

A PSYCHOANALYSIS OF INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN VÉRONIQUE TADJO'S *THE SHADOW OF IMANA*

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Abstract

Poor management of intercultural conflict has always been the bane of growth and development in any multiethnic nation. This was attested by the Rwandan nation that was ravaged by genocide in 1994. As Véronique Tadjó travelled to Rwanda in 1998 to visit the sites of massacre and hear the voices of the victims, the horrors of the tragedy were documented in a blend of fact and fiction. Using her work, *The Shadow of Imana* as a background and the framework of the psychoanalytic theory, this paper examines the factors that engendered the intercultural conflict. It also analyses the brave psychological approaches adopted by the victims, the government, those involved directly or otherwise in managing intercultural conflict. It therefore informs on the urgency of tackling any brewing intercultural conflict in order to forestall the escalation of crises as was the case in Rwanda.

Introduction

The tidal wave of genocide that decimated the small central African nation of Rwanda left the whole world reeling in shock. The 100 day civil war between April and June 1994 left in its wake a staggering toll of about 800,000 dead. The ethnic induced violence and brutality (the massacre of the minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus by the majority Hutus) tore the lives of the citizenry, damaged the lives of the survivors and seared forever the fragile memory of the nation.

As the nation took brave steps to recover from this horrific tragedy, Véronique Tadjó, on invitation by Fest Africa travelled to Rwanda in 1998 alongside nine African writers on a writing fellowship sponsored by Fondation de France to document the horrors of the genocide. The product of this journey is *The Shadow of Imana* (a translated version of her *L'Ombre d'Imana*) a travelogue in which the author Véronique Tadjó portrays, through the victims' stories and the sites visited, the horrors of the war and its aftermath. Rendered in a matter-of-fact, but poetic style, the text is rendered "in a very factual and sober manner, as if to find an antidote to the morbidity of the spectacle itself and to her visceral emotions" (Anyinefa, 2005, p.1). In other words, the writer portrays her encounter with the survivors whose lives were directly or otherwise forever affected by the tragedy. The translated version helps the Anglophone world to appreciate Véronique Tadjó's commitment.

Following from the above, this paper proposes a psychoanalytic approach to analysis of intercultural conflict in *The Shadow of Imana*. The emphasis of this discussion is hinged on the premise that Véronique Tadjó is a committed writer who seeks to warn us through this text laced with literary undertones and techniques of the disastrous consequences of conflict. This literary reportage resonates with Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2009, p.28) who remind us that:

Literature can also teach moral lessons, dissuading its readers/audience from doing what is wrong and persuading them to do what is right. Many literary pieces are designed to train the mind...on the cultivation of virtues and the eschewing of vices. Literature can draw a clear distinction between good and bad; right and wrong; acceptable and unacceptable, and also has

the capacity to prove why positive character attributes should be emulated and negative ones condemned.

Véronique Tadjó weaves together fact and fiction as she lends her voice to history in its commitment to document for posterity.

The choice of psychoanalysis as a theory for this discussion is hinged on the appreciation of the role of psychoanalysis in the mental development and evaluation of psychoanalysis of the individual's psychological effect and reactions to events. Founded by Sigmund Freud, this theory believes that people could be cured by making conscious their unconscious thoughts and motivations, thus gaining insight (McLeod, 2014). McLeod (2014) further adds that psychoanalysis proposes the cure of repressed emotions by making the unconscious to be conscious. It is a sort of investigation of the mind ... especially the unconscious mind (AROPA, 2017). Psychoanalysis is not only a theory but also a therapy proposed by Freud in treating patients with mental disorders. However, our interest in psychoanalysis is on the theory which we believe aptly applies to the people who Tadjó encounters in the journey to Rwanda. These people were psychologically ruined, destabilised, hence the need for psychoanalysis to help the readers understand their frame of mind and management.

In addition, dictionary.com (2012) defines psychoanalysis as “a method of studying the mind and treating mental and emotional disorders based on revealing and investigating the role of the unconscious mind.” All the definitions above agree on one fundamentals of psychoanalysis which is “an understanding of transference, an interest in the psychoanalyst-patient relationship in the healing process” (www.apsa.org).

Another psychoanalyst who expanded on the Freudian theory is Jacques Lacan. Culler (1997, p.128) reminds us that:

Lacan describes the subject as an effect of language and emphasizes the crucial role in analysis of what Freud called transference, in which the analysand casts the analyst in the role of authority figure from the past... The truth of the patient's condition in this account, emerges not from the analyst's interpretation of the patient's discourse but from the way analyst and patient are caught up in replaying a crucial scenario from the patient's past.

This 'transference' or "falling in love with your analyst" is the scenario rightly played out by Tadjou in her encounter with the victims of the genocide, who opened up to her, revealing the innermost thoughts, enabling her to capture their anguish from the deep recesses of their heart. They (Tadjou and the victims) become active in the healing process.

Another vital aspect of Freud's theory is the notion of 'id', 'ego' and 'super ego' in the study of the psyche, otherwise named personality. According to McLeod (2016, p.1); "id is the impulsive (and unconscious) part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts.... The id engages in primary process thinking which is primitive, illogical, irrational and fantasy oriented." The ego, on the other hand is the more realistic part which seeks to consider the rules of behaviour using reason. It tries to work out realistic ways of satisfying the id's demands by either compromising or postponing satisfaction to avoid negative consequences to the society (McLeod, 2016). Lastly, the super ego deals with the values, norms and morals of the society which are handed down by the parents and other agents of socialisation. Its function is to control the

id's impulses, especially those forbidden by the society such as aggression, sex and persuades the ego to seek moralistic goals more than realistic ones (McLeod, 2016). Made up of the conscience and the ideal self, the super ego can punish the ego by evoking feelings of guilt.

Having examined the concepts of the unconscious mind and the role it plays in determining the actions of the individual, it is imperative therefore to consider the concepts of conflict, intercultural conflict and intercultural conflict management.

Conceptual Clarification

Conflict means disagreement or opposition. It is the inability to arrive at a common goal owing to incompatible interests. Ting-Toomey defines it as an intense disagreement between two interdependent parties over incompatible goals and the interference each perceives from the other in their effort to achieve those goals. Madumelu et al (2015) opine that conflict arises from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals and groups in defined social and physical environments. Conflict is therefore, inevitable because it is found in every relationship and every form of human endeavour. Okpara, Chukwu and Nnamdi (2011) insist that human beings can never be free from conflict since it manifests in daily choices, decisions and interactions. They also cite Otite (2007) who maintains that conflict is inherent in all kinds of social, economic or political settings and in business management job.

Notwithstanding the above, conflict can swing both ways, either negative or positive. Okpara et al (2011) posit that conflict can be good or bad, constructive or destructive depending on how it is managed. It is positive when it brings change and innovations, creating healthy living and wealth. Conversely, it could escalate to crisis, deplete resources, demean ego and values, and affect people's psyche so that they act inhumanely. Evans (2016) opines that conflict

should be perceived as an opportunity for growth and an effective means of opening up among groups or individuals, though it can draw back productivity and give way to more conflicts requiring their management and resolution.

There are mainly four main types of conflict: interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal conflict, intragroup conflict and intergroup conflict. Interpersonal conflict refers to conflict between individuals while intrapersonal is the form of conflict that takes place within an individual. Intragroup conflict involves the conflict that occurs among individuals in a group, while intergroup on the other hand deals with conflict that exists between interest groups that depend on one another for satisfaction and the achievement of set goals (Okpara et al , 2011). They also identify mass conflict which occurs when people of a state or international community are involved in misunderstanding or conflicting interests that threaten the general well-being of the people. Okpara et al (2011) further identify the following forms of conflict to include: ethnic/communal conflict, religious conflict, political conflict, economic conflict, education conflict, agricultural conflict, etc.

Having therefore enumerated the above, the crux of this paper is to examine one of the natures of conflict which is ethnic/communal conflict which Ting-Toomey (1999) explains as intercultural conflict. Ting-Toomey (1999) defines it as “the perceived or actual incompatibility of values, norms, processes, or goals between a minimum of two cultural parties over content, identity, relational and procedural issues.” She further adds that some intercultural conflicts stem from deep-seated hatred, and centuries-old antagonism arising from long-standing historical grievances. Intercultural conflicts arise therefore from the conflicting parties bias(es), perceptions, prejudices and stereotypes which colour or distort the ability to achieve common goals and co-habit harmoniously. To this, Ting-Toomey (1999, p.1) adds that “individuals coming from two contrastive cultural

communities bring with them different value assumptions, expectations, verbal and non-verbal habits and interaction scripts that influence the conflict process”.

Conflict Management

This is the process of reducing the negative effects of conflict while promoting its positive aspects. Constructive intercultural conflict management has been defined as the use of culture sensitive communication skills to manage the process of conflict productively and reach important goals of all parties involved. This, not only is proper utilization of the communicative tools (listening, speaking, reading and writing) a veritable asset in the management of conflict, but the conflicting parties cultural perspectives must be considered in the process of managing the conflict. In so doing, the needs of both parties will be acknowledged and addressed.

Again, Ting-Toomey (1999) emphasises that acknowledging our own ethnocentric biases and suspending our reactive evaluations are critical in managing the intercultural misattribution process. She further adds: “By withholding our gut-level negative judgements concerning unfamiliar behaviour, we are giving ourselves and others a chance to understand the cultural nuances that exist in a problematic situation.” An insight into Tadjó’s recordings of the victims’ experiences and proposals on managing the crisis is revealing of the victims’ unconscious application of intercultural management steps.

Factors that engender intercultural conflict: Insights from *The Shadow of Imana*

Chinua Achebe, one of the fathers of African literature begins his critically acclaimed memoir, *There was a country*, a personal reflection on the Nigeria-Biafra war, with the popular idiom drawn from an Igbo proverb, “a man who does not know where the rain began to beat him cannot say where he dried his body”. Obviously, conflict has become a recurrent phenomenon that is plaguing the

world and African continent in particular, therefore a good appraisal of some of the major factors that engender conflict can help to manage existing conflict and as well forestall future occurrence.

Indeed, no conflict happens in a vacuum, intercultural conflicts occur when a set of factors and conditions converge. Diverse ethnic groups carry various degrees of conflict potential, this is because ethnicity creates the divide and culture nurtures the mind and perception of the people. Firstly, going through the work of Veronique Tadjo, she points out that the feeling and the fear of the 'Other' is a major factor that engenders conflict. Psychologically, people become defensive as a means of protecting themselves, and offensive in order to avoid intimidation from the other. She remarks:

“And I am afraid when, in my country, I hear people talk of who belongs there and who doesn't. Creating division. Creating foreigners. Inventing the idea of rejection. How is ethnic identity learned? Where does this fear of the Other come from, bringing violence in its wake?”
(37).

Such a situation is what facilitates a manifestation of emotional and psychological antagonisms among people. What creates the notion of the 'Other' is that we have neglected the underlying fact that we are all first and foremost human beings and by that we have our predefined identity before being distinguished by our peculiar cultures. The writer's use of the 'Other' connotes a feeling of separation from a common identity.

Culture in itself frames the context in which conflict occurs. Cultural and national identities are formed through formal and informal teaching and repetitions which inform the mind. If these actions are negative they in most cases tend to instigate hatred, resentment and fears leading to violence, crises and other forms of

conflict especially when nothing is done to reorient the affected individuals. Irobi (2005) opines that memories of past traumas have a way of magnifying people's anxieties as a result of historical memories of grievances that give rise to fear, hatred and consequently conflict.

Froduard, the young farmer turned murderer, one of those who spoke with the author Veronique Tadjo affirms to the fact that past memories of grievances was a major factor that indeed led to the conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda.:

“When the president was alive, he had said that we needed to get rid of traitors who had left the country for weapons training. And then when the president died, we were told that the Tutsis had killed him but that if they wanted to come here, they wouldn't find any of their accomplices alive. They wouldn't find anyone to help them kill the Hutus. We had to strike back, defend ourselves.”
(104).

Since the Hutus were those in power, they assumed that the death of the president would have been caused by the Tutsis, and therefore for them this was a perfect excuse to begin the massacre.

Another factor we see from the work of Tadjo, that facilitated the conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis is the feeling of inequality. Wherever such feeling manifests, conflict is inevitable. History has it that during the colonial rule, the Tutsis were preferred and taken as the superior tribe because they looked more like the Europeans, with a lighter skin tone and sharper nose. It was John Hanning Speke, a British explorer who discovered Rwanda in the 1800's that came up with the stereotype of “tall, light, superior Tutsis and short, dark, inferior, Hutus”. As a result of this prejudice, the

Hutus have developed a deep hatred for the Tutsis and targeted them long before 1994.

Tadjo discovers that:

“One of the reasons for the persecution of the Tutsis comes from the theories suggested by European historians, Belgian in particular, who, towards the end of the nineteenth century, attributed to them [Tutsis] foreign origins. According to those historians the 'watussi' shepherds, whom they characterised as tall and slender, in contrast to the smaller Hutu farmers, were not originally natives of central Africa. Some thought they could have come from as far off as Tibet or Egypt. But the link with Ethiopia remains the most common claim.” (22)

According to Veronique there is no proof for this theory, yet this claim which initially was made as a form of flattery led to thousands of Tutsis being thrown into the Kagera river so that 'they can return to Ethiopia'. Sadly, the same Belgians, who had somewhat laid the foundation for this unwarranted genocide, together with the international community escaped the genocide leaving the people to destroy themselves. And amongst those who left were pastors in whose parishes and churches some of the would-be persecuted Tutsis sought refuge: “The Belgian priest was no longer there when the massacre took place” (13). Again, “...Here too, Belgian priests administered the parish: four Flemings and a Walloon. They left just before the massacre. (15)

Evidently, when the Hutus took over power after independence, they saw the Tutsis as a major enemy that must be wiped out. The feeling of superiority gives rise to hatred and hatred in turn birthed conflict. In order to formalise this hatred, the Hutus came up with their ten commandments in which they stated clearly that

every Hutu person must see the Tutsis as enemies who do not deserve anything but death. “They must constantly fight against Tutsi propaganda. – Hutus must stand firm and be vigilant towards their common enemy, the Tutsis.”(103)

Tadjo also explores the character of the ruling class, and the over ambitious nature of the political group as a major factor that fuelled the conflict between the Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority. She underscores the fact that those in authority saw the conflict as an opportunity to pillage the country. Josephine, one of the witnesses of the genocide gives us insight to this truth: “No, it wasn’t an ethnic war, because at the highest level they got together to pillage the country, to look after their own interests. Politicians never tell the truth. They stir up hatred. When the country is poor and the youth are unemployed, they can easily manipulate people by making others the cause of their troubles” (108). Tadjo like the other African writers who sees literature as a subversive weapon of societal change, and through their works expose the ills perpetrated in the postcolonial Africa, puts down her pen to preserving the memory of the Rwandan genocide. It is sad to note that the cry for independence which was a necessity predicted and sought for, to end the suffering and misery of the colonised people has not produced the desired result. That is why Henry Lopes in his novel *Le Pleurer-Rire*, made this challenging remark:

“Hier nos misères provenaient du Blanc qu’il
fallait chasser pour que le bonheur vienne.
Aujourd’hui les Oncles sont partis et la misère
est toujours. Qui donc faut-il chasser? (23)

Yesterday our misery came from the white man
who had to be hunted for happiness to come.

Today the Uncles are gone and misery is still on. Who should we hunt?

It is also worth noting that the disinterest of the outside world, especially the super powers and the United Nations contributed in no small measure to the escalation of the crisis leading to genocide. A journalist vituperates:

The world powers knew that massacres were being carried out in Rwanda, but they were slow to react to admit that what was going on was genocide. A military intervention force of modest proportions could have stopped the extremists and quickly put an end to their plans. Instead, the United Nations balked at playing their part. (p.33).

Propaganda through hate speeches, print media, the radio, and television also fed the insecurities and anger of the people, resulting in tension and psychological trauma. Ethnicized and “tribal” portrayals of Hutu and Tutsi in conflict dominated the international airwaves and television. They gave very trivial accounts of the complex experiences of Rwandans and their relationship with the rest of the world. These accounts created a colossal representation of the traumas that occurred, presenting the Tutsis as victims and the Hutus as perpetrators. Tadjou presented also the role women played as they also participated in the killing.

“Women who are murderers, perpetrators of genocide, women forced to kill, accused of having killed their husbands, their children, friends, neighbours, and strangers. Women who have helped men to rape, who sang to give them the courage to massacre, who betrayed, who pillaged, who decided to join the acts of cruelty.

With machetes, they killed other women,
mutilated children, finished off men.” (101)

Tadjo is able to feel the impact of the genocide and also make it clearer for the reader to participate through her approach in which she identifies herself as an outsider and through the recounting of the individual conditions and the testimonies of the situation during and after the genocide. She makes the reader participate with her as she asks questions like “Are your fears more terrifying than mine?(...) What sacrifice would you be willing to make to preserve your humanity? Are you prepared for this incredible encounter with death distorted by cruelty?” (10) The author's use of the present tense narrative form helps to force the scene on the reader's mind.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, can this unfortunate event happen again - anywhere on the continent? And the answer is yes. All that is required is a country deeply divided along ethnic lines where justice is dispensed along these lines; where people are irresponsible for their speeches. The author emphasises the fact that what happened in Rwanda is a proof that the world is capable of genocide, and therefore finding a lasting solution is our collective responsibility. She insists that: “Rwanda is inside me, in you, in all of us. Rwanda is under our skin, in our blood, in our guts. In the very depths of our slumber, in our waking hearts. (38). Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana* is not just a reportage of death and cruelty, but the author also reveals some proven healing strategies and as well a strong commitment to forgiveness. From her interactions with some of the survivors of the tragic period, the writer explores the inherent ability in man to rise above the traumas of conflict, and continue with a normal life. The effect of conflict usually leaves the survivors psychologically traumatised, as psychological trauma could be said to be the result of extraordinarily stressful events that shatter ones sense

of security, making one feel helpless. Traumatic experience often poses a threat to life or safety. Esther Mujawayo, emphasises:

« Mais le génocide n'a pas qu'une seule violence. Il n'a pas que la violence de la mort ou des tortures physiques. Il t'anéantit à l'intérieur de toi, il te fait ce que l'autre veut faire de toi: rien, même moins que rien. Même encore en vie, tu deviens inexistant. » (153) “But the genocide is not only one type of violence. It's not only the violence of death or physical torture. It destroys you from within, it makes of you what the other wants you to be: nothing, even less than nothing. Even while alive, you cease to exist.”

Conflict Management styles in *The Shadow of Imana*

It is instructive to note that before embarking on the journey to Rwanda, the writer Veronique Tadjó already has nursed intrapersonal conflict, as she would reveal in the opening statement of her work:

It had long been my dream to go to Rwanda. No, ‘dream’ is not the right word. I had long felt a need to exorcise Rwanda. To go to that place where those images we had seen on television had been filmed, images that had flashed across the world and had left an indelible horror in every heart. I did not want Rwanda to remain forever a nightmare, a primal fear. (p.1)

Tadjó was not immune to the tragedy that had befallen her fellow human being. Though the pain would never rise to the same degree as the actual victims, she empathised with the Rwandans and one of the ways of identifying with the people was a journey to the very heart of the incident to hear the casualties of the war. Of course, she does not hesitate to point out:

...what had happened there concerned us all. It was not one nation lost in the dark heart of Africa that was affected. To forget Rwanda after the sound and the fury was like being blind in one eye, voiceless, handicapped. It was to walk in darkness, feeling your way with outstretched arms to avoid colliding with the future.

Did Tadjó succeed in her quest to resolve her internal conflict? Yes. Initially, though, she admits that she has not fully recovered from Rwanda because Rwanda could not be fully exorcised. This she said because she points out that danger is ever-present and violence is everywhere. However, her contact with the people has enabled her to understand some of the issues surrounding the conflict, thereby enabling her to come to the conclusion and warn us that:

We need to understand, to analyse the mechanisms of hatred, the words that create division, the deeds that put the seal on treason, the actions that unleash terror. We need to understand. Our humanity is in peril.

From the authors account and her interaction with the survivors of the Rwandan genocide, Tadjó reveals the various measures that are taken by the survivors to get back on track and also forestall future occurrence.

According to Tidd, the experience of trauma, which is often described as a form of 'dying' by trauma survivors, takes on various guises: one of its manifestations is the multiplication of the self during which a victim "creates a second 'self' due to conflict in the 'original self'" (407-417). This strategy enables the victim to create a distance from the traumatising experience. This is seen from the character of

the woman whose son was killed her neighbour during the genocide. After the genocide, the same neighbour took care of the woman when she fell sick and later they became lovers to the chagrin of all around them. Here, we witness the demonstration of the Freudian theory because the woman's id, that is her desire to be with a companion is fulfilled. This logical action of hers is explained by her ego's justification that the same murderer nursed her back to life. The nursing helped to reshape her psyche. Mujawayo points out that for these women, although often paradoxically, being raped had saved them from being killed, they emerged from the horrors of the experience reluctantly, because they now had to live through a "hell worse than death" (*un enfer pire que la mort*, 197).

The author also reveals the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness through justice, and the need to learn and draw insight from the past as a guide to tackling the challenges of the present. The Lawyer from Kigali insists:

How can we ensure that this never happens again?
What is needed are strong institutions, justice and national reconciliation. He repeats: justice is what is needed. A credible justice. If people do not recognize themselves in this justice, there will be no national reconciliation. (23)

In order to get credible justice there was need to resurrect some traditional modes of establishing justice. Reconciliation for a nation fundamentally divided drew on pre-colonial social practices which is the traditional community-based hearing mechanism called 'gacaca'. This system of justice was effective in addressing post-genocide civilian tension, in the sense that it permitted the local victims to publicly state their losses, and provided community restorative justice. The use of this traditional system of justice further authenticates and

affirms the African pre-colonial cultural, social and political practices as still very useful and efficient.

The Gacaca means a return to traditional justice. How did the ancestors judge? How did they mete out punishment? Traditional customs are being revived in the face of this emergency. Solutions for the present must be sought in the past. (97)

Recognizing the fact that the nation could not simply lock up perpetrators in expectation of a formal trial, the Gacaca courts imposed reparations at a community level and facilitated local unity and the reintegration of survivors. Again, this resonates with Freud's assertion, that the super ego, while drawing from the norms and morals of the society, seeks to control the excesses of the id while convincing the ego to moralistic goals over the realistic ones.

Conclusion

From the author's perspective, her main purpose of going to Rwanda was to exorcise the horrors of the place she had heard so much about. Her journey and narrative style acted simultaneously as both therapeutic and exploratory. Tadjó declares: "I did not want Rwanda to remain forever a nightmare, a primal fear. (...) I needed to lance the abscess, lay bare the wound and bandage it." (3) She also bore witness to the brave efforts made by the Rwandan government, citizens, foreigners and interested parties in coming to terms with the tragedy by adopting many approaches to manage the conflict. As far as the author was concerned, discovering the horror that was in Rwanda, remains the foundation for the therapeutic process. And for those that experienced war, they also need psychological treatment for them to move on in life and remain human. Both the offender and the offended need to work on each other and self by forgiving self and the 'other' so as to forge a common front in waging war against any threat to peace, stability, unity, progress and development.

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