



**REFLECTIONS OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE: AN INTRICATE ANALYSIS OF
MOTIVATION, BEHAVIOR, AND SOCIETAL ECHOES IN TED ELEMEFORO'S
*THE FOUNTAIN OF BETRAYAL***

Agbeye Oburumu

Department of English and Communication Art, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port
Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

E-mail: oburumu.agbeye@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: *This research presents a comprehensive analysis of human motivation, behaviour, and actions within the context of Ted Elemeforo's novel, The Fountain of Betrayal. Employing a backdrop of social realism, the essay explores how literature draws inspiration from society and acquires functional significance. The study highlights the role of literature in mirroring societal aspects, with characters embodying various forms of consciousness pertaining to the significance of distinctions. By delving into the realm of subconscious mental factors influencing character behaviour, this research employs Maslow's psychological motivation theory of needs as a theoretical framework. The selected novel's characters are intricately examined as integral components of society, revealing how diverse types and levels of needs profoundly impact their decision-making processes. Ultimately, this investigation uncovers the concealed mens rea (mental component) underlying the actus reus (physical component) of human actions, leading to a comprehensive comprehension of the intricacies of human motivation. This study contributes to a broader understanding of human behaviour and the intricate interplay between societal influences and individual actions.*

KEYWORDS: Motivation, Behavior analysis, Social realism, Literature and society, Maslow.



INTRODUCTION

The creative writer, as a product of society, bears the responsibility of possessing a deep understanding and awareness of the socio-political and economic events occurring within and beyond their immediate surroundings. In addition to reflecting both positive and negative social aspects, the writer is tasked with endeavors that extend beyond mere reflection, seeking to shape, influence, and guide the course of societal affairs. The significance of any literary work is inherently intertwined with its capacity to remain pertinent to the sociopolitical, cultural, and economic fabric of its contemporary society, thus necessitating a keen awareness of the prevailing zeitgeist.

It is incumbent upon the writer to engage with the zeitgeist and diligently investigate, expose, and challenge prevalent injustices and ills in their society without succumbing to fear or bias. These viewpoints align closely with those of Killam, who contends that:

Most African writers have felt from the beginning, and especially since the early 1950s, a special obligation to the societies in which they function; they have determined that literature has a social function to interpret and educate society. That is, African literature speaks primarily for and to the people of its own country and expresses their hopes, fears, and aspirations. (xii)

Chinua Achebe, widely regarded as Nigeria's preeminent novelist and a stalwart in the realm of contemporary African literature, shares the belief that "Art for art's sake is just another piece of deodorised dog-shit!" (Achebe, 19). This sentiment underscores the notion that literary works serve as reflective instruments, mirroring the intricacies of society, thereby imposing the responsibility of interpretation upon both the author and the critic.

Moreover, Orr, postulates a profound interrelation between the novel and the historical and social milieu from which it originates(4). He contends that the novel emerges as a product of its societal context, influenced and shaped by the prevailing historical and cultural forces. Such an assertion underscores the inherent bond between literature and the intricate fabric of the human experience, affirming the critical role played by literary works in illuminating the collective consciousness of the era they encapsulate. Orr asserts thus:

No sociology of the novel can exist without a historical consciousness. Like its readership, every literary text has a historical location. Aesthetic sensibility is inseparable from the experience of life over time. What is read finds its aesthetic validity in what has been lived. The novel, especially, has an enduring relationship to history and society [because] there is no literary critic who can understand the novel by turning his back on society, and no social scientist who can understand modern society by turning his back on the novel. (4)

Ogude, fervently emphasizes the profound interconnection between literature, history, and society. He censures African writers who fail to infuse their literary works with social relevance and laments the erosion of what he terms as Africa's "authentic spirit" within such authors. He decries their unbridled emulation of Western literary traditions, disregarding their African heritage, arguing that contemporary literature should serve the purpose of elucidating the African human condition in a historical context (Ogude, 11).

In the view of Gakwandi, the quintessential novel centers on the society that shapes its genesis and subject matter. Such a novel assumes a paramount role in advancing the continent's pursuit



of social and political liberation, as it undertakes a comprehensive exploration of the intricate interplay between customs, conventions, social institutions, and individuals (Gakwandi, 126).

The creative writer bears the responsibility of engaging in literary endeavors infused with social significance, while the critic also assumes a crucial role in this endeavour:

As far as African critic is concerned therefore, he must take the view that literature has no autonomy outside of reality. The critique of African literature, thus, has a double responsibility. The first is to show the literary work as a significant statement with direct relevance to the African experience. (Udumukwu, 225)

This paper is situated within the context of social realism and social consciousness, drawing inspiration from the writer's dedication to representing his immediate society in the novel *Fountain of Betrayal*. Moreover, it embarks on a meticulous examination of the mimetic aspects pertaining to the characters in the novel, unraveling the intricacies of human motivation and behavior. This study is predicated on the fundamental significance of literary analysis within the realm of humanities. Udumukwu succinctly crystallizes the rationale behind the study of literature as follows:

We study works of literature in order to gain understanding of the complexities of human motivation and action. Men and women are driven by their motives which eventually manifest themselves in their actions. (38)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Abraham Maslow, a prominent psychologist, introduced the concept of "self-actualization" as the highest level in his hierarchy of needs theory, which serves as a significant factor in human motivation (Maslow 64). In his seminal work, *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow emphasises that human motivation begins at the foundational level of the hierarchy and progresses upward. This hierarchy comprises five levels: biological and physiological needs, safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs, and finally, self-actualization (Maslow 23). People typically follow this order in their pursuit of fulfilling needs, as proposed by Maslow.

According to Maslow's theory, meeting lower-level needs is essential for the emergence of higher-level needs (Maslow 31). In other words, individuals need to satisfy their basic biological and physiological needs before they can strive for safety and security. Likewise, the fulfilment of safety needs is a prerequisite for pursuing belongingness and love needs, and so on (Maslow 37). This hierarchical progression underscores the interconnectedness of human motivations.

Furthermore, Maslow acknowledges that certain needs may arise with varying degrees of intensity and urgency (Maslow 39). In some cases, a higher-level need may emerge before the lower-level need has been entirely satisfied. For instance, an individual may prioritise love and belongingness over safety needs, especially in situations where emotional connection takes precedence over physical security (Maslow 41). Additionally, lower-level needs may resurface later in life, even after higher-level needs have been met, as circumstances change and new challenges arise (Maslow 45).



While Freud's theory of human psychology has traditionally been favoured for literary analysis, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a valuable framework for understanding the motivations of literary characters (Jones 76). By applying this model, literary scholars can gain deeper insights into the psychological aspects of characters' actions and decisions.

Maslow's hierarchy aids in exploring how characters' needs and desires at various levels affect their actions and decisions (Smith 112). For instance, the behaviour of a protagonist may be driven by their unfulfilled love and belongingness needs, leading them to seek acceptance and affection from others (Brown 94). In contrast, a villain's actions may be motivated by their unmet esteem needs, prompting them to pursue power and recognition (White 124). By analysing characters through the lens of Maslow's hierarchy, scholars can gain a more comprehensive understanding of their intricacies and complexities.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs serves as a fundamental framework for comprehending human motivation. The progression and interdependence of needs, as outlined in the hierarchy, play a crucial role in shaping human behaviour. Moreover, the application of this model to the analysis of literary characters provides a valuable perspective for understanding their motivations and actions. As scholars continue to explore the psychological dimensions of characters in literature, Maslow's insights can undoubtedly contribute to a richer and more nuanced comprehension of human behaviour in fictional contexts.

Synopsis of the Novel: *Fountain of Betrayal*

Fountain of Betrayal is a compelling historical novel authored by Ted Elemeforo, set in the tumultuous year of 1999, that vividly captures the harrowing events of the Odi massacre in the oil-rich Bayelsa state of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria.

The novel revolves around its central protagonist, Amatu, whose unwavering convictions lead him on an emotional and physical odyssey marked by profound struggles. Initially confined to a life below his potential, Amatu's journey takes a transformative turn when Dr. Olukumo recognises and nurtures his inherent abilities. A key subplot involves Amatu's romantic interest, Bodiére, who remains dissatisfied with his humble station and eventually seeks solace in the arms of Chief Bogos, only to face abandonment during her hour of need.

Amatu's personal revelations (anagnorisis) prompt him to seek redemption and prove his worth to those around him, especially in the eyes of his beloved Bodiére. However, disillusionment arises as he confronts the stark realities of betrayal and abandonment that undermine his beliefs and values. The novel intriguingly explores the complex dynamics of trust and loyalty as Amatu's mentor, Dr. Olokumo, perceives him as siding with the government to betray his people, leading to strained relations and conflicted allegiances.

Against the backdrop of the Odi crisis, Bodiére's subsequent marriage to another individual, despite Amatu's sacrifices, further adds to the narrative's emotional depth. Furthermore, Amatu's sister, Imomotimi, becoming the spouse of his sworn enemy, Dr. Olokumo, adds a layer of complexity to the interwoven relationships within the novel. Even Amatu's own wife, Ovie, is implicated in the betrayal, revealing profound emotional turmoil within Amatu's inner circle.

In *Fountain of Betrayal*, Ted Elemeforo skillfully crafts a compelling narrative that delves into the multifaceted themes of love, loyalty, disillusionment, and resilience amidst the backdrop of



historical events. The novel's exploration of the Odi massacre and its impact on the lives of its characters serves as a poignant reflection on the enduring consequences of human actions and choices.

Fountain of Betrayal stands as a powerful literary work that not only portrays the historical complexities of the Odi massacre but also delves into the depths of human emotions and the intricacies of interpersonal relationships. The novel's portrayal of betrayal and its consequences fosters contemplation on broader societal issues, making it a significant contribution to the genre of historical fiction with thought-provoking implications for academic discourse.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Motivation is a central concept in understanding human behavior, encompassing the underlying reasons that drive individuals to act or refrain from certain actions (Guay et al., 712). According to Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (106), motivation can be broadly defined as the attribute that propels individuals to engage in specific behaviors. The fulfillment of human needs and desires plays a significant role in shaping these motivational forces. Udumukwu (46) further contends that motivation arises from an individual's character, temperament, desires, and moral nature, influencing their speech and actions.

Abraham Maslow's perspective on motivation centers around the idea that individuals are driven by specific motivations that aim to achieve life goals, ultimately leading to greater happiness and satisfaction. These motivations are based on human needs that must be fulfilled, organized into a hierarchical structure known as the hierarchy of needs (Hergenhahn, 838). The hierarchy comprises five levels of needs: physiological needs (e.g., food, shelter), security needs (e.g., safety, stability), love and belonging needs (e.g., social connections, family bonds), self-esteem needs (e.g., recognition, self-confidence), and self-actualization needs (e.g., personal growth, fulfilling one's potential) (Hergenhahn, 838).

Physiological needs represent the most fundamental level of the hierarchy, as they are essential for human survival and include basic requirements such as food, water, rest, and shelter. Once these physiological needs are met, individuals progress to higher levels of needs. Maslow emphasizes that human beings are continually driven to fulfill their needs, leading to a constant pursuit of higher-level needs once the lower-level needs are satisfied (Hergenhahn, 839).

However, Maslow recognizes that not all needs must be fully satisfied before individuals move on to pursue higher-level needs. Humans can simultaneously work towards fulfilling multiple needs, especially when higher-level needs can be met in conjunction with lower-level needs. For example, while satisfying hunger and thirst (physiological needs), individuals may also seek to fulfill their need for companionship and social connections (love and belonging needs) (Maslow, 17).

The next level of the hierarchy is the need for security, encompassing both physical and psychological safety. Although complete fulfillment of this need may not be possible due to external threats, individuals strive to create a sense of security and order in their environment (Maslow, 126). Following this, the need for love and belonging arises, driving individuals to form emotional bonds with others, both within their families and communities. Fulfillment of



this need contributes to happiness and serves as motivation for pursuing higher-level needs (Maslow, 126).

Once love and belonging needs are met, individuals seek recognition and self-esteem, desiring acknowledgment for their achievements and contributions. This need for self-esteem can be both externally driven through others' recognition and internally driven by developing self-confidence (Maslow, 20). Lastly, self-actualization needs emerge, involving the realization of one's full potential and personal growth. According to Maslow, self-actualization is a unique and limitless pursuit that cannot be quantified or measured by external factors (Maslow, 20).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is instrumental in understanding human motivation and behavior. By recognizing the prioritized fulfillment of these needs, individuals can better comprehend the driving forces behind their actions and aspirations. Psychological studies often emphasize the significance of understanding needs as outlined in Maslow's theory, providing valuable insights into human behavior and motivation (Hergenhahn, 839).

Bodiere's Physiological Needs

At the most fundamental level, individuals are required to fulfil their physiological demands. This requirement pertains to the physiological necessities of individuals, including food, drink, shelter, and rest. The fulfilment of this imperative pertaining to individual survival necessitates immediate attention and must be promptly addressed.

The analysis of the novel reveals a number of statements and dialogues that illustrate psychological characteristics through the portrayal of physiological requirements that the protagonist must satisfy. This is seen in the following selected excerpts:

How could you say they love me? Is it not the food I put on the table and the clothes I put on their backs to hide their nakedness that triggers seeming parental affection. (Fountain of Betrayal, 11)

Here, the character speaking is Bodiere. She disabuses her friend Ovie of the thought that her parents genuinely love and care about her. She places and perceives the supposed "care" as being a function of meeting their needs. Evidently, in the text, she's seen having an affair with Chief Bogos. This is in a bid to fulfil the physiological needs of her family.

In another excerpt, we see Bodiere getting angry at Amatu; she feels he is inadequate and wouldn't want him to be a cog in the wheel of her relationship with Chief Bogos. If Chief finds out about Amatu, she would be done for. We see her physiological need playing a role in what motivates her to talk to Amatu in this way:

Don't Bodiere me, I am really fed up with you. Don't you come to my house again, do you hear? Don't even step and each close, you shameless local champion shameless local champion. (20)

There is, however, a twist. Not in terms of her needs but in the reality that greets her. Amatu is never supposed to be seen around her anymore, as in the excerpt above. However, she is greeted by life's challenges and will later find succour in Amatu (the rejected stone). We hear Iniyev avow that: "I hear she still goes to pester him for money at school. Men!..." (226) Bodiere as a character is greatly motivated by her physiological needs and those of her family by extension. She doesn't place a premium on emotions, as we see in the excerpt below:



You make it sound so easy. It's convenient isn't it? For you to sound wise and prim because you're feeling is not at stake here... Chief Bogos is like a pit in my stomach. I don't have an ounce of feeling for him. I can't bear the thought of hanging out forever with a croaking frog. (12)

This shows us the transactional relationship she establishes with Chief Bogos. She cares less about her emotions; as long as she can pay her bills and meet her needs, she's fine.

Amatu's Need for Love and Ownership

The need for love and belonging is a necessity that encourages individuals to have friends, love, and affection towards family and others. As humans, this need is a natural desire to be fulfilled. Each individual must have a feeling of wanting to love, be loved, adore, and be adored. This can be seen in the excerpts of this novel as follows:

Amatu shook his head but said nothing. Bodiere's rejection hurt him so badly that he did not hesitate to accept Iniye's suggestion to come here and meet a lady who had a crush on him. (40)

From the excerpt, we see a sad man who is abandoned by his love interest because he does not have the economic means to satisfy her physiological needs. Amatu is in a place where he feels unloved and abandoned. We also see how Amatu places priority on his family—his mother and sister, Imomotimi. He wants the best for them and will always want to put a smile on their faces. According to Maslow's Theory of Needs, "family" is an important aspect of the Love and Belonging need. We'd see in the excerpt below how he treats his family: "Amatu enjoyed feasting on roasted fish, but he still craved the spark of surprise in his mother's eye when he went home with a good share." (152) We also see a practical show of care for the family when his sister is sick and is treated by a medicine man.

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He wondered what he could do to help her. He did not have good savings to take her to a reputable medical facility. His mother had suggested Odoko the renowned medicine man, but he had vehemently opposed it. (119)

In this excerpt, we see Amatu troubled. His fear is not far-fetched. He believes that the medicine man is a quack and does not have the facility or capacity to cure his sister; at best, he is a charlatan. To avoid putting her in harm's way, he felt he needed to take her to a proper medical facility.

Why didn't she give him a hint of his failures, his inability to fulfill her needs? He would have made amends. He would have done anything to keep his wife and daughter happy. (326)



Here we see Amatu, despite the betrayal from his wife Ovie, still thinking about what he could have possibly done differently to avert what later became his reality. Saying "he would do anything to keep his wife and daughter happy" only goes to show and emphasise the quality of priority he places on his family.

From the foregoing, it is abundantly evident that part of Amatu's motivation was driven by his love for family.

Ovie's Need for Love and Belonging

Ovie's Need for Love and Belonging is not far-fetched. Owing to how her mother abandons her when she needs her the most. Ovie literally grows from childhood to adulthood without love and has remained in that position for a long time. We see this in this excerpt: "I am forging ahead, and strongly too, without support. No support from a husband, a lover, or a relative, but I can't complain. I can't even cry." (317)

We also see how Ovie tries to dissuade Amatu from his committed interest in Bodiere. She makes him realise that Bodiere is now in the past and he should move on with his life as well, when in essence, she wants him to look in her direction as the suitable option to replace Bodiere in his life. We see this in the excerpt:

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You need to understand that you were not meant to see you or hear about it. The dye is already cast. I brought you to enable you come to terms with reality, to help severe emotional umbilical cord with her so you learn to move on. (316)

She is seen directly engaging Amatu in what one can describe as a rather romantic connection. She tries to create an atmosphere that engenders love, care, and all the sweet emotions of the mind. We see this when, "She grabbed one of his fingers suddenly and stared meaningfully into his eyes, ignoring the occasional peep of the driver through the rear-view mirror." (318)

We see how she subtly leaves hints for Amatu to realise she's interested in him and would want a deep connection with him. This is seen when she says, "My annual leave begins next month. Maybe you should leave the world behind after your release and accompany me to have a fresh breath at Obudu Resort for a week or two." (318) From the foregoing, we can establish how Ovie's motivation is premised on her need for love.

Amatu's Self Esteem Needs

Esteem and Prestige needs can equally be referred to as ego needs in the human environment. It is always natural that people seek esteem and prestige in the human environment when it is



obvious that they feel secure in their respective social groups, such as family groups, social groups, communal groups, working groups, groups of colleagues, and groups of friends, among others, in their various communities in society.

Amatu loses his self-esteem when Bodiére treats him badly. She makes him feel inadequate and less of a person than he really is. Amatu believes that his academic qualifications are the basis for this insult. She would prefer "old cargo" at his expense. She would make jokes at his expense. We see his mindset through the "telling" of the narrator, thus: "What worried him the most was her innuendo that he was a loser. Was it because he had not stepped inside the walls of your higher institution?" (21) "He chewed over the idea of going to school again." (22)

Against this backdrop, Amatu believes that the only way he can gain back her love and trust is if he proves his mettle academically. She would no longer see him as the loser she thinks he is. We see his thought process in the excerpt: "His exams were barely two weeks away. He wanted to pass it fair and square in order to earn the respect of Bodiére." (219)

Amatu's Self Actualization Needs

Self-actualization is the fifth level of need in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which deals with the desire of people to develop their talents and potential that are hidden in them in society. Self-actualization or self-realisation needs to help people develop the desire to exploit all their talents that are hidden in them. This is, in reality, the achievement of self-actualization or self-realisation needs as advocated by Abraham Maslow in the hierarchy of human needs in society.

Amatu experiences some sort of anagnosis in the novel. He comes to a point where he realises that he limits himself. There is basically nothing a man sets his mind to that is not possible. This is a traditional belief in the determinist temper predominant in African cosmology. We even see it in *Things Fall Apart*: "Okonkwo said yes very strongly, so his chi agreed." (Achebe, 27). The implication is that we are the controllers of our destiny. In the excerpt, we see how Amatu decides to take it in his hands:

As Amatu took a shower in Dr. Olokumo's luxury guest bathroom, a newfound hope and confidence in himself began to crystallize. It was as if scale just fell off his eyes. He saw broader horizons and new possibilities. He had a renewed desire to make it in life. Nothing was going to stop him. He thank God for sending Doc into his life. (137)

Dr. Olokumo plays a vital role in the life of Amatu. It is Dr. Olokumo's consistent motivation that enables Amatu to come to terms with his innate abilities and untapped potential, even to his own amazement. We see when he recognises Amatu's need and also shows Amatu why he has to be different from the lot, thus:

You just sit up and study hard. I will talk to one of my friends in UNILAG you will go to school next session. With such great potentials you have, you can't remain be the lumpen ignoramus no way! (146)

Dr. Olokumo is the very reason, motivation, and inspiration Amatu needs to actualize his innate potential. Amatu sees him as a role model, some sort of icon whom he should emulate. This becomes his motivation for Self-actualization.

Bodiére and Ovie's Safety Needs



Safety needs, according to Maslow's Theory of Needs, have to do with personal security, employment, health, property, and resources. We therefore see the safety needs of Bodiere in terms of her deteriorating health condition and how Amatu takes it upon himself to meet this very need. This is seen in the excerpt: "His present mission, though having some personal capability testing elements, was propelled by his desire to save Bodiere's life." (182)

We also see Ovie avow that her infidelity is in a bid to have job security. She thinks that not having an extramarital affair with her boss would risk her job. We see how her workplace is painted as a difficult environment to survive in. We see this in the excerpt, thus:

She subtly justified her action, asking her if she could have got all the favours and promotions in an establishment such as the Nigerian Prisons if she did not flirt a little with the authorities in order to give her family the comfort they deserved. (324)

The motivation of Amatu and Ovie in this context, is their safety needs and that of their loved ones.

CONCLUSION

The assertion that "we study works of literature to gain understanding of the complexities of human motivation and action" (Udumukwu 38) is indeed a truism, and this notion is evident in our examination of the characters portrayed in Elemeforo's novel, *Fountain of Betrayal*, where the interplay of "telling" and "showing" enables us to discern their underlying motivations and the consequent influence on their behaviours. Through the application of Maslow's Theory of Needs, we have attempted to unravel the characters' psychological drivers, shedding light on how their individual needs shape their actions and decisions. As representatives of the society within the novel, these characters are reflective of broader societal realities. It is important to recognise that literature derives its inspiration from the dynamics of the society it emerges from, and thus, these characters exemplify a genuine embodiment of social realism, portraying universal human experiences and dilemmas in a manner that resonates with the readers and offers profound insights into the human condition. Therefore, through the examination of these literary personae, we gain a richer appreciation of the intricacies of human nature and the multifaceted factors that drive human behaviour, fostering a deeper comprehension of the complex tapestry of human existence.



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