

POSTCOLONIAL TRAUMA: SOCIOPOLITICAL REPRESSION AND MENTAL DISINTEGRATION IN STEPHEN KEKEGHE'S BROKEN EDGES

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Abstract

Postcolonial African creative writers have always explored realistically the undesirable conditions that attended independence in the various African states in their works. They have, therefore, revealed through their works various economic and sociopolitical challenges facing Africa. They have also gone a step further to expose the mental and physical implications of these challenges on the generality of the people. The sole aim is to create awareness and install a morally upright society. This work examines the impacts of postcolonial repression on the mental health condition of the masses by interrogating the theme of mental insanity in Stephen Kekeghe's *Broken Edges*. Through a qualitative and critical analysis of the text, it is observed that leadership failure is a significant stressor of human health. This, in turn, elicits different psychotic conditions. This work is anchored on the psychoanalytic and postcolonial trauma theories, which help to highlight the relationship between literature and the human experiences of suffering as well as their effects on human mental health. The choice of the primary text is informed by its vivid and realistic portrayal of the challenges of contemporary Nigerian society and its effects on the psyche of the Nigerian masses.

Keywords: Postcolonial Literature, Mental Health, Psychoanalytic, Postcolonial Trauma, Politics

Introduction

Modern Nigerian literary writers continue to recreate the sociological and psychological compositions of the humans and environment that engendered their artistic imaginations. As a way of reflecting the effects of the various ills in society on man's mental composition, the subject of mental health constitutes the body of a large number of literary texts. Human leadership is often characterized by abuse of power, greed, oppression, and exploitation. The unrestrained desire to amass wealth and fame often results in the political leaders' unwillingness to relinquish power; as such, they employ different means, including suppression and repression, to restrain the people from engaging in any form of anti-government activity. This has been the experience in postcolonial African states, and the situation continues to grow worse. The masses who are at the receiving end suffer both physically and mentally. Repression as a means of inhibiting the masses from revolting against an oppressive regime is described by Owen as a way of controlling people by force for political reasons thus restricting or preventing them from challenging the state's political ideology. The purpose, according to him, is to prevent anti-regime movements (23). Repression is accompanied by human rights violations, imprisonment, security agents' brutality, abuse, torture, and even execution. There is direct repression where specific individuals whom the government views as threats to her position are targeted and hunted down. Sometimes, repression may be covert; in this case, the government employs tact to cause division or dissident among the masses in order to frustrate any plan to act as a group. Political repression triggers crime, frustration, despair, and several other deviant behaviours.

Mental disintegration, which includes insanity or madness, is not a new subject in human history and has been conveyed in different cultural and artistic expressions. Ogunpitan and Fasehun state that madness can be traced to Cain, Adam's son, who was referred to as a fugitive and vagabond (Genesis, 4:12). They also acknowledge the representations of insanity in literary works of classical times as well as that of western artists including Euripides, the Greek dramatist, and Shakespeare. Ogunpitan and Fasehun maintain that these artists project their psychotic characters as though they are under the influence of the gods or demons (115-116). This is in consonance with the position of a number of ancient Greek playwrights like Sophocles, who posit that those "whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad" (*Antigone*, 620-623). Madness is thus portrayed as something beyond the physical or ordinary but has a supernatural undertone by several artists, including Aeschylus, Sophocles, Allen, and Kemp.

Contemporary postcolonial African artists offer a divergent view as to the causes of insanity in modern times. Ogunpitan and Fasehun affirm that the representation of insanity in literary works of postcolonial Africa indicates that madness is a sort of physical or physiological illness similar to other illnesses, and it can be induced by certain stressful experiences or conditions in the society (119). Kekeghe's submission is in line with the attribution of mental disorders to external factors. He observes that narratives of insanity have shifted from the religious to quasi-secular and obviously, secularization of mental conditions (325). Thus, he maintains that mental health issues in African literature, which was previously in the realm of minority discourse, are now gaining popularity and have been used to express regional or cultural peculiarity and experiences to which certain individuals have responded in the form of mental instability (325-326). Feder also asserts that the theme of madness in literature is often projected as a personal response to environmental influences, including political, social, and cultural pressures. He sees madness as an acceptable

revolutionary trait, and he specifically refers to political madness as an expression of a long-repressed sense of injustice, which, according to him, is evidence of a legitimate mode of confrontation. Feder observes that the history of recurrent literary representations of insanity is an exploration of the ways the mind of the insane character has been altered as he relates with other humans and socio-political institutions. This means that the fictive madman does not exist alone, and as a result, he reflects and also influences those around him (5). Feder further states that the mad protagonist embodies and projects the values of his family, tribe and society. Therefore, his delusions, cruelty, violence and inner flight result from his involvement and interactions with influences outside his own self (5). From the foregoing, it is evident that the issue of madness occupies a significant space in literary discourse right from the classical period down to modern times.

In Africa, literary artists have also explored the subject of insanity from different angles. Quite a good number of African writers who explored the subject of insanity did so from their personal experiences of mental disturbances. Bessie Head of South Africa, Dambudzo Marachera of Zimbabwe and Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo of Madagascar are some African writers who have experienced some mental or mood disorders and have explored this subject in their writings (Ezeigbo, 4). The main reason propounded for mental disorders in the works of contemporary African literary artists who explore the theme of insanity in their works seems to be the discontent with the perversities and the dislocation in society. Thus, social consciousness and commitment have propelled their literary outputs.

Although the theme of madness continues to feature in poetry, drama, and fictional narratives, critical works tend to pay more attention to narratology. Two reasons have been put forward to account for the choice of the narrative mode by Kekeghe. The narrative technique according to him, affords the characters the opportunity to effectively convey their personal experiences of mental illness, how they plunge into insanity, and their sordid experiences in asylum. He adds that the narrative tool adopted by the novelist compares to the diagnostic method employed by the psychiatrist in comprehending the mental state of patients (326). This agrees with Beveridge's view, which maintains that reading narratives bordering on issues of the mental health of characters helps in the understanding of patients suffering from mental disorders. He therefore advises that through the recreation of mental disorders in fictional narratives, one will be more sensitive to the nuances and subtexts of patients' communication (5). According to Kekeghe, the goal of autobiographical and fictional accounts of insanity is to enhance the mental well-being of humans in society. Consequently, literature is a potent instrument for medical education as attested to by Oyeboode (9). Literature shares a healthy relationship with psychiatry and by extension, medicine. So, the portrayal of mental diseases in literary writings comes under literature and psychiatry, and it is a subspecialty of literature and medicine.

The choice of *Broken Edges* as the primary text for analysis in this research work is informed by the fact that the text is a play, and only a handful of critical works have focused on the examination of drama as a medium of unveiling the mental wellbeing of the individuals in relation to prevailing conditions in the society. The play under investigation, *Broken Edges* by Stephen Kekeghe, is his second play in which he demonstrates his in-depth knowledge of contemporary social and political challenges in his Nigerian society. The play exposes several forms of postcolonial dispossessions

and deprivations and the attendant traumatic impacts on the psyche of the protagonist, Ejaita and his father, Pa Okorhi. Otosirizee rightly points out that a playwright employs theatre to convey issues that could be located in the continent's sociopolitical realities (5). The mad character, therefore, is not just there for dramatic effect but has a deep metaphorical import both in the play and in the society. Otosirizee is one of the few scholars who interrogate the theme of psychosis in drama using some of the works of pioneer African playwrights, namely, J.P. Clark's *Song of a Goat* and Wole Soyinka's *Beatification of Area Boy*. He maintains that these writers utilize drama to unveil the effects of the misuse of political power by its possessor and the African dysfunctional value system in the lives of ordinary people. This research paper is, therefore, a qualitative critical analysis of how drama has been deployed as a tool to reveal the traumas of postcolonial challenges of insecurity, unemployment, and other political failings on the minds of educated individuals or families in society.

This paper is anchored on the psychoanalytical and postcolonial trauma theories since it explores the relationship between the stiffening sociopolitical system and the attendant mental traumas of the Nigerian masses as portrayed in the play under study. Psychoanalytic theory involves understanding personality traits and the dynamics of personality development. It also involves how behaviour can be influenced by repressed experiences and unconscious desires. The observations and formulations of the Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud have proved to be a handy reference point in psychoanalytical investigation since the 1890s. After Freud observed certain patients, he stated that some painful experiences are usually repressed or held back from consciousness (although, in the case of his patients, it was concerned with disturbing sexual experiences). He adds that anxiety which results from such repressed experiences, finds expression in different symptoms that seem to act as psychological defense mechanisms. This anxiety is further expressed in the form of fear, guilt, shame, and several other anti-social behaviours. The application of psychoanalysis to artistic creations, according to Delgado, refers to that aspect of knowledge that explores the hidden sides of human behaviour in order to gain an understanding of the mystery of creative writings. He posits that psychoanalysts recognize two states of mental life; one relates to wakefulness with a focus on the external world of reality; the other focuses on the internal reality that is always active whether one is asleep or awake (in the subconscious). He describes the latter as the dream state that is connected to aesthetic or creative mental life where the artist, who is now the creator, skillfully manipulates thoughts and images left behind in the subconscious in their fleeting passages through the mind's emotional experiences (13).

Visser sees trauma as a painful remembrance of an experience, which may not in itself be painful, but the act of remembering the action makes it really traumatic. Trauma, according to her, involves a stressor that is recognizable and evokes notable symptoms of distress in the victim(s) (273). Trauma is recurrent or repetitious, and it occurs through the aid of memory, dreams, or some other means. Its symptoms also include nightmares, flashbacks, depression, emotional numbness, or extreme alertness. There is traumatic aftermath; hence, it is referred to as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Postcolonial trauma theory derives from postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory involves the study of the impacts of European colonialism on the colonized people as it is represented in literary writings. Postcolonial theory focuses on the critical investigation of the cultural, political, aesthetic, historical, social, and economic impacts of

colonialism on the colonized people. The postcolonial trauma theory involves a critical examination of literary works produced by nations that were once colonized with regard to the psychological and emotional impacts of some overwhelming experiences on the people.

Postcolonial trauma theory is credited to Cathy, C., Felman, S., and Hartman, H. G., but the psychoanalytic concept of trauma theory can be traced to Freud. Trauma theory emphasizes a distinction between a determining cause and an efficient cause of psychic disturbances and seeks to establish the history of psychic disturbance that is triggered, which means that there is a case of repetition mechanism of the original trauma. Pena posits that the fundamental of trauma theory is the belief that individuals experience trauma when they encounter events that are life-threatening, such as accidents, natural disasters, or extreme neglect. Pena lists disruption of daily functioning influence on emotional, cognitive, and physical state as areas where trauma effects are felt and adds that untreated trauma can lead to long-term mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (4). Yusin also states that trauma can result from violence and structural oppression such as apartheid, colonial, and, by extension, postcolonial experiences (37). The Western view of trauma theory is criticized for not accommodating psychic sufferings that result from structural violence of racial, gender, sexual, class, and other inequalities that have been ignored in trauma studies. Whitehead subsequently suggests that postcolonial trauma theory should take into account different experiences of suffering and oppression in the works of postcolonial African writers (16). Such experiences are collective in nature and should be the focus of cultural trauma theory. There is no doubt at all that political repression is one of the Postcolonial African experiences that has engendered trauma in the masses' mindscape; as such, the psychoanalytic and postcolonial trauma theory are appropriate theoretical tools for the investigation of mental disintegration that results from political repression in postcolonial Africa as projected in Kekeghe's *Broken Edge*.

Sociopolitical Repression and Mental Disintegration in Kekeghe's *Broken Edges*

In Stephen Kekeghe's play *Broken Edges (BE)*, one comes across the interface between sociopolitical repression and mental disintegration. This is portrayed through characters' depiction, dialogues, and events in the play. Post-colonial African states, including Nigeria, are fraught with several problems, amongst which are terrorism, kidnapping, conflict between farmers and herdsmen, insecurity of various kinds, hardship, corruption of varying degrees, exploitation, and many more. These problems, which continue unabated, seem to be the products of African post-colonial maladministration. African leaders have failed in their social responsibilities towards their subjects, and the masses are the ones who bear the brunt of poor leadership, which, sadly, translates to mental agony in several cases. Stephen Kekeghe, who hails from Imode in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, is a seasoned scholar, poet, and playwright. He is also a critical essayist in the field of literature and medical humanities. Through his creative works, he has demonstrated a thorough grasp of the challenges of his Nigerian people, which are also applicable to Africa in general.

Broken Edges is Kekeghe's second play, which explores the theme of madness and demonstrates the shattering of the psyche and the individual defense system by anti-social undercurrents or discontents in society. His protagonist, Ejaita, is a non-conformist character who rebels against a repressive socio-political system that is intent on crushing his personality and isolating him from

the human community. His role as a mad character equips him with the power to unveil significant truths about Nigerian society and the political leaders who have plunged the nation into misery and chaos. Ejaita identifies these corrupt leaders and exposes them as the real plunderers and lunatics in his very opening speech:

Ejaita: They think I am mad these mad plunderers and the plundered! Two sets of people in two different worlds united in absurdity. Look at their mocking eyes and little minds... See what they are doing to the treasures of the community. Chains, they continue to chain the assets and fortunes. Yes, they have chained sanity. A thoroughly sick community regards the fertile minds as insane and wrecked (*BE*10).

Ejaita is in a frenzied mental state where his painful and suppressed memories of family and nation's destruction erupt and are expressed in his dissociative condition. The tradition of the unsound mind as an avenue to vent one's discontent with socio-cultural and political system, according to Feder, is a vehicle through which inhibitions are exposed and suppressed suffering is revealed (xi). Kekeghe uses insanity as a weapon to unveil the perversities in society. Thus, his protagonist, Ejaita, affirms that the political leaders who have fanned the flame of terrorism, tribal conflicts, youth restiveness, unemployment, corruption, and various vices are the plunderers. The play actually exposes several possible sociopolitical factors that initiate mental disintegration in people.

As a playwright, Kekeghe carries out a literary diagnosis of mental health conditions as manifested in the characters. Though a non-physician writer, Kekeghe has expressed his social consciousness of some common triggers of psychological illnesses. Ogunpitan and Fasehun contend that though it requires a mental health specialist to identify genuine madness, everyone can easily identify those vagrant psychotics who often roam the streets either half or stark naked. In other cases, however, oppressive pressures of life have led quite a high number of persons to commit violent acts or reflect highly bizarre behaviour. They add that such abnormal behaviours are borderline cases between sanity and insanity (116). Accordingly, mental illness could be used loosely to include any form of sickness or aberrations of the mind. The mad persons in society live in a world of their own as they seem to be unaware of their pathological conditions or behaviours. However, in literary works, the insane person is portrayed as having extraordinary vision, a condition exploited by the literary artist to reveal abnormalities in society with impunity. This is well illustrated in Ejaita's case as he boldly exposes the rot in the Imode community. He thus charges:

Ejaita: Madness wears different colors. Those with tattered virtues wear good clothes, those with good virtues wear tattered clothes. One's mind is disintegrated. Another's moral is charred. (*BE*17).

Ejaita here reveals different shades of insanity. He shows that morally bankrupt individuals, though they appear in suitable clothing, are in an actual sense insane in their obsession with abnormal and immoral behaviours. These are the corrupt leaders in the society who, according to him:

Ejaita: rebrand their mess and cover their stinking wounds with colored bandages while a deep ache tears their inside. It is the lunatic that paints the house to obscure its wears and tears rebranding insanity in the feverish face of a wobbling world (*BE*34).

Although the perverse leaders make several efforts to make situations appear normal, they have not been able to conceal their gross misconducts, which have resulted in the precarious and hopeless condition in which the nation now finds itself. The political leaders who are responsible for the problems in the nation also experience internal unrest, a “deep ache.” They lack inner peace in their affluence. Their insatiable desire for wealth is also a disease condition of the mind that makes them defy everything logical and morally upright. As a result, society lacks the qualities necessary for survival. The following excerpt affirms this:

Ejaita: In this world, empathy is an illusion. Kindness is a mirage. Our humanity is charred by insatiable grabbers of powers and wealth. Do you feel some worth as you stagger through a turbulent community of violence and wreckage? Do you have reasons to laugh as you recount statistics of our charred remains? We are dumb in the face of doom! (*BE*19).

The above extract shows that the leaders are the ones responsible for the problems in society, and the masses are at the receiving end; they suffer the consequences of bad leadership in silence, which has significant psychological implications. Ejaita suffers from several mental disorders; according to Dr. Okamre, Ejaita is maniac depressive, a type of disorder that is characterized by episodes of mood swings that range from low to high mood. Ejaita, thus, exhibits extreme hypomanic symptoms, including “self-talks, tantrums, irrational outbursts, perceptual disorders of visual and auditory hallucinations as well as insomnia” (*BE* 20). But the truth is that Ejaita is driven into these mental conditions as a result of the things he has suffered in the society. The heinous murder of his friend and brother-in-law, Ederha, by “terrorist herders” (*BE*63), his lack of employment, and his broken home are the reasons he is mentally destabilized. No wonder the first neighbor says:

First Neighbour: This intelligent boy is ruined by the stiffening weather of our society. We are in a wicked society populated by cruel and selfish politicians. They are insensitive and insatiable insane people that restlessly seek self-preservation. They have destroyed many green and fertile minds like this one. (p. 63)

Ejaita is physically and psychologically traumatized as a result of the deteriorating Imode, socioeconomic and political conditions. He manifests neurotic symptoms, which escalate to psychosis. His agonizing experience is evident when he sets his certificates ablaze. At this moment, he begins to engage in self-talk and thought-broadcasts, which are clinical symptoms of mental disorders like schizophrenia and manic depression. He reveals the contradiction and worthlessness in the society when he tells the Vice Chancellor:

... I have returned these worthless certificates to you. I wonder why you graduated me if I am not employable. Here in the belly of the certificate, you said that I met the requirements for the degree. You too said that I am not employed. There is an internal

contradiction in that. Take the credentials and give me all I spent getting this degree. Henceforth, graduate only candidates that are employable (p. 61).

Ejaita regards the certificates as worthless, hollow, and dead; they could not fetch the holder any job. When he turns to farming with crude instruments to survive, his life is not safe in the face of the mayhem the herders are unleashing on the harmless and innocent citizens. His friend, Ederha, has just been slayed on the farm by the herders. There is gloom everywhere, and this plunges Ejaita into depression.

As represented in the play, the government has done nothing to ameliorate the worsening situation. The terrorist herders are instead empowered by the government's attempt at creating grazing reserves in all states in the country despite the four hundred and nineteen (419) grazing reserves already in existence in twenty one (21) states of the federation. The herder along with the cows, continue to trample on human lives and plants as they take their animals through the bush (farmlands), even in territories where the grazing reserves and routes do not exist. They view their cows as superior to human beings; hence, they attack individuals who object to their destruction of crops. The Second Villager, one of the characters in the play, *Broken Edges*, affirms this when he says, "Here cows are of more regard than humans" (BE 57). The government has been very reluctant to take decisive action against the killer herders; hence, the First Neighbor declares:

First Neighbour: If there was security, his friend would not be killed by terrorist herders. If the government built industries to engage the youths, this intelligent boy and the slain ones would be working and contributing to the economy. So, you see you cannot exonerate the government that rapes us (BE63).

The protagonist, Ejaita, is angered by the insensitivity and irresponsibility demonstrated by the political leaders. The politicians, as portrayed in the play, continue to show a high level of insincerity and lack of commitment to salvaging the agonizing experiences and conditions of the masses. There is no respite for anyone, nowhere to turn, as every 'edge' is broken in the society. This brokenness is well illustrated on the cover page. Like pieces of broken glass that cannot be put together, the family, which is the domestic edge, is severely shattered. Ejaita's family is at a broken edge, and so are several other families in society. His home is not healthy physically and psychologically. His father, Pa Okorhi, commits suicide. This is a case of severe mental depression and despair. He is driven into this by his wife's unfaithfulness. So, Pa Okorhi admits that his world is crashing very fast, and the President General, who is Pa Okorhi's friend, also confirms this:

President General: What is the blame of the man that becomes sick in the head? Did he consciously take that path of mental sickness? The answer is no! Your father's suicide was provoked by your mother's toxic attitude towards him... Your mother was in the same barrack with you, not to secure your release, but to flirt with an army recruit, an accomplice of terrorists. My son, your father died of depression (BE 48- 49).

The protagonist's mother, Madam Gold, exhibits traits of insanity. She is obsessed with a passion for pleasure that is associated with material things. This is what Onyemelukwe classifies as

monomaniac, which is a preoccupation with a single passion (4). Madam Gold is obsessed with sensual pleasure, which plunges her into degrading, immoral sexual escapades with different men of questionable conduct who are below her age. She is compared to a “decomposing corpse” (*BE* 62) since she is already infected and smells offensive. The son, Ejaita, describes her as a reckless woman. The Third Neighbor also refers to her as a morally wrecked woman who engages in sexual immorality with a notorious kidnapper and an army recruit because she is a plutomania. Madam Gold is mentally sick and exhibits the traits of her immoral acts. Her sex addiction is a manifestation of her dysfunctional family. She constantly bombards her husband and son with disparaging words that destroy their self-worth and drive them deeper into depression and insanity.

The society and the political edge are also broken, and as a result, there is no success anywhere. Chief Tafie and the Vice Chancellor of Imode University, who represent the political leaders, manifest symptoms of madness. They are megalomaniacs, and they reflect this in their desperation for power, which leaves them blind to their shortcomings; as such, they blame the crisis and regression in the land on their political opponents. This is typical of Nigerian political actors who employ deceit and condemnation of their political opponents in order to win and continue to enslave the masses. The play *Broken Edges* realistically portrays Nigerian failings in every ramification. The author asserts that, in truth, Nigeria is broken in every segment. The family, educational system, society, political and economic spaces, and the nation as a whole are the different edges that have suffered disintegration. The situation is so gloomy, and this is the position projected in the play. “This gloom that sits on our world” appears several times in the play to highlight the intensity of the state of hopelessness confronting the land, specifically Nigeria. The Play seems to be projecting revolution as the only option. Ejaita and some other youths are the revolutionary characters who confront Chief Tafie, the politician and the Vice Chancellor who come with false promises to achieve their selfish goal of acquiring power. Ejaita boldly demands answers to questions of insecurity, unemployment, and bad leadership from Chief Tafie and his accomplices. When they fail to give a satisfactory response, he declares:

Ejaita: In place of leadership, they give us repressive politics. Our world is crashing because there are too many hustlers who see political practice as an avenue to amass wealth. Such people are the plunderers of our land. We will resist them with all our might (*BE* 34).

The need for revolution is stressed here also by the President General of Imode Community, a good friend of Pa Okorhi, when he says,

President General: There is a terrible gloom on the weather we must be deliberate about liberating ourselves and consciously create happiness. Our land is headed by thoughtless and wicked monsters who only want to remain in the fog... (pp. 51-52).

The President General’s advocacy is for the masses to seek deliberate means to free themselves since the leaders are not ready to bring any positive change; hence, the people should be determined to confront the invaders of the forests, their patrons, and the fake soldiers in the

barracks according to Ederah. The decision to go into farming with crude implements is the only alternative to survival for the people, and this is the advice of the President General, so they have to be ready to confront the herdsmen. The task is not easy, as symbolized by the murder of Ederha by the same herdsmen shortly after his speech. But the people should persevere in their struggle to gain freedom. The government makes efforts to frustrate such struggles using different means, including force and subtle manipulations. The masses will be hindered from gaining freedom because the leaders want it this way; the masses should remain in chains or perpetual bondage like Ejaita, who is chained and denied appropriate mental care. The situation is truly very bleak, and only a decisive confrontation can bring about the needed change and freedom.

Conclusion

Stephen Kekeghe's dramatization of insanity in literary space is an eye-opener to the sad consequences of the warped political and social system. The study reveals that the inordinate desire to retain power by corrupt leaders who lack genuine interest in the plight of the suffering masses encourages lingering hardship, unemployment, terrorism, immorality, and several other heinous crimes. These frustrating conditions are stressors of the mental health of individuals in the society and cause madness for some of the post-colonial African masses. It is apt to say that the portraiture of characters and events in the text accurately and sufficiently captures the mental disintegration that results from the failings of political leaders in our society. The play *Broken Edges* and several other literary writings reveal that mental ill-health is not restricted to vagrant psychotics alone but to several other individuals who manifest traits of mental disintegration and inability to cope in a meaningful way with existing world conditions, persons who could not develop and sustain mutually satisfying personal relationship but are often depicted as suffering from one form of mental disorder or the other.

Kekeghe suggests through the play *Broken Edges* the need to consciously engage in deliberate revolutionary actions, including fearlessly confronting reckless leaders in order to bring sanity to society. The play is very apt in revealing how the different institutional forces, the family, society, political, economic, and educational systems, have impacted negatively on the lives of ordinary people because of the craving for abnormality in the society. The theme of mental health in literature remains a very relevant subject as literature continues to reflect society.

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