

The Compensation Effect On Characters' Reactance In Anglophone African Literature

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Abstract:

This article considers in Anglophone African Literature, the compensation effect on characters' reactance through threats and promises. The sociological, sociolinguistic, anthropological and psychological approaches will be applied. This paper intends to point out a new perspective namely how Anglophone African authors' writings present threats and promises as influencing characters' course of action on a daily basis. Both lack of compensation effect and the compensation effect on characters' reactance will be scrutinised through Anglophone African Literature.

Key Words: "Anglophone African Literature", "Freedom Deprivation", threat and promise, lack, effect and compensation.

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I. Introduction

This article considers to what extent threats and promises may be obstacles to characters' freedom in Anglophone African Literature.

This paper intends to emphasise a new perspective that is how anglophone African authors' writings present threats and promises as influencing characters' course of action on a daily basis. In so doing, this endangers characters' freedom by preventing them to display the behaviour of their interest, and the only freedom related to the fact of not being involved with the behaviour under consideration.

This paper features also how anglophone African authors' writings bring out both the lack of compensation effect and the compensation effect on characters' reactance through Anglophone African Literature. This will be a critical contribution and main point of this article under consideration.

In this regard, how does a character react when there is a threat of freedom deprivation without any compensation? How does a character react when there is a threat of freedom deprivation which comes along with a subtle compensation idea?

Viktore Frankl in his book entitled *Man's Search For Meaning - The classic tribute to hope from the holocaust*, makes this point regarding prisoners' threats of death in the concentration camps, just like that:

Let us take the case of a transport which was officially announced to transfer a certain number of prisoners to another camp; but it was a fairly safe guess that its final destination would be the gas chambers. A selection of sick or feeble prisoners incapable of work would be sent to one of the big central camps which were fitted with gas chambers and crematoriums. The selection process was the signal for a free fight among all the prisoners, or of group against group. All that mattered was that one's own name and that of one's friend were crossed off the list of victims, though everyone knew that for each man saved another victim had to be found. (2004:18)

In view of this fact, it is clear that prisoners in the concentration camps live with threats of death on a daily basis. These threats increase when they are sick. In fact, sick prisoners are no longer useful for the concentration camps. Their final destinations are gas chambers and crematoriums. This is how Viktore E. Frankl points out to what extent sickness in the concentration camps becomes like sword of Damocles. In doing so, the detainees live in the concentration camps with a constant threats of death.

Threats are also perceived through trauma, absence and loss. As it is well illustrated in the lines below from *Writing History Writing Trauma*, in this way:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was in its own way a trauma recovery center. Its awe-inspiring and difficult, if not impossible, project was to provide a quasi-judicial setting in which the truth was sought and some measure of justice rendered (at least retrospectively) in a larger context in which former victims were now rulers who were trying to find ways and means of reconciling themselves with former rulers and at times with perpetrators of oppression. The TRC also provided a forum for the voices- often the suppressed,

repressed, or uneasily accommodated voices - of certain victims who were being heard for the first time in the public sphere. Indeed, as a force in the public sphere the TRC itself was attempting to combine truth seeking in an open forum with a collective ritual, requiring the acknowledgement of blameworthy and at times criminal activity, in the interest of working through a past that had severely divided groups and caused damages to victims (including damages inflicted by victims on other victims). (1999:44)

Based on the foregoing, it is the situation of post apartheid in South Africa where former victims are now rulers. They are trying methods and other things needed to make reconciliation happen with the former rulers. There are threats for former victims to let themselves conquer by grudge against former rulers' past actions. There are threats for former victims whom voices often suppressed, and for the first time given floor in public to seek to avenge for speech freedom deprivation that they went through for a long period of time. There are threats for former victims to be discovered as associates of former perpetrators of oppression. There are threats for former rulers to think that no matter what promise of change they will make, they will always be viewed like criminals by the Country and people. Different kinds of threats above mentioned, were going on throughout former victims' and rulers' mind.

Stephen Frosh in his article entitled "SIGMUND FREUD" from *Routledge Handbook of Psychoanalytic Political Theory* introduces the notion of threat in kind:

This proposes a foundational opposition between the demands of the pleasure principle, identified as the 'purpose of life', and the 'world' with which it is 'at loggerheads' (75). This is first because pleasure is an instantaneous event derived from the reduction of tension and cannot be sustained, whereas suffering ('unpleasure') continues for all the rest of the time. Additionally, people are faced with threat that comes from nature, from their own bodily frailties, and most importantly from other people. (2020:23)

As per above, Stephen Frosh makes a clear point about threat. According to him, human beings are confronted with all sorts of threat. This feeling of being threatened comes from nature, from the weakness related to the human body limitations, and from others.

Cathy Caruth in her book entitled *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative, and History* makes the point about trauma just like that:

For what returns to haunt the trauma victim in Freud's primary example of trauma, as I emphasise in my readings of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Moses and Monotheism*, is not just any event but, significantly, the shocking and unexpected occurrence of an accident. The example of the train accident - the accident from which a person walks away apparently unharmed, only to suffer symptoms of the shock weeks later - most obviously illustrates, for Freud, the traumatising shock of a commonly occurring violence. (1996:6)

Given the above, Caruth showcases the situation of the person who survives from the train accident. He or she will always suffer symptoms of the shock weeks later. This is due to the fact that, he or she is living now bearing in mind threats of likely next accident occurrence.

Philip Zimbardo in his book entitled *The LUCIFER EFFECT Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* makes the following point:

Around midnight on Tier 1 A, three Iraqi detainees were dragged from their cells, made to crawl on the floor naked, chained together, and forced into simulated sexual acts. One of the abuse photo shows this cluster of prisoners surrounded by about seven soldiers looking down on them. The key protagonists were an interrogator, Ramon Kroll, and MI Specialist Armin Cruz. Among those identified as a passive observer was MP Ken Davis. He watched it all and just walked away from it (forever sorry now that he did not intervene immediately). (2007:358)

In view of this fact, it is obvious the detainees or prisoners do not have their right like human beings. They are not only naked but also humiliated. They often are dragged from their cells like animals. This is a clear illustration of how the Iraqi prisoners live with a constant threats of humiliation in the prison. It has been analysed in the lines above, some themes written by some critics and researchers such as Victore Frankl, Stephen Frosh, Cathy Caruth, and Philip Zimbardo. However, they do not point out to what extent anglophone African authors' writings highlight the lack of compensation effect and the compensation effect on characters' reactance through Anglophone African Literature.

II. Reactance Theory With Threats And Promises

The Reactance Theory with threats and promises from Sharon S. Brehm and Jack W. Brehm's *Psychological Reactance A Theory of Freedom and Control* will be helpful for the analysis of this paper under consideration. The above-mentioned book, alludes along these lines:

Reactance theory takes a different approach to possible differences between threats and promises. First, both threats and promises are seen as threats to freedom. Offers may be punishing or rewarding, but if they

pressure one to behave in a certain way, they threaten one's freedom not to behave in that way. That, under conditions specified by the theory, a promised reward can arouse reactance has been demonstrated by Brehm and Mann (1975), who used a proffered bribe to induce subjects to change their opinions. (1981:230)

As per the aforementioned text, threats and promises pressurise several freedoms. On the one hand, when someone is threatened unless he does a specific thing, he or she will be punished. This is a way to take away something from him or her. It may be love, money, the state of physical or psychological well-being that was awaited before enforcement. On the other hand, when someone is promised of reward, he or she will be rewarded if he or she behaves in accordance with the expectations of the promising person. Offer gives the opportunity to have what he or she does not have. Be it, money, love, time to do other thing, and so on.

It is crystal clear, any threat endangers the freedom to display the behaviour of your interest and to hold on to what you currently takes control of. Promises of reward will imperil only the freedom related to the fact of not being involved with the behaviour under consideration.

III. Lack Of Compensation Effect On Reactance

This subheading will highlight how threat of freedom deprivation, through threats without any subtle compensation idea impacts strongly the characters' reactance in Anglophone African Literature. Chike, a character of Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, is an perfect illustration of threat of freedom deprivation without any compensation effect. Chike lives in the Igbo community where People do not favour marriage between a slave or a slave descent with a free man or woman. This threat of marriage mate choice freedom, pushes him to restore his freedom in a very high level, by having love affairs with many free women. This attitude contradicts all the societal laws regarding 'oshu' and free men and women marriage. This point is made clear from Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* as follows:

The lasting effects of such old-fashioned ideas about slavery were not new to chike; he had heard it all before and was not too concerned about it. He was handsome and though women knew that he came from 'Oshu' family, a slave family, they pretended not to see it. Had not his family produced many professional men? In fact, he looked down on most of the local girls. Yes, he had slept with lots of them in his late teens, and even still had a few mistresses among the younger wives of many old chiefs. His conscience did not worry him on that score, for these wives still in the flush degree to be a good politician. (1976:83)

In the light of the above lines, the narrator informs the reader how the threat of freedom deprivation regarding the love partner choice, is viewed by a slave descent like Chike. For him, slavery and all what goes with, are old fashion and do not matter. As a case in point, the community does not allow a slave descent to have either a love affair or a marital union with a free woman. This community's threat becomes a booster of Chike's reactance. This increases his desire for free women. Despite his being an 'Oshu', Chike sleeps with many free women in his late teens. Young wives of many old chiefs have been seduced by him. He does it on purpose maybe because there is not compensation effect which is related to that threat.

The threat directs to 'Oshu' regarding marriage, instead of being a stumbling block, it becomes a stepping block. This how threat of freedom deprivation without any compensation effect boosts Chike's reactance regarding love affair with free women. He makes a decision to have love affairs not only with one free woman but with many of them including married ones. The restriction of marriage between 'Oshu' and Free women or men without any subtle compensation effect by the community, impacts Chike's behaviour strongly. In doing so, Chike has love affairs with many free women including community Chiefs' younger wives. This is the manifestation of strong reactance due to threats of freedom deprivation without any compensation effect.

IV. Compensation Effect On Reactance

This subheading will point out how threats of freedom deprivation, through promises which come along with compensation effect influence characters' reactance in Anglophone African Literature. This above-mentioned point will be analysed, as outlined below from Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*:

"Aku-nna and Ogugua will get married at about the same time. Their bride prices will come to me. You see the trend today, that the educated girls fetch more money."

Now his sons smiled. And so did his young wife who, on the pretext of clearing the goats' droppings, was listening to everything. So Aku-nna might after all really live up her name and be a "father's wealth", funny how without realising it one come to fulfil one's parents' expectations. Unfortunately her own father had not lived to share the wealth Aku-nna was bound to bring, but not to worry, Okonkwo was almost a father to her now. (1976:75)

In the foregoing paragraphs, there is a case of reactance related to promise. In fact, it is a well known fact that in Igbo's community portrayed by Buchi Emecheta, education is not good for girls in particular and women in general. Okonkwo is deep rooted in the traditional values. However, he displays a very smooth motivational status or puny reactance vis à vis girls education due to promise which goes along with it. Currently, within Okonkwo's community, there is the trend to allow their daughters to be educated, despite the fact that

girls' education contradicts the community norms. This illustrates the fact that community members pretend not to know that girls' education is not praised within community. Their behaviour is justified by compensation effect related to daughters' education. Promises of getting rewarded if individuals accept to meet the expectations of the promising persons or community; have an effect on community members' reactance. Although promises deprive individuals' freedom of not being involved with the behaviour under consideration.

This is noticed through Okonkwo's reactance toward girls education. He allows his daughters, Aku-nna and Ogugua to get school education, knowing that this contradicts the Igbo's community norms and standards. Okonkwo's behaviour may be explained by the compensation effect of promises on his reactance. The compensation effect induces him not to react strongly in order to restore the freedom of refusing to send girls to school, in accordance with community's norms. Okonkwo does not refuse to get involved in this specific way of viewing education of girls in connection with their bride prices. He does not take any strong action to restore this freedom deprivation. Based on the foregoing examination, it is crystal clear that his reactance is feeble regarding freedom deprivation which comes along with promises or compensation effect. Okonkwo's reactance is smooth, even passive or in-existent, in this particular matter.

Okonkwo's reactance is very smooth. Instead of rejecting the idea of extra money that comes along with girls' education, Okonkwo thinks about the compensation effect due to the idea of famous bride prices in his household. His reactance is feeble because it is directed by his personal fame within the community. The more bottles of wine and money are given during a bride price, the more bride is respected for what she may bring to her people. Likewise, the head of the bride household is respected by the community. So, viewing things from this perspective, the respect and honour which come along with big bride price may compensate to some extent Okonkwo's freedom deprivation. This is the reason why, he does not reject strongly the ideas of educated girls who bring extra money during their bride prices. Therefore, Okonkwo's reactance is very smooth or almost in-existent due to the idea of extra money compensation effect that educated brides bring to the family wealth.

V. Conclusion

To conclude, this paper has brought out how reactance may be perceived in a new standpoint, that is, lack of compensation effect and the compensation effect on characters' reactance through Anglophone African Literature. The different reactance manifestations on restoration of deprived freedom due either to threats or promises have been highlighted. There is difference of reactance in the restoration of deprived freedom depending on whether it is linked to threats or promises. This means that the first one the reactance is generally very strong because threats present a subtle total lack of the compensation effect for deprived thing, while the deprivation of freedom due to promises as analysed above, the deprived thing is compensated in a subtle way, as seen with the educated girls' bride price extra money. This has been the aim of this article under consideration, to bring out this new perspective related to the power of subtle compensation effect on Characters' reactance in particular and people in general.

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