

Psychopathy in *No Country for Old Men* (2007)

Name

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### Introduction

The movie *No Country for Old Men* (2007) gives a story of one sheriff who is a psychopathic killer by the name Anton Chigurh (Weitner, 2007). In fact, one of the characters in the movie, called Wells' description of Chigurh associates him with sociopathic character. However, he does not care about his character and spends all his life committing violent murder. Psychopathy is a personality disorder in which individuals manipulate charm, intimidate, or use acts of violence in controlling others to satisfy their selfish desires. The movie "*No Country for Old Men*" is one full of violence and the main character is a sociopath. The character Chigurh is depicted as an individual who is not remorseful and lacks compassion for others as Covell (2009) argue. He is a psychopathic killer in the play and plays a significant role in bringing out the theme of psychopathy in this work. He is a notorious criminal who uses a pistol to murder his victims and break doors. To know the fate of his victims he throws a coin and enjoys his actions every time he kills his targets. Chigurh murders his victims and is never remorseful or compassionate, and the work seems very deliberate according to DuBos (2008). He considers himself as a hand of fate that facilitates death that is bound to happen in a person's life. He is a symbol of destruction and violence that decides the fate of human beings that he comes across without any mercy contributing to the theme of psychopathy depicted by his shallow emotions, lack of guilt and remorse, and egoism.

### Shallow Emotions

A psychopath has the ability to manipulate other people and possesses shallow emotions. Chigurh is the main antagonist who murders without any mercy with a bolt gun and does not fear the law. He pursues Moss to get the drug money that he stole leading to many deaths as the

movie progresses (Cutchins, 2009). He is a man who kills without compassion and emotion throughout the film. For instance, he is hired to track down money from drugs by some Americans, but he kills his hirers and pursues the money for his own. The manner in which he carries out his mission is traumatizing to the victims especially when he tosses a coin to decide whether to kill them or not. This is psychologically disturbing to the victims who do not understand the reason for Chigurh's behavior. His prey only is saved if the head of the flipped coin shows on top thus; he makes them nervous as they await their fate. To him tossing a coin before killing his victim is great favor "That's the best I can do" (Coen 2007). Even when Chigurh is not on the scene, the audience still feels him. The characters live in fear for knowing that such a psychopathic man exists and may strike anytime. Chigurh is a man who is hard to understand, and both the victims, law enforcers, and other leaders are surprised by his actions. The man does not seem to value life, and it is difficult to explain the reasons he hate the society so much such that h does not pity anyone. Although money is involved, his primary motivation to kill leaves unanswered questions. The victims are at the mercy of the tossed coin or the whim of the murderer. However, Chigurh is a man who can pull the trigger regardless of the outcome of the coin showing that he enjoys his every action (Ellis, 2014). He makes the audience believe that the coin can save a victim, but this is not always the case as seen in his final victim. He tells the victim "I got here the same way the coin did", which shows that his decision on whether one should live or not is final (Cooper, 2009). For instance, in the gas station, Chigurh argues with the attendant and his intentions are quite clear to both the viewers and the victim. He wants to kill and flips a coin after which he tells the old man attending to the petrol station to select one side. The man is lucky since he escapes the wrath of Chigurh. Another encounter is with Carson Wells who is equally violent thus; the audience does not sympathize with him much (Tyrer &

Nickell, 2009). He does not even flip a coin and kills him despite Well's pleas to spare him for cash. This shows that Chigurh is passionate about killing anyone he meets, enjoys it fully, and does not sympathize even when victims plea for his mercy depicting his lack of emotions for anything.

#### Lack of Remorse or Guilt

A sociopath does not feel guilty and is never remorseful even after committing a serious crime. Chigurh is a man who does not respect the law and decides to operate illegally as if directed by evil. The manner in which he treats his victims is cruel and passive since he allows some to make choices about their deaths (*No Country for Old Men*, 2007). He considers himself an agent of fate although he feels that people have brought it to themselves. However, his way of murdering many of the innocent people he encounters indicates that he has no respect for human life and dignity. This merciless killing contributes to his sociopathic nature throughout the film. Chigurh has a weird look and makes the others uneasy whenever he is present even when he does not utter anything threatening (Topolnisky, 2009). He says very little but does it openly and clearly exposing his dangerous and psychopathic character indicating that he is not guilt conscious. The fact that he wants to control all the events reveals his dangerous motives since the other actors do not have much to say in his presence. He also justifies his actions even when he is taken to the local sheriff and argues, "I'm not sure why I did this ...." (Cooper, 2009). The other notable thing is his confidence about the turning of events in the future, and this is the reason he rejects the offer by Wells. He commands people and has contempt for individuals that love money than their life on this earth. From the beginning of the movie, Chigurh is a dangerous man who performs his heinous crime with perfection. There are instances that he makes people uneasy by predicting the action that is likely to happen. Many times a short dialogue with the

characters leads to their death especially when the conversation grows into a harsh argument. For instance, the conversation with the proprietor is cool at first but becomes intense when the latter asks him whether there is anything wrong since his reply is harsh” Is that what you’re asking me” (Cooper, 2009). When the conversation tenses, Chigurh offers a coin toss to decide whether the man should live or not. Throughout the movie, he does not regret his actions and considers himself justified to kill others.

### Egocentrism

A Psychopath is one that possesses narcissistic and grossly inflated view of own self-worth and relevance, sense of entitlement, and view themselves as the centre of the universe entitled to live according to their own rules. Chigurh’s sociopathic behavior is influenced by his belief that every action has a reaction, and people have no power to change what will happen. He also believes that everything happens for a reason, and there must be some consequences, but he does not associate himself with such naturalistic rules of life. He controls human life since he decides who lives and who dies and believes that he is facilitating something that is bound to happen in every person’s life. Financial gain is not the driver of his inhumane actions but the passion for killing humans at own will or facilitate death. His ruthless killings leave a question of the kind of person he is and his short dialogues tell the audience that he is not a good man (Cant, 2009). Other signs that denote his psychopathic character include his weird smile, varying of voice, and the pitch of his voice. He tends to repeat words said by his victims in a mocking manner creating a scene of fear and depicting his capacity to control everything. Chigurh pretends to be a very nice character yet it is very difficult for the audience to understand him. He can be considered as a villain who finds enjoyment in death and destruction such as the case of Carla Jean. Although he knows clearly he will kill her, he gives her a lot of hope. He lives a life

full of violence with no regrets especially when he toys with his victims by tossing a coin of faith such as what he did with Jean. He commands everybody and boasts about it "... I am in control of who is coming and who is going" (Cooper, 2009). The use of Chigurh as the major character in the movie takes away the moral values and ideas of life from the drama. The audience has to deal with scenes of a psychopathic killer who tends to enjoy tormenting his victims before killing them. In addition, nobody beats him leaving the audience confused and unable to tell the role of Chigurh in the entire movie who tends to control others' lives by deciding whether they live or not.

### Conclusion

The character of Chigurh is portrayed as evil and inhuman since he kills mercilessly and one can argue that his desire is not only to get money but cause harm as well. He is a sociopathic killer, that seems to enjoy his actions very much yet some of his victims are entirely innocent. From the beginning of the movie, he pursues several characters and appears to determine their fate of death. The manner in which the killings are done leaves a question of the motive of this killer. He does not benefit much by committing this crime since Moss; the man with the briefcase manages to dodge him. Instead of going for Moss Chigurh preys on some innocent citizens in a ruthless way and thus can be considered a psychopath since he seems to enjoy the action. The character brings out the theme of psychopathy in the entire movie through his violent actions. He portrays the character of egoism and grandiose, lack of remorse or guilt, and possesses shallow emotions leading him to commit murder crimes throughout the movie.

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