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Shifting Identities and Fragmented Subjectivities in Majok Tulba's *Beneath the Darkening Sky* and Emmanuel Dongala's *Johnny Mad Dog*

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This paper examines the shifting identities of child characters and their fragmented subjectivities as represented in Majok Tulba's *Beneath the Darkening Sky* and Emmanuel Dongala's *Johnny Mad Dog*. The paper's central premise is to examine how the two authors employ character mutation to construct shifting identities in the two texts. The paper employs the tenets of Carl Jung, which include the archetypes (shadow, animus, and persona) and forms of rebirth. Particularly subjective transformation (diminution of personality, identification with a group, and natural transformation). Sigmund Freud's tripartite psyche (id, ego, and superego) is used to shed light on character mutation and the fragmented subjectivities of the child characters. This paper argues that civil war compels the child characters to behave barbarically, adapt to their new environment and automatically understand their roles while coping with war.

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INTRODUCTION

The paper argues that child characters in the two texts Majok Tulba's *Beneath the Darkening Sky*

and Emmanuel Dongala's *Johnny Mad Dog*, undergo shifting identities to find freedom, survival, and power. It premises that child

characters transform the texts due to the pressure of witnessing and being forced into heinous acts. It also examines how child characters change by developing new social and emotional identities since the civil war forced them to forget their childhoods. These changes occur in both texts to different child characters with diverse intensities.

CHARACTER MUTATION AND FRAGMENTED SUBJECTIVITIES

War experience, as documented in fiction, affects children in horrible ways that transform their lives. As a way of coping with traumatic war events, child characters undergo mutation, resulting in shifting identities as reflected by their acquisition of new names. The paper argues that name-changing is a form of altering identity. War names express the battle between diverse social groups and entities. The use of war names is to hide and to make new identities. This section examines the processes of creating identities using new names in *Beneath the Darkening Sky* and *Johnny Mad Dog*. In this paper, we explore the characters Obinna, Johnny and Laokole to examine children's experiences in war trauma and how it leads to shifting identities.

Obinna as 'Baboon's Ass'

In *Beneath the Darkening Sky's* opening pages, the villagers refer to the recruits as 'animals.' They once inhabited the same villages, but the villagers view child soldiers with new identities since they are no longer as regular children. As a recruit, Obinna observes other recruits and says, "they are our size, but they have grandfather eyes" (Tulba, 2013, 37). Tulba uses such words to ensure that his narrator indicates how other children seem to change, and it is visible through their eyes, as they seem old because their childhood is gone.

After his recruitment, Obinna narrates how the captain mistreats him. The captain gives Obinna a new identity by naming him 'Baboon's Ass'. The captain starts owning him. In "The Many Faces of Nicknames," Theodore Holland argues that nicknames are frequently obtained from occupations, roles, behaviour, and physical

attributes. They need a familiarity with situationally exact customs only a participant in a certain group can possess (2013,260). The captain names Obinna according to his weak behaviour. The new name reflects hate and disapproval. In slang, calling someone a 'baboon or monkey ass' refers to him as a fool. Obinna is new and weak, and the captain ensures that everybody in the camp knows the new nickname to humiliate him enough to change his behaviour to fit his new environment.

Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery* notes that victims of captivity are regularly given new names to indicate the eradication of their former identity and their compliance with the new command (Herman 1997, 100). Following Herman's thoughts, Obinna can no longer control his life because he is in a new territory and must obey the orders. The captain thinks he owns the recruits because they are powerless and confused. In another incident, the captain orders Obinna's punishment for vomiting on his shirt. The captain tells him, "That scrawny little ass you sit on now belongs to me, and every twig bone of yours is mine to command. Do you understand? You are now my own personal private property" (Tulba, 2013, 85). The captain creates a new identity for Obinna and other child soldiers, and he points out that he decides when they can be hungry, thirsty, piss, or feel pain. The captain rips their former identities from them.

Johnny as 'Litua Liwa' and 'Matiti Mabe'

In *Johnny Mad Dog*, Johnny wants to become a Lieutenant colonel. Johnny's fear of being a failure makes him change his name multiple times. The first nickname is 'Lutua Liwa' which means 'kill death' or 'cheat death. Johnny later despises the name despite choosing it with much scrutiny. Johnny learns that there is no way he can escape death and his primary goal is to show that he is brave and that because he needs to be a leader, that name would only show fear. He decides to look for another nickname. Unlike Obinna, who the captain names, Johnny names himself, indicating extensive mutation. He is not

a fresh recruit like Obinna. He is already familiar with the civil war, and his main drive is power.

Johnny even becomes jealous of giving Giap a new name and hates him because of the belief that Giap does not deserve respect. Johnny wants everyone to respect him since he believes he is the group's only intellect. He says, "I had my brains, and I wanted everybody to know this. Maybe someday the others would choose me as a leader" (Dongala, 2005,17). In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud notes that if something conveys desire, the id will struggle to obtain it irrespective of how brief it will be (1960, 23). Johnny's id is at work as he struggles to prove his intellectuality. Johnny's id is sometimes at war with the superego. The superego occasionally comes to his rescue because Johnny thinks of the consequences before acting. General Giap calls him 'Turf,' which angers Johnny because he now identifies as 'Matiti Mabe' (poison weed), "I was boiling with rage. I thought of killing Giap...But no, I kept my cool (Dongala,2005,22). Johnny declines 'Turf' because it is a demeaning nickname and does not mirror his self-image. He believes he controls his actions, so he likes his new nickname 'Matiti Mabe.'

Character Mutation and Fragmented Subjectivities

In "The Changing Identity of Child Soldiers," Anouk Soomers asserts that child soldiers regularly wear military uniforms and possess weapons to belong to a group. Their identity becomes enhanced as they transition from ordinary children to influential soldiers (2014,4). Soomers' argument helps us understand why these child characters start changing as soon as they receive the weapons. It is because it gives them the power to do anything. They draw most of their energy from the gun because they feel untouchable with it.

In *Beneath the Darkening Sky*, Obinna observes that the kids sit together and cry because they want to go home. They do not want to be child soldiers because they are scared. Obinna narrates that the young soldiers he refers to as 'kids' are given

uniforms, guns, or sticks. Some receive dummy guns because they are just children who have not trained well. Obinna says the kids "jump up and down and run onto the football field, shouting calling at the other children they know. Perhaps they are friends... We're like young goats coming out of a pen" (Tulba,2013,53). Obinna describes how these child characters take the slightest opportunity to be playful, just like children in an everyday setting. They are still holding on to their childhood. Obinna separates from his brother and clings to him, but he mercilessly receives a beating. He says, "I'm crying. The monsters didn't beat it out of me. Now I *want* to cry. I want them to see that they are kicking a child" (Tulba 2013, 54). Obinna believes his assailants are wrong for beating him because he is just a child. He still does not understand why they are recruiting children of his age.

Obinna also narrates about the revolution songs and how they terrify him because he feels guilty that he sings them. His guilt makes him sing songs from Sunday school service back in the village, and he feels 'cleansed' afterward. He sings, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the bible tells me so" (Tulba,2013,101). In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud postulates, "The tension between the demands of conscience and the actual performances of the ego is experienced as a sense of guilt. Social feelings rest on identifications with other people, based on having the same ego ideal" (1960, 33). Obinna admits that he tries to resist these songs about killing and raping, but they keep replaying in his mind, and constant singing makes it hard to forget.

In *Johnny Mad Dog*, Johnny has insufficient moral conduct because his id changes. His id prevails because it constantly seeks power. Johnny's illusions originate from his id, such as killing, raping, harassment, and thirst for leadership. When Giap appoints him the leader of the commando unit three, Johnny's attitude finally changes because he suddenly stops hating Giap. Johnny starts praising him, "He was stupendous, Giap—a terrific judge of men! He knew what you were worth and could do...with a glance. He had immediately understood that if anyone was a horn

leader, it was me. Yeah, me!” (Dongala,2005,34). Freud notes that the id holds the essential human passions (1960,19). Since the id works to satisfy the basic impulses of human beings, Johnny wishes to fulfill his desire to be a leader. His wish to kill Giap fades. After all, his role as a group leader makes him look up to Giap because he loves power and approval. Johnny even says that he feels taller after becoming a leader. These are thoughts of a child and are slight hints that Johnny is a child despite his attempts to appear as a strong soldier.

Jung in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* notes that while identifying with a group, “you must have continual recourse to mass intoxication to consolidate the experience and your belief in it. The mass is swayed by participation mystique, which is nothing but an unconscious identity” (1980, 226). Their friendship includes adventures of killing civilians and raping girls and women, giving them an unconscious identity that makes them believe they must stick together. Their actions are contradictory because Johnny says that people who kill have no heart, yet he does the same. Johnny’s behaviour shows that he is still a child who does not want to confront his truth as a ferocious person. Therefore, while Johnny’s actions are dreadful, Dongala displays the value of friendship and vulnerability he strives to hide in certain situations.

In *Beneath the Darkening Sky*, Obinna, unlike Parasite, has not fully mutated. Parasite kills a girl in cold blood, and Obinna worries about his evil peer. Parasite’s behaviour matches his actions. He is dependent on his host, the commander. He tells Obinna to show no mercy. After shooting a girl, he cuts off her braids with a knife and takes them as trophies. He then tells Obinna, “I see you getting all cuddly out here again, I’ll put a bullet in you” (Tulba,2013,167). Tulba uses Parasite’s character to show that conflict can change child soldiers to be ruthless and display the role he plays in making Obinna mutate by constantly mocking him. For instance, Obinna receives instructions to kill, but guilt overcomes him since he has not

killed anyone yet. He finds a dead mother with her baby still alive and lets the baby live. At this point, he still has his sense of humanity. His two personalities conflict, and he is not sure where to stand. The commander tells him that he would like to see him murder someone and gives him the name ‘my cub,’ which means that he trains him as his child and wants to see him act more aggressively. Obinna’s superego keeps pushing him away from doing the heinous acts, but the id’s urges supersede the guilt.

Obinna eventually listens to all voices he has been ignoring and makes his first kill. He kills a man but, the event traumatizes him because he narrates that he goes blank, hears a gunshot, opens his eyes and, sees a man with his skull wide open. Obinna recounts as if someone else did the shooting, “a hole where it shouldn’t be. A body where there should be a man. My hands tremble, but the gun is so heavy it barely moves. My loose grip, slick with sweat, rattles against it. A chant of revolution rises up” (Tulba,2013,171). Jung notes, “Thus identification with the group is a simple and easy path to follow, but the group experience goes no deeper than the level of one’s own mind in that state” (1980, 226). Under Jungian lenses, Obinna’s confusion and trauma are because it is his first kill. Parasite and the other boys celebrate him because of his initiation into being a murderer. It is easy for Obinna to follow the group’s path and kill, but it weighs down on him because it affects him as an individual after the group’s encouragement. The group initiates Obinna into a killer, but is not happy with his action, and his two identities are conflicting.

In *Johnny Mad Dog*, the female protagonist develops character mutation and fragmented subjectivity. She also brings out Johnny’s vulnerable side. For instance, the civil war forces Laokole to grow up. She forgets her childhood life because she suddenly takes responsibility for caring for her little brother and mother, who is crippled. Laokole’s mother is sad because she hates seeing her children undertake the roles she once played. Laokole narrates, “No, I couldn’t cry—Fofu mustn’t see me crying. At sixteen, a

girl is already a woman. I was now the mother of my mother, and the mother of my brother. I had to go on” (Dongala,2005,37). Laokole must mutate to fit into her current situation. She declines to show emotion because that would make her childish. In “Identity and Name Changes,” Avner Falk in “argues that identity is a complex notion that is “often strongly determined by individual identifications, resolution of early crises of psychological development” (1975,651). Laokole’s initial traumatic incidents make her view the world differently. She refrains from thinking like a child. Laokole refuses to abandon her mother in several instances, and she points out that she prefers to die beside her. Laokole confidently notes that it comes a time when a daughter must become a mother to her mother.

As Laokole observes, Johnny and his peers harass a little boy. She wonders why they are so evil. Johnny kills the boy, eats a banana afterward with no remorse. Stud kicks the dead boy on the genitals, and Laokole shudders and says they have no heart. He wonders why Stud kicked the boy on the genitals, “He went back to the corpse of the little street rat and gave it a swift kick in the balls. Just a kick. The act was unexpected and made no sense” (Dongala,2005,41). Johnny has multiple identities because some of his peers’ behaviours shock him. Johnny thinks Stud’s action was unnecessary because he perhaps went too far.

Johnny is not as brave as he claims because as he and his team leave the spot, they come across a crowd and demand they stop. A man keeps running, and as they threaten him, he turns around, grabs Piston’s gun, and hits him with it. Johnny is shocked because, for the first time, a civilian has attacked back. The weapon loses power: “I felt my hands trembling with rage, or perhaps with retrospective fear” (Dongala,2005,56). In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud notes that the influence to kill drives individuals unconsciously...the sexual instincts which cause a person to seek satisfaction from elementary wants or desires, and death instincts are aggressive and operated by the ability to destroy (1960,40-41). Therefore, in Freudian observation, Johnny’s unconscious need to beat

the rival is due to the fear that the man would terminate him. Johnny is also a child who realizes he is not powerful without his weapon. This incident highlights his fear and some aspect of shame in their actions.

In *Beneath the Darkening Sky*, Obinna receives a gun he calls ‘Crazy Bitch,’ which excites him because he notes that the gun gives power. He also officially calls himself a soldier, something he has hesitated to do. Obinna also narrates that he is among the special soldiers, “I’m allowed to rest. I’ve killed, and so I’m one of them. I’ve become a man” (Tulba,2013,173). The commanders trick the child soldiers into believing they become powerful after heinous acts. Lotte Vermeij posits that armed groups influence children’s identity by developing them from children to child soldiers, which is done through socialization practices, roles, and positions they receive (2011,173). They are rewarded well and treated better. Most of them give in to the pressure of becoming people they had never dreamt of becoming in the past. Obinna has a fragmented subjectivity because he does not want to accept his new dark nature but enjoys the favours that come with power.

Often, Obinna has multiple identities conflicting with each other. He has become a vicious killer and rapist who wants to prove his worth. Then suddenly, he is merciful and full of guilt for his actions and that of his friends. For instance, he does not want to imagine the troops doing anything to Mouse. Obinna narrates, “I imagine the government troops raping Mouse. It doesn’t make much sense; I can’t picture it. Those men in their proper uniforms raping. It was dark” (Tulba,2013,179). Obinna knows such acts are dark, yet he and his friends do the same to girls when they attack a village. Obinna forgets about the thoughts he believes to be dark, starts laughing with Christmas, and claims, “we are just kids hiding in the jungle” (Tulba,2013,179). Obinna calls himself a kid because that is what he truly is, but in some instances, he identifies as a man because of his role as a child soldier. He grasps any chance that allows him to be a child again, even if it means hiding in the jungle, playing, and

having a moment of happiness that reminds him of his childhood. Obinna declares that he feels like he is in hell whenever he is in the presence of burning corpses. It indicates that it is hard to adjust to this kind of life.

The civil war makes Obinna unsure of his age. Initially, he struggles with counting the days he has been on the camp. Now he has trouble saying his exact age, “I’m not even sure how old I am anymore. Older than eleven and younger than sixteen. Years don’t matter out here, not in our world. We count age in kills. I’m older than I should be” (Tulba,2013,188). Here, Obinna indicates that he has killed many people, hence older. The child characters change their identity because they were treated like weapons of war. Obinna kills again. He shoots a man and claims that he was shooting in a general direction and was not aiming at him. The man does not die instantly. That is when Parasite asks him to finish the man. At this point, Obinna talks back and insults Parasite, something he has never done. The commander is very pleased with Obinna’s second kill because Obinna is officially ‘acting’ as a soldier.

Obinna mutates after every violent instance. The commander’s mission of changing Obinna is complete because Obinna says that they kill randomly to spread fear among the villagers, “we want everyone to know how tough and ruthless we are. We’re strong and brave, we kill unarmed civilians” (Tulba,2013,184). There is power in a group. Obinna feels powerful when he is on a mission with his group. Jung calls it “identification with a group,” whereby an individual identifies with a group and has a shared change experience” (1980, 225). When Obinna is alone, he starts reflecting on his life. For instance, he watches the kids they have kidnapped from their villages.

Jung asserts, “Thus identification with the group is a simple and easy path to follow, but the group experience goes no deeper than the level of one’s own mind in that state. It does work a change in you, but it does not last” (1980, 226). Obinna’s guilt conforms to Jung’s assertions because peer pressure does not last long since he experiences

guilt. Obinna’s new identity disgusts him. Deep down, he does not want to be part of it.

Obinna wonders what his parents would think of him, “no one will ever understand what I have done. They’ll never forgive me. Will God forgive me?” (Tulba,2013,189). Obinna seems sad because of the person he has become and not proud of his actions. As much as Obinna has conflicting emotions about his new identity, he still wants to maintain his status as the ‘People’s Fire.’ In *On Murder, Mourning, and Melancholia*, Freud posits that Melancholia suggests that when the superego has attained a hold on consciousness, the ego has no opposition but discloses its guilt and surrenders to the discipline (2005,52). Obinna’s behaviour is evidence that the superego has dominated his conscience. Overcome by the superego, the decency principle accountable for instigating guilt for breaking his usual conduct, Obinna admits his guilt by wondering if he will ever receive forgiveness.

Obinna loves the attention he receives from his new status. Power takes over since he has become a proud killer. However, all the raids and killings traumatize him despite his struggles to act brave. Obinna narrates, “So, I kill. The lessons take over, and I kill... Crazy Bitch kicks and bucks and barks in my hands, but I don’t hear her. I barely feel her. I just watch through another person’s eyes” (Tulba,2013,203). Using the Freudian argument on the sense of guilt, Obinna wants to be a ruthless killer the commander made and likes the praises he receives from his peers, but his actions make him sad, guilty, and traumatized. He shoots people but does not feel his gun while doing it. Obinna feels like he is in another world because he does not directly see the killing of people. This makes him an absent-minded killer due to trauma. He hates that the raids are endless and wishes that he could kill everyone, including the commander. Obinna’s greatest wish is to be free. It indicates that his superego is at work and how much his subjectivity is fragmented.

In *Johnny Mad Dog*, Dongala depicts Johnny as a ruthless killer; but in some cases, he has conflicting identities. For instance, Johnny sees

photos of mutilated people's bodies from his ethnic group. They had a machete and burn wounds, and Johnny narrates that they were unbearable, and he did not want to see them anymore. Their leader instructs them to avenge their people. Johnny admits that "we'd never had any problem with the Mayi-Dogos. Furthermore, among the young people our age, no one even knew who was a Mayi-Dogo and who wasn't". We'd never lived our lives in tribal terms. Besides, wasn't my current girl a Mayi-Dogo? I adored her" (Dongala,2005, 58). Johnny is surprised that they are being taught to hate each other. At first, he is against the notion because his girlfriend is from a rival ethnic group, but Johnny becomes attentive when a doctor speaks up and urges them to avenge their people. Johnny admits he likes to listen to people in power because he believes he is also a leader.

Rebecca Cech in "Advocacy literature Sans Frontières: African warscapes, international community, and popular narratives for emerging human rights norms" posits that the idea of traumatization aids as a device to recognize these young people as victims while asserting that they are also agents of destruction (2013,81). Johnny shows signs of trauma. Despite the atrocious acts, he finds the sight of dead bodies unbearable. Johnny's behaviour also finds an explanation in Jung's diminution of personality, where he explains that it decreases an individual's self-assurance and the spirit of initiative. It causes an upsurge in ego-centricity that restricts the mental prospect (Jung,1980, 214). Johnny always thinks he is an intellectual and would listen to someone of the same calibre. Johnny notes that he cannot hesitate to listen to his 'fellow' intellectuals since they are knowledgeable and cannot lie. Johnny says, "I realized that the Mayi-Dogos were our secular enemies and that we had to kill them. I applauded" (Dongala,2005,59). Jung also postulates that the diminution of personality may finally lead to the growth of a profoundly negative personality, which means that a distortion of the original character has ensued (1980,214). Johnny has a negative personality but, simultaneously, has a fragmented subjectivity because, after this

incident, he argues tribalism was terrible for the country and people should refrain from it, yet he highly encouraged it. He does not know where his views should stand.

Johnny believes they were practicing positive tribalism because they were not killing all Mayi-Dogos, but those who followed the current president. Johnny tries to convince himself that he is doing good and eliminating evil. In "Ethnicity, Class, and Civil war," David Siroky and Michael Hechter argue that "for an ethnic group to engage in collective action, its members must perceive themselves as having common interests and be able to mobilize" (2016, 97). The child soldiers have a common interest: to defeat their opposing tribe. The insinuation is that Johnny is not naturally atrocious. He and his peers have been led astray due to the organization, corrupt warlords, and politicians who control children for material achievement. There is no other social structure in which Johnny can assimilate himself. Therefore, he is swayed quickly, causing multiple personalities to conflict, just as Obinna does.

In *Beneath the Darkening Sky*, Priest's death breaks Obinna's heart because he is the only friend and advisor he has. Obinna thinks of him as a brother. When Priest begs Obinna to end his life because of the excruciating pain sustained from a fatal injury, he declines Priest's request and starts crying. It surprises him because he was unsure if he could ever cry again. He says, "My vision blurs through the tears, and my mouth pulls back like I'm a kid again" (Tulba,2013,210). Obinna is battling his identity as a child soldier and an ordinary child. He avoids being a child but cannot help in some instances. It indicates that his id craves his past life, but the civil war requires him to be strong and brave, even if it means blocking away his emotions.

Eventually, a boy called Koko rescues Obinna, who is in critical condition after an attack at the camp. Obinna wishes he could die because he fears what freedom will offer. When Koko asks about his name, he says 'Baboon's Ass' but remembers he does not have his gun, therefore not a soldier anymore, "I'm not a soldier, I'm not

people's fire...I'm really free, is it too strange to believe. I dig through my memory, searching for something that has been buried for a long time. 'Obinna' the name feels strange in my mouth" (Tulba,2013,217). Obinna has his name changed a few times, and his actual name sounds different. He is finally free because, deep down, that is what he always desired. His actions keep haunting him even after freedom, but he declares he is a child again and takes back his previous identity.

In *Johnny Mad Dog*, the two narrators Laokole and Jonny have shifting identities. Johnny is a vicious killer yet lives in fear, a side he does not like showing. Laokole changes and becomes braver as the plot thickens. For instance, she rejects an interview planned for her mother for a documentary depicting the plight of the refugees. She is furious because they want to use her disabled mother to attract more views. The journalists suggest getting close-up images of Laokole's mother's sad face and amputated legs because that would make it dramatic. The same journalists would later report no casualties in the civil war, yet thousands have died.

Laokole decries, "At that, I almost lost my temper. Mama's stumps were our suffering, our pain. Katelijne saw them only as something that would attract the attention of an audience. Was she completely heartless?" (Dongala,2005,90). Jung postulates, "Possession caused by the anima or animus presents a different picture. Above all, this personality transformation gives prominence to traits characteristic of the opposite sex; in man the feminine traits, and in woman the masculine" (1980,223). Her animus influences Laokole to be very protective of her family. Laokole fills a void that her father left. She also stands up for vulnerable people. She becomes strong because her survival depends on it.

The civil war also changes Laokole's personality. She stops being polite and claims that minding manners during such times is a death sentence. A woman makes her trip and falls. In return, Laokole hits her on the ribs with the elbow and points out they are at war. Laokole also narrates, "A man was furious when I got ahead of him by shouldering

him aside. "Cunt!" he yelled at me. "Asshole!" I shouted back and thrust my jug under the spigot. I'd done it! I filled my jug to the brim" (Dongala,2005,86). At this point, Laokole realizes that being polite during such times is lethal, and her character changes to fit into the new environment.

In *On Murder, Mourning, and Melancholia*, Freud posits that countries cannot protect their inhabitants from brutality during the war. The behaviours of individuals undergoing cruelty are forced to act in a way they never thought they would be capable of (2005,305). Laokole has proven throughout the novel that moral standards guide her. This is the first incident in which she insults another person because the civil war pushes her to the edge. She can no longer tolerate how people treat her and the helpless people. Freudian postulation explains the need for Laokole to stand up for herself because the government or her parents cannot protect her anymore.

On the other hand, Johnny and his friends attack the embassy. They are called a gang of killers and murderers who kill innocent people. The refugees start yelling that they are murderers, rapists, and thieves. Johnny reveals that the refugees seemed to be more than usual, "I felt my skin burning from the heat of those gazes charged with hatred and fear. I was glad they weren't hurling laser beams—we would have been fried to a crisp." (Dongala,2005,83). Johnny is afraid because the tables have turned. He feels vulnerable because he is not in command. Johnny cannot give orders for an attack because they are in a controlled territory with armed officers on guard and could be killed at any moment. They retreat, but Johnny swears that he will have a comeback to please his peers because he does not want to show that he is afraid.

Dongala shows Johnny's fear and guilt. Johnny hates Giap but dramatically depends on him for instructions. When he loses his phone and cannot reach Giap, he says, "I wasn't sure what to do. For a moment, I felt at a loss" (Dongala,2005,113). Just as children depend on their parents for guidance, Johnny highly depends on Giap for

direction; without him, he feels lost and unable to act. Johnny's conduct contradicts the ethics of morality because he blames other people for doing things he does, such as killing. The textual echoing enables the reader to understand the traits of the characters. Johnny calls the rival team 'Jackals' and 'Hyenas' because they are looters. He chooses to ignore the fact that they also do the same. Johnny's view of rival troops indicates his denial of what the civil war has made him. Johnny feeds on other people's fears, and when a victim shows no fear, it scares him.

For instance, Johnny meets and threatens a man holding a bible but fears that he could be an intellect hence the courage. Johnny highlights, "D-d-drop the book, or I'll shoot!" I heard myself stammer, though usually, I fired without warning. His gaze had numbed me—my finger was paralyzed, unable to squeeze the trigger. What the hell was happening to me?" (Dongala, 2005, 129). Throughout Johnny's role as a group leader, he struggles not to show fear. Still, in some instances, fear overwhelms him. Jung argues that "if we can see our own shadow and can bear knowing about it, then a small part of the problem has already been solved: we have at least brought up the personal unconscious" (1980, 44). Johnny does not want to confront his shadow, the darkest side of human nature. Johnny does not want to accept that he is a bloody killer, just like his rivals.

Johnny attacks a family because he wants to prove he is the leader and not afraid of anyone or anything. Little Pepper shoots the man on Johnny's behalf, but he is not very pleased because he believes he has displayed weakness. Johnny spares the woman and says, "I know, I know—someday my kind heart is going to get me into serious trouble" (130). In this case, Johnny's rejection of his shadow can be interpreted using Jung's postulation that individuals "do not like to be reminded of this, but prefer to think of themselves as heroes who are beyond good and evil" (Jung, 1980, 44). Johnny has conflicting identities because he cannot confront his shadow. He is susceptible to fear but hates showing it. He

kills to prove a point, then offers some mercy to 'cleanse' himself.

Johnny attacks the refugee camp and kidnaps Laokole and a small girl she rescues during the attack. Laokole observes that Johnny has a lot of looted things, including books, but she is surprised that an 'animal-like' person like him can steal books. This is not the first incident Laokole refers to Johnny as an "animal or a 'monster.'" In her eyes, Johnny did not behave like a human anymore, especially since she witnessed him kill people in cold blood. Freud postulates, "Other people's drive-impulses are naturally withheld from our perception. We deduce them from their actions and behaviour, which we trace back to motives from their drives" (Freud, 1961, 309). Laokole has been observing Johnny's behaviour from the first time she saw him from a distance. Laokole does not know Johnny's background, but from his actions, she concludes that he no longer acts like a human because of his inability to show mercy. He destroys another human the way a predator does to its prey.

The two characters have a long conversation for the first time, and Johnny thinks Laokole is strange, mainly because she is not afraid of him. Johnny starts believing that she is a witch. Laokole questions him about kidnapping them and calls him a murderer. Laokole asks Johnny to rape her because that is what he does best. Johnny is scared because Laokole even knows his name. He admits that he is worried but does not want to reveal it. Johnny narrates, "Yet what could I do when someone had no fear of force or guns? I was lost. I could kill her easily. But if I killed her without making her afraid, without humiliating her, she would have won" (Dongala, 2005, 175). Jung argues, "For individualization to occur, we must discover and accept the different sides of ourselves, even those we dislike or resist" (1980, 228). In "Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism.", Ann Dobie, posits that, "If we reject part of the self, we are likely to project that element onto others, thus making us incapable of seeing ourselves as wrong or guilty" (2002, 57). Johnny fears Laokole

because she does not react like others when they see a gun. He even tells her he has hobbies and does not always kill people.

Johnny is afraid that Laokole does not fear weapons; hence it will be hard to kill her. He leads her to the bedroom to show her what he has collected over time; he offers her a luxurious piece of cloth, but she rejects it. Johnny narrates, "Here—you can have it. See? Mad Dog is no vicious beast". She wasn't impressed and showed no interest at all, returning to the living room before I'd even finished displaying all of my treasures" (Dongala,2005,175). Laokole does not react because she is smart and does not want to entertain Johnny. This makes him furious because he cannot get the response he desires from Laokole. She stays calm throughout the entire ordeal. Laokole only observes him as she calculates her next move. Jung's argument explains Johnny's constant need for approval and acceptance from people. He blurs his violent side and attempts to act pleasant to hide his guilt and wrongdoing.

On the other hand, Johnny seeks validation, trying to impress her with his few collections. Johnny's desperate quest for Laokole's view of him as intellect is a sign that he is just like any other teenage boy in the presence of a teenage girl. The scene also displays Johnny's emotional susceptibility as he acts like a needy child, qualities that make the reader understand that he is a confused teenager, despite his actions.

Johnny's need for recognition as more than just a murderer proposes that Johnny comprehends changing his morals to attain some connection with Laokole. However, Johnny fails to connect with her and hence becomes angry. Laokole is smart because she anticipates Johnny's violence and attacks him with the bible he looted, the first book in his collection. Johnny narrates his attack, "I was dead, killed by a Bible. People had always told me to beware of women and books! The room was swimming around me. I had to get up, I had to kill her...I screamed, I pleaded for it to stop—but the fury didn't know what pity was, and continued to strike, to strike" (Dongala,2005,

176). Johnny wants pity, something he never shows his victims, it reflects his contradictory beliefs. The author's language in this scene is highly violent, combined with vivid descriptions. Johnny's narrates the agony and suffering after Laokole hits his testicles mercilessly. He closes the scene by mentioning that he is dying.

Our analysis of the two texts shows that the two characters Jonny and Obinna undergo character mutation which conform to Freudian postulation in *On Mourning and Melancholia* that when people lose someone dear to them, their actions may change because "All this is possible only because the reactions expressed in their behaviour still proceed from a mental constellation of revolt, which has then, by a certain process, passed over into the crushed state of melancholia" (2005,586).

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined how child characters experience shifting identities that leads to fragmented subjectivities. In the two texts Majok Tulba's *Beneath the Darkening Sky* and Emmanuel Dongala's *Johnny Mad Dog* two characters Obinna and Jonny as used to illustrate the transformative changes that are contextualized as character mutation. The conclusion is that a psychoanalytical reading of the two novels reveals commonalities in terms of the character mutation of the narrators. Civil war pushes the child characters into psychological turmoil, leading to fragmented subjectivities. The texts depict individuals affected by the disruption in post-colonial war-torn countries. Through the psychoanalytic reading also helps in finding ways of rehabilitating children traumatized by war especially those recruited as child soldiers

The child characters, particularly the significant characters, change throughout the texts and develop fragmented subjectivities because of the psychological impact of the civil war. The child characters are compelled to behave barbarically or adapt to their new environment and automatically understand their role in war situations. The paper expects that reading the experiences of children in war stories helps raise awareness and is a

campaign against underage combatants in conflict zones.

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