

Psycho-criminological exploration of stalking in selected novels of Thomas Hardy and Elechi Amadi

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ABSTRACT: All over the world, stalking is perceived as a form of crime in interpersonal relationships and a form of psychological victimisation. Literary representations of stalking abound but are relatively underexplored. This paper examines a psycho-criminological exploration of stalking in selected novels by Thomas Hardy and Elechi Amadi, with a focus on stalking as a criminological and psycho social phenomenon as well as a weapon of warfare, dominance and control. The paper uses qualitative textual analysis, close reading, along with criminological, victimological, and psychoanalytical theoretical frameworks. The findings reveal that surveillance is a form of crime, a psycho- social disorder manifesting as unwanted contact and an obsession that aims to intimidate victims. The paper contributes to literary scholarship and criminology by revealing that stalking is a form of deviant behaviour having both psychological and social consequences.

Keywords: Exploration, psychoanalysis, psycho-criminology, stalking, victimology.

INTRODUCTION

Stalking is an antisocial behaviour and is perceived as a criminal act. It is an intrusive behaviour characterised by consistent, unwanted surveillance of a given character for ulterior motives. It is a form of interpersonal violence directed towards an individual in ways that cause fear and other forms of emotional distress. On the surface, stalking appears innocuous, such as repeated unwanted surveillance, following, intrusive visits, monitoring, or insistent conduct that transforms ordinary acts into a pattern of intimidation, harassment, and control (Tjaden *et al.*, 2000, pp. 7-22; Meloy, 1999, pp. 85-99).

From Tjaden *et al.* (2000) perspective, stalking is a serious interpersonal problem and a criminal offence because it is unwanted conduct that can lead to anxiety in the victim. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2025), stalking is an unwanted pattern of harassment that produces concerns about the safety of the object of observation. It includes actions like following, watching, unwanted approaches, and romantic pursuit that intimidate others.

Stalking therefore represents more than persistent admiration, romantic pursuit, or interpersonal conflict; it can constitute a sustained exercise of power in which the perpetrator attempts to intrude upon, monitor, intimidate, or control the victim. Its criminal character is further reinforced by the diversity of contexts in which it occurs, including intimate-partner relationships, former relationships, acquaintanceships, and stranger encounters (Pathé and Mullen, 2002: pp. 1-22). Research also demonstrates a close relationship between stalking and other forms of interpersonal abuse. Mechanic *et al.* (2000a,b), for instance, found significant associations between stalking, psychological abuse, and physical violence among battered women, while their subsequent study associates severe stalking with heightened exposure to physical and sexual violence, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms (55-72; 443-58).

Stalking may consequently function both as an independent form of victimisation and as an extension of coercive or abusive relationships. Its effects can extend

beyond immediate physical danger to psychological insecurity, anxiety, social withdrawal, disruption of everyday activities, and persistent fear (Pathé and Mullen, 2002, pp. 1-22; Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025). The contemporary expansion of digital communication has also widened the behavioural repertoire of stalkers, enabling perpetrators to use social media, electronic communication, GPS technologies, hidden cameras, and other technologies to monitor or contact victims repeatedly (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025).

In Nigeria, this technological dimension has acquired particular legal significance because the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act recognises cyberstalking as an offence where electronic communication is persistently used to send grossly offensive, indecent, obscene, menacing, or knowingly false messages intended to cause annoyance, inconvenience, or needless anxiety (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). Stalking thus occupies an important position within criminological and victimological discourse because its defining pattern combines persistent conduct, intentional intrusion, psychological intimidation, and victimisation. Its representation in literature can therefore illuminate not only the behavioural dimensions of criminal pursuit but also perpetrators' motivations, victims' vulnerability and experiences, the social environments that facilitate such conduct, and the language through which power, fear, possession, and control are constructed.

Stalking and victimhood are interconnected forms of psycho-social and criminal behaviour that create fear, psychological distress, insecurity, and loss of independence. Literary portraiture of stalking behaviour is yet to receive the desired attention it deserves from a criminological perspective. Previous studies of Thomas Hardy and Elechi Amadi have explored themes of fate, destiny, predestination, man's place in an unfriendly universe, violence, conflict, victimhood, gender relations, and social injustice, among others. This gap necessitates a criminological examination of this behaviour and its psychological implications for the victims.

In Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Amadi's *The Great Ponds*, characters confront situations involving stalking and attempts to control others. At times, such behaviours create fear, psychological pressure, psychological displacement, vulnerability, and intrusion into personal autonomy. However, previous literary interpretations subsume stalking under broader conflicts like jealousy, revenge, rivalry, patriarchy, communal tension, or fate, thereby obscuring its criminal and psychological dimensions. The challenge, therefore, is to determine how stalking operates in the novels as a driving force and how it functions as a weapon of warfare and dominance.

Consequently, the paper examines stalking and victimhood through a criminological lens in the selected novels. It examines unwanted and unpermitted obsessive

movements that cause fear or any form of distress. By adopting criminological, victimological, gical and psychoanalytical theoretical frameworks for the novels, this study contributes to literary narratives on stalking as a criminal behaviour.

This study examines stalking as a psycho-criminological phenomenon in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Great Ponds*. It focuses on stalking as a criminological experience, a psycho-social phenomenon, and how stalking is a strategy of warfare and dominance. The paper deploys criminological, victimological and psychoanalytical theoretical frameworks. Therefore, the paper aims to analyse stalking as a psycho-criminological behaviour. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine stalking as a criminological experience in selected novels of Thomas Hardy and Elechi Amadi.
2. Analyse stalking as a psycho - social phenomenon in the selected texts.
3. Examine stalking as a strategy of warfare and dominance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual review

Stalking as a criminological, victimological and psychological concept

Criminologically, stalking is a patterned form of deviant or criminal conduct that is associated with persistence, repetition, intentionality, and intrusion (Spitzberg and Cupach, 2007; National Institute of Justice, 2007). At times, it involves the exercise of power, control, threats, and violence. In most cases, it coexists with threats, assault, and other criminal behaviours (McEwan *et al.*, 2007).

From the victimological angle, the focus is on the stalker's behaviour and the victim's experience, vulnerability, suffering, coping mechanisms, and consequences of victimisation. In some instances, stalking undermines privacy, autonomy, mobility, security, and psychological well-being. Victims may express fear, hypervigilance, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and disruption of activity and attention (Pathé and Mullen, 2002). To Purcell *et al.* (2002), stalking invokes fear because it progresses from a feeling of security an to invasion the of victim's privacy. In addition, Spitzberg and Cupach (2004) emphasise that obsession may be a motivating factor in stalking.

Psychologically, stalking pertains to behavioural actions like motivations, emotions, cognitions and relational difficulties. According to the American Psychological Association (1995), stalking is a pattern of harassment through observation of the victim. Stalking manifests as obsession, self-gratification, an unregulated emotional bond, and unwanted attempts to establish or maintain

closeness (Meloy, 1999). To the psychologist, it is a form of mental disorder (Parkhill *et al.*, 2022). Spitzberg and Cupach (2003) describe it as a type of obsessive relational intrusion despite rejection of the stalker and resistance, or lack of consent, by the object of observation. In addition, Mullen *et al.* (2001) see stalking as an interdisciplinary concept covering behavioural, psychological, social, and legal studies.

Stalking as a criminal behaviour

Cupach and Spitzberg (2000) see stalking as a sociological term that implies tenacious, unwelcome encroachment directed towards a particular character. It is an antisocial interpersonal criminal behaviour. Originally, it means to hunt, but in contemporary criminological terms, it refers to frequent observation or intrusion that can cause fear, distress, or apprehension about personal safety. The National Institute of Justice (2007) and the National Library of Medicine conceptualise stalking as any repeated unwanted proximity or threats that may cause fear or substantial emotional distress. (ncbi.nlm.nih.gov). To Mullen *et al.* (2001), stalking is a model of a problematic act involving recurring infringement of personal boundaries or unwanted conduct that may produce significant psychological distress.

Stalking is a criminal act because it violates personal privacy, security and freedom of movement. To Knoll (2026), recent anti-stalking laws generally focus on unwanted pursuit that involves threats, fear, or the intention of causing apprehension. In addition, Logan and Walker (2012) perceive stalking as any intentional conduct involving life invasion, intimidation and interference.

Logan and Walker's (2012) framework connects stalking with invasion, intimidation and interference within the same behavioural process. Stalking helps perpetrators obtain information, maintain unwanted contact, intimidate victims and control their activities. In literature, stalking may be portrayed through unauthorised watching, following, unexpected appearances and knowledge of another character's private activities. Mullen *et al.* (2001) identify rejection, resentment, predatory intentions and attempts as some drives of stalking. As a result, stalking is not synonymous with an expression of love or affection but a disregard for the victim's wishes and autonomy.

From a psychological perspective, stalking has to do with obsession, resentment, rejection, humiliation, possessiveness and the desire for intimacy or control. Logan and Walker's framework connects invasion of privacy with intimidation and interference. At the same time, Stark (2007) opines that it can restrict the victim's autonomy or freedom and can cause post-traumatic stress and depression (Lohmann *et al.*, 2024). Meloy's work is relevant because it helps to elucidate unconscious attachment and possessiveness without clinically diagnosing fictional characters (Meloy, 1998).

Stalking is not synonymous with physical violence, but it employs threats, intimidation, sexual offending, assault and homicide. Research has linked stalking to physical and sexual assaults. It is a serious social problem because it may produce substantial psychological and social harm.

From a victimological point of view, stalking affects different facets of the victim's life. Mullen *et al.* (2001) observe that stalking may affect victims and their families. Brewster (2003) identifies fear, anxiety, depression, panic and post-traumatic symptoms among possible consequences, while Truman and Morgan (2016) assert that victims seek protection or psychological assistance. Mullen *et al.* (2001) explain that stalking is a social construction and a social reality. It is an unacceptable interpersonal conduct.

In selected novels of Hardy and Amadi, stalking is exclusively a male-against-female phenomenon, gender expectations, sexual entitlement and patriarchal authority, while in Amadi's *The Great Ponds*, it is not gender based. This accounts for Mullen *et al.* (2001) caution that stalking is not exclusively heterosexual. They advocate for a gender-sensitive approach when examining power and vulnerability without reducing every case to a single gender pattern.

This study provides a framework for examining stalking in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Great Ponds*. It examines patterns of watching, information gathering, intrusion, possessiveness, intimidation, control and their effects on victims and communities. The paper closely examines how these behaviours are portrayed through dialogue, characterisation, narrative perspective, setting, imagery, symbolism, ism and plot. This paper examines how literary expressions represent criminality, power and victimhood within their respective historical and cultural contexts.

Scholarships in stalking in literary expressions as a psychosocial problem

Stalking is a complex psychosocial experience, and in literary expressions, it extends beyond physical pursuit. The psychosocial dimension of stalking stems from the social interaction between individuals' psychological dispositions and social relationships. Cupach and Spitzberg (2000) call it "obsessive relational intrusion" (357). In literary criticism, stalking can begin as affection, coercion, and admiration, as in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. To Spitzberg and Cupach (2003), stalking is linked with intimacy, possessiveness, harassment, and criminality ("What Mad Pursuit?"). Literary representation traces a gradual progression from interpersonal interest to fixation, surveillance, intrusion, and criminal behaviour.

Psychologically, stalking may be associated with obsession, possessiveness, rejection, anger, and an excessive desire for control. In addition, Spitzberg and Cupach (1998) affirm that frustrated relational goals

generate rumination and obsessive relational stalking. In literary narratives, stalking is represented through repeated watching, following, unexpected appearances, monitoring, and attempts to regulate another character's movements or decisions.

Furthermore, stalking is also a social problem because the act disrupts interpersonal relationships. Mullen *et al.* (2001) see stalking as deviant behaviour resulting from unwanted intrusion. The victim perceives familiar settings as threatening because of the possibility of a stalker. Literary expressions use setting, dialogue, narrative perspective, imagery, and symbolism to depict stalking. The stalker's physical absence triggers psychological trauma as the victim anticipates being observed.

Victimhood is another consequential dimension of stalking. Pathé and Mullen (1997) advocate that stalking can have substantial social and psychological consequences for victims. Contemporary public-health research asserts that stalked victims express fear, anxiety, depression, hopelessness, and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Literary artists mirror these negative consequences through narrative devices like silence, withdrawal, anxiety, isolation, loss of confidence, and heightened awareness of danger.

In literary expressions, stalking involves seeing and being seen. This accounts for Kamir's (2001) observation that stalking narratives have been mirrored in different historical and cultural contexts to challenge traditional gender relations. Similarly, Nicol (2006) examines stalking in literary expressions through forensic psychology, psychoanalysis, and cultural theory. To Nicol, the stalker's stare can be an instrument of psychological domination, while the victim is consciously aware of being watched.

Theoretical frameworks

Criminological criticism is traced to Cesare Beccaria (1986) and Jeremy Bentham (1996). They argue that man is a rational creature with free will and advocate deterrence and proportionate punishment for misdemeanours. To Beccaria, punishment proportionate to the offence discourages criminal behaviour (Beccaria 1986: p14.). On his part, Bentham (1996) explains that man, in his pursuit of pleasure, is regulated through the avoidance of pain, thereby emphasising the utilitarian role of crime and punishment (Bentham, 1996, pp. 11-12). Later, the positivist school of criminology shifted focus to biological, psychological and social causes of criminal behaviour. Later, sociological theorists such as Edwin Sutherland state that criminal behaviour is socially learned through interaction with others (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970, pp. 80-83).

Victimological criticism, on the other hand, is a response to the traditional emphasis on offenders and criminal acts, bringing the victim and the process of victimisation into criminological analysis. Hans von Hentig discussed the

relationship between offenders and victims and stressed that personal and situational circumstances increase vulnerability to victimisation (von Hentig, 1984, pp. 384-390). On his part, Benjamin Mendelsohn developed victimological categorisation by examining the various ways victims participate in the circumstances surrounding their victimisation (Mendelsohn, 1947, pp. 9-10).

The psychoanalytical framework originated from Freud (1923) theory of the unconscious. To Freud, human behaviour can be influenced by desires, impulses and conflicts that are not fully accessible to consciousness (Freud, 1923, Interpretation, pp. 595-606). To him, the human psyche is divided into the id, ego, and superego. The id represents instinctual drives, the ego negotiates between instinct and external reality, and the superego embodies internalised moral standards (Freud, 1923, pp. 19-22). To the psychoanalyst, irrational behaviour such as unconscious desire, repression, guilt, anxiety, psychic conflict and defence mechanisms best account for human behaviour. In literary criticism, these concepts can be applied to characters whose criminal or victimological experiences are connected with unconscious motives, suppressed desires, guilt, fear or psychological conflict.

METHOD OF STUDY

This paper deploys qualitative textual and interpretive analysis to examine stalking and victimhood in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Amadi's *The Great Ponds*. The two novels are the primary sources, while related scholarship in criminology, victimology, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism provides secondary support. This approach is necessary because it explores why stalking is a crime, its drivers, and the consequences of these behaviours as constructed through linguistic features, characterisation, narrative techniques, setting and other literary elements. The fictional scenes are treated as literary representations and not as empirical evidence of actual criminal behaviour.

The primary data are purposively selected from texts depicting persistent unwanted monitoring, attempted intimidation, manipulation, and other related behaviours. Particular attention is given to interpersonal relationships among characters and victims, as well as the conditions that intensify such unwanted conduct. The study also examines related psychological drives that substantiate the fact that stalking leads to victimhood, or the emotional, social and psychological effects of stalking on victims.

Data analysis draws mainly on criminological and Psychoanalytical perspectives to explain obsessive and controlling behaviour. Close reading examines linguistic features, imagery, symbolism, characterisation, among others. A comparison of the novels identifies similarities and differences in their representations of stalking as criminal behaviour.

Although considerable scholarship exists on Hardy's

representation of crime, sexuality, gender, victimisation and psychological conflict, and Amadi's fiction has attracted studies of conflict, culture, violence, spirituality and communal relations, comparatively limited attention has been devoted to stalking as a distinct behavioural pattern in these novels.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Stalking as a criminological experience in selected novels of Thomas Hardy and Elechi Amadi

In selected novels by Hardy and Amadi, both novelists portray stalking as criminal behaviour within criminological, victimological, and psychoanalytic literary frameworks. Stalking is a misdemeanour because it constitutes unwanted surveillance by the offender against the victim. The major drive of stalking is unconscious impulses of the id, such as obsession, control, and domination. It produces fear, emotional discomfort, and harassment of the victim. Stalking violates the sanctity of privacy, safety, and human dignity, inflicts psychological trauma, and can escalate into harmful confrontations. As a recurring motif, stalking reflects an antisocial lifestyle rooted in suppressed desires and psychological instability, creating a suffocating atmosphere in the lives of victims. In this context, the hostile intention behind the act, rather than mere repetition, determines its classification as a criminal behaviour.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, stalking is portrayed as a lifestyle of misdemeanour driven by Michael Henchard's unconscious desire to control and possess Lucetta Templeman. After she refuses to grant him an audience, the omniscient narrator observes:

The answer he received was an expression of Miss Templeman's sorrow and her inability to see him again...Henchard walked away from the door to the opposite street, and stood... in a lonely reverie...he entered the shadow ...here he watched Lucetta's door...Farfrae knocked...she instantly opened the door herself. They went together...avoiding the front street...guessing where they were going, he determined to follow (p.198 -199).

This passage reveals Henchard's obsessive surveillance and compulsive behaviour, which violate Lucetta's freedom of movement and association. His actions reflect repression, jealousy, and fear of emotional loss, all of which align with the psychoanalytical understanding of deviant behaviour. The novelist uses an omniscient narrative technique to show how the protagonist's stalking escalates:

he ...left the field and followed her...on reaching Lucetta's door, he did not knock. Still,

he opened it and walked straight up to her sitting-room ...The light was so low that she did not notice Henchard at first. As soon as she saw him, she uttered a little cry, almost of terror (p.201).

Henchard's intrusion signifies both stalking and trespass, demonstrating a breakdown of moral restraint. Lucetta's reaction: *she uttered a little cry, almost of terror (p.201)* confirms the psychological impact of his actions. His behaviour reflects an unstable psyche dominated by unchecked impulses.

Hardy's hero also stalks Mr Newson. His motivation is his neurotic desire to retain control over Elizabeth-Jane. According to the omniscient narrator,

he hastily put on his hat and went out in the direction that Newson had taken. Henchard followed and saw his visitor stop at the King's Arms... where the...coach which had brought him waited. Newson mounted..., the vehicle disappeared with him (p.300 - 301).

This act demonstrates deliberate surveillance rooted in guilt and fear of exposure. His haste indicates psychological agitation, while his actions reveal an attempt to manipulate reality and deny Newson his paternal rights.

Amadi also present stalking as a criminal behaviour in *The Great Ponds*. The omniscient narrator *informs that:*

By afternoon of the next day the warriors left for Chilly and arrived by night. He did not risk taking the main village path. He walked through the bush...he had taken the same path several times at night when the war was on... He would hide near the fenced-in enclosure in which Olumba normally had his bath and wait for an opportunity to cut off a piece of his wrapper (p.114).

The above passage portrays stalking as a deliberate, calculated targeting of a victim. The search for Olumba's clothing and other subsequent actions indicate that the stalkers closely track his personal belongings. Anwuanwa's manner of examining the wrapper and ordering that it be cut suggests premeditation and purposeful targeting, rather than accidental contact.

From a criminological view, the action involves surveillance, intrusion and preparation for further harm. Olumba's personal clothing becomes evidence of his presence and is appropriated for destruction. The statement "*Olumba is being cooked*" reiterates the act's threatening nature. Through this, the narrator transforms stalking into psychological intimidation and a precursor to violence.

Stalking as Strategy of Warfare and Dominance in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and Amadi's *The Great Ponds*, Thomas Hardy uses stalking as a strategy of

warfare and dominance in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

At last, full proof was given him. He was standing behind a wall close to the place at which Farfrae encountered her. He heard the young man address her as 'Dearest Elizabeth - Jane' then kissed her, the girl looking quickly round to assure herself that nobody was near (p.313).

The above passage describes clandestine surveillance as a form of stalking and psychological control. Henchard intentionally positions himself “*behind a wall*” close to where Farfrae encounters and observes the private interaction with Elizabeth-Jane without their knowledge, demonstrating the intrusive nature of stalking.

Henchard's behaviour is not only unauthorised surveillance but concealment and targeted monitoring. He aims to obtain “*proof*” of their relationship. The act is therefore not accidental but purposeful and used as a weapon of dominance and control. In this instance, the knowledge he acquires secretly becomes a potential instrument for confronting, intimidating or controlling them. His hidden posture violates the privacy of the victims and creates an unequal power relationship between the watcher and the watched.

One can explain Henchard's act of hiding behind a wall to secretly observe Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane as a symbolic weapon of war. The protagonist concealing his position mirrors military reconnaissance, where surveillance gathers information about an opponent without being detected.

The wall becomes a symbol of secrecy and strategic positioning, while Henchard's observation stands for covert intelligence gathering. His decision to observe rather than challenge Farfrae proves how surveillance can become a form of psychological warfare. The scene therefore turns stalking from mere observation into a symbolic strategy of intelligence gathering, coercion, and dominance within Henchard's psychological conflict.

In Amadi's *The Great Ponds*, the novelist also presents stalking as a strategy of warfare and dominance. For stalking to be effective in times of war, the community expects young men to practice the act and be perfect at it. This is the essence of the dialogue between Olumba and Ikechi, thus:

*Why don't you sit down, Ikechi? Olumba said without turning round.
Hei!
What is it?
How did you observe me?
I know your steps, don't I?
But I made noise
Ha - ha! No noise indeed! You made as much noise as a herd of elephants
Your father has a lot to teach you about stalking (p.7).*

The above dialogue between Olumba and Ikechi reveals stalking as surveillance, psychological manipulation, and a strategy of warfare. Ikechi's attempt to approach Olumba without being noticed suggests covert observation and stealth. From a criminological perspective, the statement: “Your father has a lot to teach you about stalking,” identifies stalking as a learned activity involving pursuit, concealment, observation and attempts to remain undetected. From Olumba's speech, such behaviour is learnt through social learning and imitation.

The passage also shows potential victimhood and the place of awareness. Olumba expects Ikechi to possess the skill of secrecy, but Olumba detects him through his footsteps. The relationship between observer and observed is therefore reversed: Olumba refuses to remain an unsuspecting target. Olumba's awareness becomes a form of counter-surveillance and psychological resistance, reducing his immediate vulnerability to attack.

Psychoanalytically, Ikechi's surreptitious approach is an indication of his unconscious desire for proximity, knowledge, control or dominance. His astonishment at Olumba's skill to observe him indicates the psychological disruption that occurs when the concealed observer becomes the observed. Olumba's laughter, “Ha-ha!” further subverts Ikechi's presumed psychological advantage and establishes Olumba's assurance and supremacy in the encounter.

In warfare, stalking assumes a broader strategic importance. In warfare, clandestine observation can expedite ambushes, reconnaissance, surprise attacks, threats and the acquisition of information about an opponent. Olumba's ability to discover Ikechi represents counter-surveillance and shows the importance of awareness in resisting an enemy's attempt at concealment. Stalking is more than physical surveillance. It is a psychological competition over who sees what without being observed, for the purpose of gathering information and control.

In *The Great Ponds*, stalking evolves into a communal strategy of warfare, reflecting collective aggression and moral degeneration. Ikechi boasts: My stalking has improved (p.125). This statement symbolises pride in predatory behaviour and signals ethical decay. The narrator uses the omniscient narrative technique further to describe a planned ambush by the warriors of Chiolu thus:

As soon as it grew dark, the men began to march towards Chiolu...and hid in a thick clump of trees... Elendu said... We shall not attack the whole village;.. We shall select a few compounds and carry off one or two women from each compound. If we capture seven women, it is a good job. Their men are tired and should be sleeping heavily (pp. 51-52).

The passage above exemplifies premeditated collective criminality or a calculated act of surveillance and ambush.

The intention is to instil fear and assert dominance. It reflects humans transforming into agents of violence under the influence of unchecked desires and communal rivalry.

Elendu and his co-warriors plan to attack, hide in the trees, select particular compounds, and exploit the men's expected weakness: sleep. Their major drive is to abduct women. This act demonstrates both *actus reus* (the planned unlawful seizure) and *mens rea* (deliberate criminal intent). In this instance, stalking is a calculated strategy rather than spontaneous violence.

From the above, the women constitute direct and vulnerable victims because of their vulnerability and being easier targets. The phrase "*If we capture seven women, it is a good job*" reduces human beings to commodities and dehumanises victims. Their abduction produces indirect victims among their families and the wider community through fear, humiliation and insecurity.

From a psychological perspective, the planned abduction of women reveals the psychological dimension of domination and control. By penetrating Ailiakoro's domestic space and targeting women, the stalkers succeed in instilling fear and demonstrating power. Their exploitation of the men's exhaustion shows calculated aggression rather than uncontrolled impulse.

In a nutshell, stalking portrays warfare as physical, psychological and social control of the victim. Darkness and concealment help the attackers, while selective abduction creates fear within the opposing community. Amadi therefore portrays war as a form of organised violence in which crime, victimhood and psychological domination operate together.

The omniscient narrator of Amadi's *The Great Ponds* tells of another dimension of deploying stalking as a weapon of war, dominance and control thus:

The next day a few chosen elders met again in Igwu's house. Methodically, Ugwu gave the details of the process involved. Then he added: There is one important point. I shall need a fragment of Olumba's clothing or anything that he has touched. How can we get that? That won't be easy... I shall get a bit of Olumba's clothing...the leopard killer announced (p.114).

Ugwu's deliberate ritual theft of Olumba's clothing indicates a calculated effort to establish a connection with the victim. The expression "Methodically" emphasises planning and persistence, suggesting that the intended action is not accidental but organised. In warfare, such targeting can identify, locate, and eventually neutralise an opponent.

Olumba is the vulnerable and targeted victim. The ritualistic appropriation of his personal possessions violates the victim's privacy and symbolically reduces him to something that can be appropriated for strategic purposes. The elders' discussion shows how victimisation

can become communal as they pursue their target. Stalking consequently threatens Olumba's physical and psychological safety.

Psychoanalytically, the pursuit of Olumba reflects an intense preoccupation with controlling the object of aggression. Ugwu's desire to control Olumba suggests an attempt to establish psychological proximity and mastery over someone who is physically absent. This critic interprets this act as an expression of aggressive and possessive impulses channelled through a culturally sanctioned warfare strategy. It implies, therefore, that stalking operates as a weapon of war without direct physical confrontation. The search for Olumba's clothing represents surveillance, targeting and preparation for possible attack. It creates an atmosphere in which the victim becomes a potential target outside the battlefield. Thus, Amadi presents stalking as a mechanism of dominance and control.

Stalking as a psycho-social phenomenon in the selected texts

In Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the hero's surveillance of Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane indicates the psychological and social dimensions of stalking. Henchard secretly positions himself behind a wall and watches Farfrae interact closely with Elizabeth-Jane, reflecting his obsessive preoccupation with people connected to his personal rivalry and emotional insecurity. Psychologically, the act of stalking suggests jealousy, possessiveness, and an inability to detach himself from relationships and conflicts that threaten his sense of control and self-esteem. Socially, Michael Henchard's surveillance violates the private and public life of his objects. His hidden observation therefore shows how personal emotional attachments can develop into intrusive behaviour that affects other people's freedom and security.

In Amadi's *The Great Ponds*, stalking also operates within interpersonal and communal relationships. The encounters between Olumba and Ikechi, despite the latter's attempt to approach quietly, "*You made as much noise as a herd of elephants*", show that stalking is a learned social behaviour and part of communal socialisation. Therefore, stalking is not merely an individual psychological act; it is acquired through family, community, warfare, and cultural practices. Stalking becomes especially significant in the context of war between Aliakoro and Chiolu.

In the two novels, stalking produces a psychosocial cycle because psychological motives generate surveillance; surveillance creates fear or insecurity; social conflict intensifies the surveillance; and continued surveillance further deepens interpersonal hostility. On the other hand, in Hardy's novel, stalking behaviour is closely connected with jealousy, possessiveness, rivalry, and emotional insecurity. In Amadi's novel, stalking takes on a communal,

warfare-related dimension, where monitoring an opponent can serve purposes of attack, intelligence gathering, and dominance.

Conclusion

The study shows that behaviours corresponding to contemporary understandings of stalking appear in the selected novels, even though modern criminological and legal terminology was not available when the texts were produced. Hardy and Amadi represent pursuit, surveillance, possessiveness, intimidation and social control as behaviours embedded within broader structures of interpersonal and communal relations. Their representations therefore provide literary perspectives on the relationship between offender motivation, social environment, power and victimisation. Within the criminological, victimological and psychoanalytical theoretical frameworks, Hardy and Amadi portray stalking as an individual and collective manifestation of deviant behaviour rooted in unconscious drives such as obsession, jealousy, fear, and the desire for control. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, jealousy motivates Henchard's actions, and in *The Great Ponds*, stalking becomes a communal war strategy. Ultimately, both novelists present stalking as an unethical and destructive lifestyle that undermines human dignity and reflects deep-seated psychological and societal dysfunction.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that no conflict of interest.

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