
A Psychoanalytic Reading of: Grace Akpan's *Spider Web*

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Abstract

One fundamental issue surrounding the development of literary theories is the fact that they (the theories) are the very platform on which works of literature are interpreted and applied. Thus, literary theories serve as the underlying principles by which we understand and enjoy literary works. This paper is therefore anchored on the psychoanalytic theory as espoused by Sigmund Freud to the extent of determining how the author of Spider Web uses the story of the novel to explicate the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of a parish priest, Father Tobias, who is viewed as the projection of the author's psyche. The paper strives to establish the fact that human behaviours are driven by desires, fears, needs and conflicts especially, sexual libido to which they are unaware. The paper concludes that the novel, Spider Web by Grace Akpan, does illustrate to a large extent, the psychoanalytic theory of the 20th century and that Father Tobias is a character caught in the web of repressed images, thoughts and desires of human mind.

Keywords: *Literary theories, neuroses, character, author's psyche, sexual libido, unconscious desires, Sigmund Freud.*

1.0 Introduction

Dreams have been identified as the foundation on which the theory of psychoanalysis is built and sustained. In literature, many writers own their writings to their world of dreams. For instance, Robert Louis Stevenson, Goethe, Blake, Bunyan, Dante and Poe DeQuinncy to mention a few, are writers whose works have been largely influenced by dreams. To be precise, psychoanalytic theory started with the publication of Sigmund Freud's foremost text - *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900. According to Freud:

The dream-thoughts which we first come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts but are on the contrary represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech (26-34).

By the application of the principle of psychoanalysis to literary works, we see such works as the expression of the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author. Literary works can also be viewed as the manifestations of the author's own neuroses. Thus, when one psychoanalyzes a particular character in a literary text, such as Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, it is assumed that the character's creation is a project of the author's psyche. "Psychoanalytical criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques

of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature” (Barry 96). Psychoanalytic theory is based on the premise that human behavior is often driven by an unconscious process. From the perspective of Freud, all human behaviour, including dreams, is essentially sexual since it is driven by an individual’s sexual energy or libido. To Freud, dreams are either Oedipus or Electra complexes. Contributing to this line of thought, a foremost psychologist writes: “...the notion that human beings are motivated even driven by desires, fears, needs and conflicts of which they are unaware” (Tyson 14-15) speaks for the place of psychoanalytic theory in human affairs.

1.1 Salient Issues Concerning Psychoanalytic Theory

1.1.1 Historical Origin

Psychoanalytic theory is a development of the 20th century. In the development of theory, ‘chance’ and ‘determinism’ played an important role. The issue of chance is linked to the theory because Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis is seen to have been dragged into the field of psychiatry for personal reasons. Again, the fact of determinism is seen as Freud’s obsessive nature and his “penchant for rejecting people who did not totally agree with him” largely determined the history of psychoanalysis. However, Freud owed influences both to his contemporaries in the field of psychiatry and to the scientific tradition of his time (Burns 70).

The Freudian psychoanalysis was developed out of the observation and the analyses of data derived from his clinical practice. Nevertheless, there are three major practitioners who influenced Freud’s theories. They are Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). Jean Charcot (1825 – 1893) and Joseph Breuer (1842 - 1925).

1.1.2 Sigmund Freud’s Contributions

Psychoanalytic theory is impacted largely by Sigmund Freud. In what is known as Freud’s Typographical model, the human psyche is seen in tripartite form – the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious. According to Freud, the conscious part of the human psyche deals with external reality. The preconscious functions as a store house of memories where consciousness is brought to bear on human mind while the unconscious part of the psyche deals with repressed images, thoughts and desires of human mind.

Freud developed the provinces of the mind and subdivided the human psyche into the ‘id’, the ‘ego’ and the ‘superego’ (Hjelle and Zielgler 86). The id houses our secret desires, our darkest wishes and our most intense fears. The id is the pleasure seeking principle largely associated with sex drive instinct. The id is thought to be linked to our instinctual biological impulses such as the need to eat, drink, defecate and gain sexual pleasure. Freud believed the id to be ‘raw, animalistic, and chaotic, it knows no laws, obeys no rules and remains basic to the individual throughout life” (Hjelle and Zielgler 88). The choice of Father Tobias, in Grace Akpan’s *Spider Web* for the application of psychoanalytic theory is informed by the working of the components of the human psyche.

The ego, according to Freud, is the only part of the human mind that is in touch with reality. The ego is said to function as a communicative tool with the external world. It regulates the excesses of id and ensures that its outcome is not destructive. Predictably, the ego must repress any socially inappropriate emotions, relying on defense mechanisms to protect it from angst (Feist, Feist 29). The third part of the human psyche, according to Freud, is the superego. Evolving from ego, the superego is not in touch with the external world. It is the censoring aspect of the human psyche. In the view of Freud, “the superego operates according to the morality principles and serves primarily to protect society and us from the

id” (Bressler 123). The superego is indifferent to the well-being of the ego, and exerts unrealistic demands on the ego in its quest for perfection. Sexual and aggressive impulses are repressed by the ego. Nevertheless, failure to repress the impulses in accordance with the superego’s moral ideals may result in a feeling of guilt and anxiety (Feist, Feist 39).

1.1.3 Carl Jung’s Contributions

Although Jung’s theory on the subject matter of psychoanalysis is modeled on Freud’s findings, Jung departed somewhat from Freud’s interpretation of dreams. The fact that all human behaviour is sexual driven is contested by Jung. In his published seminal work, *Symbols of Transformation* (1912), Jung asserts that “dreams include mythological images as well as sexual ones” (Bressler 126). Another area in which Jung departed from Freud’s theory is in the contents of the unconscious. As with Freud, Jung believes that the human psyche is in three parts – the personal conscious, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. It is Jung’s belief that all conscious thoughts begin in the personal unconscious. The collective unconscious houses the cumulative knowledge, experiences and images of the human species. Jung contends that these memories exist in the collective unconscious in the form of ‘archetypes.’

Archetypes are patterns or images of repeated human experiences such as birth, death, rebirth etc that appear in our stories, our dreams, our religions and our fantasies. The impact of archetypes in literature is that it provokes point of awakening images stored in the collective unconscious for which the reader has no control. Jung’s most worthy contribution to the study of literature lies in archetypal criticism with Northrop Freye as its foremost critic.

1.1.4 Northrop Freye’s Contributions

Northrop Freye is known in the study of literature as originating the literary approach known as the ‘mythic criticism.’ His published work, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) helps to popularize him in this field of study. It is his belief that all of literature can be seen in one whole story known as ‘monomyth.’ According to Freye, this monomyth is a cycle containing four phases. There is romance phase where our wishes are fulfilled and where we can achieve happiness. There is also the anti-romance phase where stories of bondage, frustration, fear, imprisonment are told. There is equally the spring or comedy phase where our rise from anti-romance and frustration to freedom and happiness are recorded. The last of the phases is the tragic phase which records our fall from romance phase and from happiness and freedom to disaster. Northrop Freye’s contribution to the study of literature is his schematic approach which enables literary scholars to identify stories based on genre, symbolization, themes, points of view and other literary elements.

1.1.5 Jacques Lacan’s Contributions

Jacques Lacan, although shares the view of Sigmund Freud that the unconscious part of our psyche greatly affects our conscious behaviour, he departs from Freud’s position that the unconscious is “a chaotic, unstructured, bubbling cauldron of dark passions, hidden desires and suppressed wishes” (Bressler 129). Lacan sees the unconscious as structured like a language and that it can be analyzed systematically. Believing in Freud’s typographical model, Lacan divides the human psyche into the ‘imaginary,’ ‘symbolic’ and the ‘real.’ He associates the imaginary with ages within early birth and maintains that the thinking of the psyche at this infancy stage contains our wishes, our fantasies and that it is dominated by the mother image. In this stage, according to Lacan, there is the feeling that, as children, we could unite with our mothers. Total unity, in Lacan’s view, is an illusion. Feeling for our mothers in this stage could either be Oedipus or electra.

The knowledge that we are individuals in our own creation different from our mothers takes us into the next of Lacan's tripartite division- the symbolic order. The symbolic order is dominated by the father just as the mother dominated the imaginary order. An important part of the symbolic order is the encounter with language. Language helps to shape our identity and molds our psyches. With language, we learn to differentiate between male and female. The father is seen as a symbol of authority. He enforces cultural rules and his presence is synonymous with castration. For Lacan, what is 'sex' is biologically determined whereas our gender or sexuality is culturally created. In Lacan's third part of the human psyche – the real order, we are introduced to the physical world, including the material content of the universe. In the view of Lacan, the real order symbolizes all that a person is not. It is further argued that because the entire physical universe are and can never be part of ourselves, we can never experience or really know them except through language. Lacan's contributions to the study of literature lies in the fact that literature is capable of capturing a brief moment of joy or terror or desire arising from the deep of our unconscious psyche and thus reminds us of a time of perfect wholeness characterized by the imaginary order when we were yet able to differentiate among images from the real order.

1.2 Basic Tenets of Psychoanalytic Theory

The following are the basic tenets of the theory of psychoanalysis:

- (i) That human attitude, mannerism, experience and thought is largely influenced by irrational drives.
- (ii) That irrational drives are unconscious in nature.
- (iii) That besides the inherited constitution of personality, a person's development is determined by events in early childhood.
- (iv) That attempts to bring unconscious drives into awareness meet psychological resistance in the form of defense mechanisms.
- (v) That conflicts between conscious and unconscious, or repressed, material can materialize in the form of mental or emotional disturbances, for example; neurosis, neurotic traits, anxiety, depression etc.
- (vi) That the liberation from the effects of the unconscious material is achieved through bringing this material into the conscious mind.

1.3 Methodology in Psychoanalytic Theory

The following serve as signposts in the method employed in the study of psychoanalytic theory.

- (i) Literary works can be interpreted through the knowledge of the author. This method is known as psychobiography. The author's biography, his personal letters, lectures and such other related document about an author can be utilized to construct the personality of the author in order to determine his idiosyncrasies, internal and external conflicts.
- (ii) The most recent method in psychoanalytic study is character analysis. Apart from the knowledge given on individual character within a literary work by the author, readers equally develop their own conceptions of each character's personality. Whereas the author creates a character, readers recreate the same character. Thus, character interpretation in modern time is both the reaction of the author and the reader.
- (iii) The method of seeing all human behaviour as sexual is also relevant in psychoanalytic study. This method, although is controversial, it helps in limiting all images and actions within a text to the author's id, since everything in a text is ultimately the hidden wishes of the author's libido.
- (iv) A text can also be analyzed along the line of archetypes. "red" and "water" could be

discovered in a text and will be interpreted to get out the meaning of the text.

Jung's criteria must be referenced when interpreting works from the point of view of archetypes. Psychoanalytic study can also be viewed symbolically. Here, Lacan's model of the imaginary, real and symbolic are brought to bear on interpretation. From Lacanian point of view, there is no integrated or psychologically whole person in real life situation.

1.4 Criticism of Psychoanalytic Theory

The following serve as points of criticism against psychoanalytic theory:

- (i) Modern psychologists criticized the theory for relying on ambiguities for its data without empirical evidence.
- (ii) Patricia Waugh is of the view that "psychoanalytic theory does not constitute a unified field... however, all variants endorse, at least to a certain degree, the idea that literature is fundamentally entwined with the psyche" (200).
- (iii) Critics of the theory are also of the view that Freud's theoretical models arise from a homogenous sample group, almost exclusively upper class Austrian women living in the sexually repressed society of the late 19th century.
- (iv) Such a sample, many psychologists contended, made Freud's focus on sex as a determinant of personality too emphatic.
- (v) In the 1920s, critics such as Otto Rank, Sandor Ferenczi and Wilhelm Reich, stressed the interpersonal aspect of the analyst-patient relationship and placed more emphasis on the processes of the ego.

2.0 Psychoanalytic Theory and Literature

The development of psychoanalytic approaches to literature proceeds from the shift emphasis from content to the fabric of artistic and literary works. Sigmund Freud, in his introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (1922), defines the artist as "one urged on by instinctive needs that are too clamorous" (314). In 1909, the psychoanalyst, Otto Rank published *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* following Freud's earlier work, *The Relation of a Poet to Daydreaming*. It is the belief of Otto Rank that artist turns a powerful, secret into a literary fantasy, and in doing so, the artist uses Freud's notion about the 'Oedipal' complex to explain why the popular stories of so many heroes in literature are so similar.

Critics such as I.A. Richard, Kenneth Burke, and Edmund Wilson have posited that psychological and psychoanalytic theory could assist in the understanding of literature. Indeed, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, in their book, *Theory of Literature* (1942) said that psychological criticism "provides a psychological study of an individual writer, explores the nature of the creative process; generalize about types and laws present within works of literature, or theorizes about the psychological effects of literature upon its readers" (81). A psychological approach to literature, according to Daniel R. Schwarz, "discusses the relationship between author and characters and seeks to understand how the author's creative imagination transfers, sublimates, displaces and represses as it produces a work of art" (95).

2.1 A Psychoanalytic Reading of *Spider Web*

First and foremost, the reader of Grace Akpan's *Spider Web* is confronted with the image of the 'spider' and the 'web.' These are symbols and they have meanings within the context of psychoanalysis. Symbols appear especially in dreams in nocturnal and diurnal (fantasies) as well. However, they are also present in the awoken life in the culture of a people, in religious beliefs, in myths and folklore. Symbols are also present in neurosis or more precisely, in their thought content. These symbols, that at first sight seem to be very different have a

unique signification. In Freud's view, they point to the human sexual life, more precisely to sexual organs.

In the context of *Spider Web*, the symbol of the spider, from the angle of Freud's dream symbol, represents mother as an object of fear or dislike and particularly in a man's dream. Freud sees it as a symbol of the phallic mother, of whom we are afraid, so that the fear of spider expressed dread of mother-incest and horror of the female genitals. In the Victorian view, spider sitting in its web watching till its prey is entangled represents being caught in the illusion of the physical world, just as Father Tobias in Grace Akpan's *Spider Web* can be said to have been caught in the illusion of the human world, especially the religious angle, which *Spider Web* represents.

On another side of the symbol of the spider's web, especially on a Freudian level, spider embodies woman. She is the creative force, weaving the designs of life and fate. The case of Uduak, the female heroine and Father Tobias, the parish priest could be an illustrating point in the novel under examination. Spider's appearance can symbolize one's fear. When she arrives, it is time to confront one's phobias. Naïve Uduak squares in this category of the symbol of the spider. Shortly after her marriage to Nkereuwem, teenage Uduak returns to the convent at Calabar to complete her training as a mid-wife. One night at the Orphanage where she assists with the work, she is raped by the local parish priest. Uduak is forced to return suddenly to her village where, to her horror, she discovers that she is pregnant. Nkereuwem, her husband, accepts her situation, blaming himself for exposing her to undue temptation. From the brief synopsis above, one is inclined to the relevance of the story of Grace Akpan's *Spider Web* as apt for the illustration of the Psychoanalytic Theory.

2.2 Textual Application of the Theory of Psychoanalysis in Grace Akpan's *Spider Web*

One would want to ask the question: Is Grace Akpan's *Spider Web* a novel for the explication of the theory of psychoanalysis? By the textual unfolding of the story of the novel, it is possible to say yes. The issues raised in the novel touch seriously on the pedestal of psychoanalytic theory. The tenets of the psychoanalytic theory as shown earlier in the discussion of this paper are to be referenced. The basic principle of this theory is that human beings have to repress certain drives, desires and pleasures, especially those relating to sexuality in order to fit into social relations.

In Grace Akpan's *Spider Web*, these expectations are violated in the character of Father Tobias. A Catholic priest is, in an ideal situation or context, expected to be wholly spiritual. Things of the flesh are highly detested. Thus, such a priest must be seen to be opposed to carnality. A novel, such as this one under examination, that depicts the irresistibility of sexual drives on the part of a principal character like Father Tobias is indeed, a novel for psychoanalytic theory.

As the novel opens up for reading, we see the image of a young, tender girl by name Uduak. She is the heroine of the text. Though naïve, she is portrayed as very beautiful.

Her modestly designed calico frock did nothing to conceal her beauty and Father Tobias felt that he was gazing at a masterpiece by a Master Artist. Uduak spun round and caught sight of the priest. His long white gown and long hair gave Uduak the impression that

Christ himself had appeared to as he had appeared to Mary Magdalene after resurrection (3).

The reader is exposed to the sex drives of Father Tobias through the authorial subconscious mind. We immediately see the manifestation of id, the dragnet of the spider's web to which escape route seems impossible. Uduak has come to the convent in order to complete her training as a mid wife. To the chagrin of the catholic priest in charge of the convent, Uduak is uneducated. Her knowledge of English Language could best be imagined than described.

‘Bress me, Father...’ Father Tobias could barely make out the rest of the familiar plea. The voice was that of an illiterate native female who could not pronounce the unfamiliar English words. It was obvious that she had learnt the words by rote just for the confession. It was just as obvious that she had no idea what she was saying. Yet she tried to put some character and emphasis on the words and, in the process, used all the wrong inflections (1).

At birth, Uduak got betrothed to Nkereuwem who was a village carpenter and had completed his apprenticeship not too long before with a carpenter in the Catholic Mission at Calabar. He was a prime catch, the most eligible bachelor in the village, and Uduak was the envy of her whole age group (13).

The fate that befell Uduak in calabar was seen ahead of time by the mother. Thus, we read:

On the morning of her departure her mother wept so inconsolably that Uduak almost changed her mind about the whole trip. It was as if Ima had some premonition that in spite of all the advantages and benefits listed for her, something would go wrong (20).

The angelic nature of Uduak becomes the bane of her existence in calabar. Not only was she an envy among the sisters in the convent, she was particularly, the tempting figure as long as Father Tobias lives and works in the convent.

2.3 The Interplay of the Working of Human Psyche

In the text *Personality Theories; Basic Assumptions, Research and Applications*, Hjelle and Zielgler explained the id as conceived by Sigmund Freud to be “raw, animalistic, chaotic, knows no laws, obeys no rules and remains basic to the individual throughout life” (88). The id is that component of the human psyche that houses our secret desires, our darkest wishes and our most intense fears. On page thirty nine of the text, we see Father Tobias suffering under the weight of carnality occasioned by the id drives in him. “He tried to concentrate on the sacred mysteries, but all he could see was Uduak’s face, even more beautiful in its distress. He tried to transpose on the face the features of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was useless” (39).

As a Catholic priest, one expects that the control of the superego which is the morality principle should have grip on him. Each time such thought comes up in him, the obtrusive id rears up and dominates his better sense of reasoning. For instance, the quotation below attests

to this fact:

The teachings of the church on carnal desires were unequivocal, but he admitted to himself that he now was experiencing those desires first hand, he was not convinced that they felt so beautiful could be sinful and wrong (41).

As a matter of fact, the 'ego' in the context of the novel fails to regulate the excesses of the id, a function which is its primary assignment. In the words of the psychologists, Feist and Feist, "the ego must repress any socially in appropriate emotions, relying on defense mechanisms to protect it from angst" (29). If we imagine that Father Tobias takes certain religious vows before his engagement as a Catholic priest, then we will begin to wonder what has become of him. Is it just the sexual feelings? Or is it the extraordinary beauty of Uduak, whose physical appearance he could not get out of his mind? Had he not taken the vows because he believed that Christ himself had chosen him to serve him and humanity? These are questions that bother on the personality of Father Tobias via-a-vis, his Catholic faith. Activities in the convent tilt towards the final fall of Father Tobias. Sister Marie Thérèse and Collete could not prevail on Uduak who is already heading towards being trapped by the priest's psychosexual desires. Collete, who had a bitter experience with Father O'Reilly in Ireland years gone by ought to have cautioned Uduak on the dangers of being too close to a Father. Collete was raped by Father O'Reilly at Saint Anne's Convent. She became disillusioned and ever since, had remained cautious of who a Father really is. Uduak returned from the village where she has gone to fulfill her marriage ceremonies. Sister Marie Thérèse informs her of Father Tobias's request. Uduak now had to work in the Orphanage. This request has an ulterior motive. It comes from Father Tobias with hidden agenda, the author states it in this way:

I have been wondering if you could find the time to help in the Orphanage on some weekends. I understand from sister that you are very good with children and used to help in the village (154).

All that Father Tobias needs in the circumstance is a situation where he can have free access to Uduak in a solitary environment. Working in this unit where children are, promises to give him that kind of opportunity. But again, he was dominated by a lot of repressed feelings. The author reveals his crowded thoughts when he writes that: "He was taking shameless advantage of his position as a priest to do all that he felt compelled by a force he could not control" (155). Here again, we notice the manifestation of id psyche as being obtrusive. The 'ego' in him makes it possible for him to realize how as a father, he had despised and condemned those who demonstrated acts of carnality as priests. This is the rational, logical working part of the mind, the human psyche known as the ego.

As a Catholic priest, on one hand and as a human being on the other, Father Tobias is fragmented. We are inclined to believe Jacques Lacan who holds the view that: "a fully integrated and psychologically whole person does not exist and that we must all accept fragmentation" (Bressler 135). When the human side of Father Tobias dominates his thinking and reasoning, he becomes extremely human with surging human frailties. This can be seen in yet another creation by the author where he writes that:

He found himself kissing away Uduak's tears, and then he was kissing her on the mouth. For the first few

seconds, Uduak was in shock then she came to her senses and started to struggle (160).

This human side of Father Tobias develops to a crescendo that he could no longer control. He needs Uduak sexually. He has forgotten in a matter of seconds that Uduak is married. He has also forgotten his Celibate vows. He has indeed put aside what the society prescribes as morally just. His id psyche is portrayed as too weighty and knows no bounds. Bressler again, gives us an apt description of the working of the id by saying: “unchecked by any controlling will, the id operates on impulse, wanting immediate satisfaction for all its instinctual desires” (123).

Between Father Tobias and Uduak, there could have been no nonsense. Uduak sees Father Tobias as God or Christ. She could not believe that the priest would think of her in the sexual sense of the word. Moreso, she has just concluded her traditional marriage rites and her virginity is tied to Nkereuwem her husband who should be the one to open it up. But in the moment of her lingering thoughts, the unimaginable happens. The author captures Father Tobias’s moment of craziness by saying:

It was only as the priest pushed her on to the worktable and eased up her clothes, mumbling incoherently that Uduak realized that his acts were not at all godly. She started to fight, but it was as if he had become a different being. His actions were dream like or nightmarish as if he was possessed. Uduak was amazed at his strength. She was not a weak girl, and fear and anger made her stronger, but her struggles and fight had no effect on the man who pinned her down with his legs as he proceeded to rape her (160).

As soon as the propelling force of the id was satisfied in the Father, the ego, which is the reality principle, begins to dawn on him. He realizes himself too late. The weight of his action equally stares him in the face. To imagine how the priest felt, the author writes:

God, Uduak, what have I done? You must forgive me, but how can you? I have dishonoured you and your husband. I’ll give up my vow! I’ll marry you! Oh God, what shall I do! (161).

What a fall! Father Tobias has allowed himself to be overrun by the instinctual id drive. He is neither to be located in Northrop Freye’s Romance phase of the monomyth nor in the Anti-romance phase where stories of bondage, frustration, fear and imprisonment are told. He is certainly to be linked with the tragic phase of the monomyth which records our fall from the romance phase, from happiness and freedom to disaster.

2.4 Implication of the fall of Father Tobias on Catholic Faith

Before now, the call to serve as a Catholic priest was one of dignity. The myth of that career found expression in holiness. As a priest or a nun, the issue of sexuality is an aberration. That position of the Catholic faith made the priest or the nun in its service to be revered and treated with deference. However, with the turn of events in the 20th and 21st centuries, the hitherto sacred career turns out to be one that is now treated with ignominy. Carnality becomes the

corner stone of the world of the priests and nuns. The citation below speaks volume:

Cases of child sexual abuse by Catholic priests, nuns and members of religious orders and subsequent cover-ups, in the 20th and 21st centuries have led to numerous allegations, investigations, trials and convictions (Stephens, Religion and Ethics 2011).

Be that as it may, the hierarchies of the Catholic Church have argued against the worldwide media coverage of the sexuality of the Catholic priests and nuns. They alleged that such abuse also takes place in other religions and institutions (Vatican, “sex abuse rife in other religions,” 2009). Countries such as Ireland, Canada, Australia and the United States have been adjudged as areas where this sex abuse has been prevalent. Nevertheless, from 2001 to 2010, when the ‘Holy See’, which is the central governing body of the Catholic Church, got disturbed, about 3,000 priests were found in the trap of sex abuse (Lewis, 2010). The paper considers the implication of such sexual harassment by Catholic priests as a reversal of the tenets of the church. By extension, it speaks of the misplaced values of the orthodox churches on issues concerning morality and portends danger for the Christian faith.

2.5 Conclusion

What is morally just is the judgment of one’s mind. The interplay of the components of the human psyche plays out themselves in the actions of every man. The ability to strike a balance makes for who a person really is. Father Tobias falls out of faith because his personality as perceived is tilted towards immediate gratification of his desires, in this case, sexual desire. His disillusionment is central to the fact that the id component of the human psyche in him dominates far and above the reality and the morality principles of the ego and superego. Thus, Father Tobias in the context of Grace Akpan’s novel – *Spider Web* offers a good example of a psychological character whose unconscious sexual drive is bereft of defence mechanisms.

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