The Elements Of Georg Simmel's Theory "The Stranger" in Wole Soyinka’s Play "The Strong Breed"

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Abstract

The Strong Breed, is a drama by Wole Soyinka, depicts the traditional customs of African tribes which their superstitious beliefs imposed on their life. ‘‘The play is about ritual and superstitious believes which were in Africa society. The theme of this play focuses on scapegoat of societies which to sacrifice one of their own to bring purification for the society. The play begins with the scene which Sunma urges Eman to leave the village before the evening. Since the village had an annual the New Year purification rite; in order to, the wrong doings of the villagers are carried on the carrier, a stranger, to redeem of their sins. Because they believed that the community gains the spiritual strength after the scapegoat of one strange person’’ (www.answer.com). The play moves on Ifada one of the marginal characters, when the elder chooses him, but he rejected to become the carrier. The one is a girl, who was sick, so she separated from the other children because of her sickness that is why she decided to scarify her doll as the carrier. Eman is the main character who was the responsible for carrying the tribe’s belief as a carrier. Regarding to Simmel’s idea this paper attempts to show the concept of the stranger and how the theory of the stranger will apply on the protagonist. Upon Simmel’s view stranger is a person or a group which comes today and remains for tomorrow. In fact, the stranger is a concept which by some characteristics in the community obtains the identity. Although from the beginning he / she does not belong to the group of society, after some actions and interactions, become the part of the new society. To Simmel, the stranger is an objective (production) of the society and not the subjective part. Eman is a person who carry the Simmel’s theory willingly sacrificed himself to remove the stranger label from himself. Although he was the teacher of the village, he does not have an identity for the people who live in the village except the concept of the stranger. He believed that he never become the subjective part of that society unless he absorbs himself in the heart of the community. As a result, this feature leads him to remove the cover of the stranger from himself. Indeed, Eman, the main character of The Strong Breed demonstrates the theory of the stranger by Simmel.

Keywords: Stranger, society, action, interaction, conflict, sacrifice.
Introduction:

Scrutinizing the play, the research has found the stranger’s theory by Georg Simmel which classifies in the interactional structure of the social conflict category. The dictionary definition for conflict is that a struggle between the different groups of people in order to one side gains power from opposing group, but to some thinkers has the different conception. According to Hegel, “any existing concept (thesis) always has an opposing concept (antithesis).” These two ideas will come into conflict in any time in the minds of thinking individual persons, resulting in a third option-synthesis which is the root of the conflict, that creates the motion of life.

To Marx, who follow this idea (the father of conflict theory), conflict is a produce of social living, and this concept is an inseparable part of society. He believed each class society by the conflict with opposed group finds the meaning. For Marx, “a class of society when to exist which becomes aware of their relation in contrast with another group”. Although he believed to dialectical thinking, his idea differs from Simmel, for him, the dialectic should lead to interest in the conflict among the different of the social level because by the conflict each society finds the real meaning. To him, “each social system consists of two parts: owner and workers, so both of two sides tries to gain advantages from their relationships, which are causes the competition, in fact, this is the game of rising and fall, that one side is winner and another side is looser, but both of the two sides need to this connections, because the aim of this connection leads to revolution” (Marx and Marxism, p.35-36).

Regarding this point, Emile Durkheim had the scientific view to each society, but he believed each society obtains unification by the interaction between the members of the group of the society. The mass interaction between the members depicts the members have a common idea and share their idea, which leads them to unification. The unification between the members of the group shows the group stand in the high degree of agreement; because his view is on to the point, by the society people reach to the real identity, and this aim never gains by the interaction with others.

George Herbert Mead is another thinker, who his idea is close to Simmel, to him, the interactions in each society are based on the common benefits, because he agrees with this idea as Simmel said, that the conflict and the interaction in each society have relationship to each other, and there is no society without these conceptions. Each civilized society consists of the collection of interactions and conflicts between the members of the social groups.

Lewis Coser one of the new conflict theorist, who believed to macroscopic conflict theory. To him, “each society based on action, interaction, and relationship. He compares each society as the iron cage which Simmle believed to this conception. This conception inducts that everyone limited in this world and should adopt himself or herself with new situation” (sociological theory, p.164). Regarding this, Simmel has a positive view of the conflict and known as a microsociologist which is the significant role in the development of a small group of society (159).

Simmel has an essential view of the conflict because he believes conflict is a necessary part of each society. To Simmel the best society is not without the conflict, but in fact, the best society is consist of the collection of the conflict which has the role of interaction. To him, in each society individuality does not mean and this concept is not giving the meaning unless by some interactions and conflicts with others, then Society can be defined as a number of people...
connection by interaction with others (classical sociological theory, p.1). Moreover, he believes that the conflict in each society will cause the balance.

He considers the conflicts are the positive item to strength people from parts of life. To him, it is the facility to reach unification, and life is found in the unity. The conflicts prepare people for other parts of the life to gain knowledge and powers; in order to, how to show their reactions to the unexpected situation. Simmel believes in, the conflicts create the balance between the different parts of the society to gain evolution and unified by another part of the society, because some of them are the different types which are classified in the interactional structure group for this purpose to him, there are some significant concepts: miser, spendthrift, stranger, and adventure which the stranger and individuality (simmel often integrates the different characteristic into a border totality) are the conceptions which this research focusing on this issue. By these items he completed the feature of the society; each of these is the production of others interaction. For example, the stranger is the production of the social interaction and creates because of the other demands, so because of his label should play his role correctly. In the one way, the stranger is a person without any identification and characteristic for others.

He or she is an unknown Person in the society because nobody knows any information about him or her to recognize. “The stranger, who is neither too close nor too far. If he or she were too close, he would no longer be a stranger, but if he were too far, he would stop to have any contact with the group. The interaction that the stranger engages in with the group members involves a combination of closeness and distance. The strange distance of the stranger from the group allows him to have a series of unusual interaction patterns with the members. For example, the stranger can be more objective in his relationships with the group members. Because he is the stranger, other group members feel more comfortable expressing confidence to him. In these and other ways, so the stranger becomes the organic member of the group” (169).

“Although there is the social distance between the stranger and the host, Simmel also identifies commonalities between them. Stranger are close – both physically and in an abstract sense–because, we share with them some common human characteristics. For example, a stranger may share with the host a common national identity, similar social and occupational identity or a common human nature. These universal features, claims Simmel, extend beyond ourselves and connect us only because they connect a great many people” (1999, p.187).

To Simmel, a stranger is an unknown person which in the social group gains identity and this conception never take meaning except for the action and interaction opposed to others. Although from the beginning nothing defines for him or her and has the just physical relationship (because not belong to the new area), he or she gains the real definition in the heart of the society. The stranger tries to overcome the situation because he is the only reason which all people in the community have the common idea about him.

**The Stranger's Individuality**

Individuality is a value that causes the differences between the person, and object from others. The simmelian stranger changed the meaning of individuality, which had the definition for Romantic era because his identity and individuality gain the meaning opposed the others.
Simmel depicts individuality has meant by an interaction between the different groups of people because he believed in each society all the parts related to each other and individuality absorbs in the community. Individuality has the same meaning as an identity because both of them taken meaning by the reaction with other people. For this reason, Simmel had the positive view to the conflict. Because he believed by the conflicts people in each society have the relationship with each other. Therefore, the conflicts are necessary parts of their society, because of each individuality gains meaning only with action and interaction with opposed to another group of the society, which by the conflicts they will get individuality.

Simmel depicts the stranger is a concept which taken from the heart of the conflict. To him, the stranger’s behaviors to contrast with other people consist of some actions and interactions. Although all the time the stranger because of the sense of strangeness is separated from the society, for finding the real identity in the heart of the society tries to absorb himself/herself with the community. In fact, he / she knows never gains the identity and individuality unless by unification in the society. Simmel believed that” the stranger presents the unity, as it were. He comes today and stays tomorrow. To him, the stranger is the active wanderer. Although he has not freedom of doing anything, he is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries “(Simmel 402). He compares the stranger as a trader, who is in every time, should offer his products which are outside the group, so this place of the stranger helps him to stay in the group for more self-introduction. However, the stranger in the eye of other is not an owner, because he not belong of soil, but he tries to join the community to reach to unification (405).

The stranger is set apart from a particular in –group by his different ideas and attributes: the time and place of origin, not belonging to the group socially (Heinke 1). ” When the stranger arrives at the new place, he is outside of the system of social relationship and poses a set of problem for the existing order. Since the society believed he is not belonging to the system, so they wanted the stranger changed himself to absorb to the society “(Mc Lemore, 87). The stranger believes he never gains his identity and individuality in the new society unless joins to the new group, and accepts their idea and belief.

Textual Analyzing

Eman, a protagonist, a teacher, who live in a small village with his beloved Sunma. She was the headman tribe’s daughter. In the village, which they lived the people believed for arriving at every New Year one strong person should be sacrificed to purify the community for the future. They believed that one strong person should scarify and carry the people’s guilt. Jaguna, headman’s tribe, and his attendants search to find strong breed, so they found Ifada. Since he was an idiot boy, so they believed he was too strong which deeply influences on his mind. Although they had been chosen him, Ifada with fear and trembling rejected to carry as “carrier “, because he had been chosen unwillingly, but Eman, a person who labeled the stranger by the villagers, because he was not the member of the village, accepted to carry the guilt as a “carrier “instead of Ifada.

Eman, Sunma, Ifada, a girl are four characters in this drama which investigate regarding about the influences of the stranger, but only one of them carry the idea of the stranger by Simmel. The strong breed depicts Eman’s struggled with himself, his beloved, Sunma, and with the community which labeled him as the stranger. From the beginning of the drama, Sunma had
struggled with Eman and urges him to leave the village before the evening because she believed Eman is one the option for the people’s village to carry the guilt as the carrier. The villagers had annual New Year purification rite in which the wrong doings of the villagers carry on the carrier, a stranger person so that the community reach to the salvation of its sins for arriving in the New Year.

Sunma: You will have to make up your mind soon, Eman. The lorry leaves very shortly.
Sunma: Eman, are we going or aren’t we? You will leave it till too late.
Eman: There is still – if you want to go.
Sunma: If I want to go … and you? (1962, p.1274)

In fact, Eman, decided to stay in the village and take on the role of the scapegoat. Eman eventually recognizes that it is better to choose his destiny and become the part of the society rather than to live with the label of the stranger, objective, for a long time. He believes, that he never gains his real identity and never reach to unity unless in the heart of the society. Because he knew the people in the village dominated by one idea (carrier), which covered their thought and feeling.

According to Simmel,” the stranger presents the unity, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, he or she is the common reason for others to speaking, because he believed to dialectical thinking that focuses on social relations especially interaction(association). To Simmel, “people possess a doubly transcendent ability. First, because of their restless, creative capacities (more –life), people are able to transcend themselves. Second, this transcendent, creative ability makes it possible for people to constantly produce sets of the object that transcend them” (sociological theory, p. 164).

The stranger rather as the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his place in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact he has not belonged to it from the beginning that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself ” (Simmel, p.402).” Because he is not bound by roots to particular constituents and partisan disposition of the group, he confronts all of these with a distinctly objective, attitude that does not signify mere detachment and non-participation but is a distinct structure composed of remoteness and nearness, indifference and involvement “(Adam and Sydie 216).

The conception of the stranger which proposed by Simmel is seen in Eman personality. He willingly accepts to scarify instead of Ifada because of reach to unity with society. As the stranger, he is part of the objective culture (the things that people produce), so he tried to remove the cover of objectivity and becomes subjective part of the society and gains the capacity and ability of the character to produce, absorb and control the element of objectivity in the conception of the stranger.

He knew that the people who live in the Yoruba (the village) dominated by one idea (the carrier) with respect to this idea, he decided becomes the part of the mass idea of the community, and becomes the carrier as the subjective issue in that village. Since his position in the group is determined as the stranger, and cannot stem from the group; so he tried to become part of the community, and plays his role in the best way; in order to, gain individuality. Hence, Sunma
urges him to leave the village, Yoruba, he does not accept to leave. He remains there to reach the proper position by his label.

Eman:” I cannot listen when you talk like that.
Sunma: I swear to you, I do not mind what happens afterward. But you must help me tear myself away from here. I can no longer do it by myself …It is only a little thing. And we have worked so hard this past year …surely we can go away for a week…even a few days would be enough.
Eman: I have told you, Sunma…
Sunma: Two days, Eman .only two days.
Eman: But I tell you I have no wish to go.
Sunma: Are you so afraid then?
Eman: Me? Afraid of what?
Sunma: you think you will not want to come back.
Eman: You cannot dare me that way.
Sunma: Then why won’t you leave here, even for an hour? If you are so sure that your life is settling here, why are you afraid to do this thing for me? What is so wrong that you will not go into the next town for a day or two?
Eman: I don’t want to. I do not have to persuade you or myself about anything. I simply have no desire to go away.
Sunma: You are afraid .You accuse me of losing my sense of mission, but you are afraid to put yourself to the test.
Eman: You are wrong, Sunma, I have no sense of mission .But I have found peace here and I am content with that” (1962, p.1276).

The point which is clear in Eman’s life is that he not belongs to the village. Regarding this idea, Eman was the stranger in that village, and because of his label, he was the common reason for the villager to speak. Although he lived there for twelve years as their teacher, for the villagers was the stranger. Since he had the physical relationship with the people, but in fact, he not belongs to their soil (Not only he was the combination of nearness and remoteness, but also he was the objective of that society). Eman was the stranger and objective for people in the village, so other group members feel more comfortable to express their feeling and idea to him like the girl when she express her idea to Eman.

Girl: is the teacher in?
Eman: (smiling): no
Girl: where is he going?
Eman: I do not really know .Shall I ask?
Girl: yes, do.
Eman: Sunman, a girl outside wants to know…
Eman: oh, there is no one at home who can tell me
Girl: why are you not in?
Eman: I do not really know .Maybe I went somewhere.
Girl: all right. I will wait until you get back.
Eman: so you are all ready for the New Year.
Girl: I am not going to the festival.
Eman: then why have you got that?
Girl: do you mean my carrier? I am unwell you know.
My mother says it will take away my sickness with the old year
Eman: won’t you share the carrier with your playmates?
Girl: oh, no. do not know I play alone? The other children won’t come near me .Their mothers would beat them.

Conclusion
Textual analysis has explored the concept of Simmelian stranger, a person who comes today and remains for tomorrow. He is the subjective and the objective person that the definition of his identity is in the interaction with others. Since he is the creature (objective) of the society's belief, so he tried to do his duty as the people of the new place want .Hence, he defined in the form of the stranger; in fact, he is dominated in the form of the society, that for the people he is always on the outside and inside .The stranger is a symbol of the new world which is unknown to others; he is the remoteness and closeness .Although the stranger has the physical relationship with the new people in the new place, in their spiritual subject matters and their idea differ from them. In the other word, geometric distance is the creator of strangeness. Simmelian stranger tries to find the similarities between himself and the community in order to find the new way for the connection with others because he tried to find his true individuality to the strange place. The individuality of the stranger by Simmel differs from the individuality of the romantic era because this identity obtains the meaning in the heart of the society, not in solitude.

Eman, the protagonist and the stranger who lives in Yoruba for twelve years, lived outside of his hometown. Although he settled down in the village which he was the teacher there, in fact, everybody knows him as the stranger .Because he did not belong to their soil. The villagers believed in order to remove guilt from the community the stranger and stronger person should be sacrificed to save the society. However, Eman came from another place, but during the days which the story occurred his flashbacks to his childhood and remembered his father, how sacrificed himself willingly because of his belief. All these conditions put him on the stage of the carrier in the village that dominated by the idea of scapegoat, so he decided to sacrifices himself as the carrier because of the common idea to becomes part of the society as simmel argues the stranger by the interaction in the society reach to unity.
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