

Beyond Complicity: Perpetrator Trauma and Implicated Subjects in Ahmed Yerima's *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*

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Abstract: This article examines the representation of perpetrator trauma and implicated subjects in Nigerian playwright Ahmed Yerima's *Heart of Stone* (2013) and *Pari* (2016). It argues that merely blaming and condemning the perpetrators of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria can only undermine the possibility of understanding the totality of identities and relationships that perpetuate the conflict and injustice. In contrast to previous studies on both plays which largely focus on the religious identity and the monstrous persona of the perpetrators – Musa and Ibrahim – this article adopts Saira Mohamed's thesis on perpetrator trauma and Michael Rothberg's theory of the implicated subject to demonstrate that viewing perpetrators as human beings, not just as criminals, brings more understanding of Boko Haram terrorism. Specifically, our study, on the one hand, reveals traumatic memory, paroxysm of anger, feelings of guilt and regret, and reenactment as symptoms of trauma exhibited by Musa and Ibrahim after perpetrating terrorist activities. On the other hand, it identifies implicated subjects (collectively called 'cultural/societal agents' in our analysis) who are not perpetrators themselves but are indirectly involved in terrorism in northeastern Nigeria. It is concluded that *Heart of Stone* and *Pari* conform to a body of emerging Nigerian plays on terrorism which portray how the complex identities and relationships of perpetrators, victims and implicated subjects enable the conflict while suggesting collective responsibility as potential means of curbing terrorism and effecting justice.

Keywords: Ahmed Yerima, Boko Haram terrorism, perpetrator trauma, implication, traumatic memory

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Introduction

The prolific Nigerian playwright Ahmed Yerima's *Heart of Stone* (2013) and *Pari* (2016) are dramatic representations of the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram group in northeastern Nigeria. In *Heart of Stone*, Musa is a hardworking borehole digger-turned-terrorist who was raised by his grandmother, Kaka Patu, after the death of his mother during childbirth. In *Pari*, terrorist Ibrahim gets married to Pari, one of his abducted girls. Extant literature on both plays by critics such as Mbachaga Jonathan, Olanrewaju Agboola and Gbemisola Adeoti puts a particular emphasis on the terrifying personas of Musa and Ibrahim as perpetrators of crimes,¹ thereby neglecting the complexity of their identities and of their relationships with other characters. Jonathan, for instance, explores not only how religious intolerance and hate result in insurgency in *Heart of Stone*, he also decries the destructive personalities of the terrorists, concluding that blatant misunderstanding of religious beliefs provokes religious conflicts in multi-religious societies.² In a similar vein, Agboola contends that *Heart of Stone* is focused on the radicalisation of young people in Nigeria through religion and the heinous influence of terrorists as perceived agents of socio-political change.³ He sees terrorists Musa and Ali in *Heart of Stone* as representative of other young victims of religious radicalisation and rampant socio-political imbalance in northeastern Nigeria.⁴ Fluidity of religious identity is a major concern of Adeoti's study of Yerima's *Pari*, stressing as it does the positive aspects of Ibrahim changing his religious identity after repenting from evildoing.⁵

As Hussein Solomon closely observes in a broader context, there has been much scholarly concentration on the Islamist identity of Boko Haram to the near neglect of other fault lines, making it feasible

1 For detailed discussion of religious intolerance and the terrifying identity of the perpetrators, see Mbachaga Jonathan, 'Dramatic Literature and the Fight against Terror, Insurgency and Insecurity in Nigeria: Yerima's Vision in *Heart of Stone*', *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 10.5 (2019), pp. 83–87, doi: 10.7575/aiac.all.s.v.10n.5p.83; Olanrewaju Agboola, 'Religious Dislocation, Socio-Economic Dysfunction and the Politics of Terrorism in Ahmed Yerima's *Heart of Stone*', *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*, 12.1 (2020), pp. 107–20; Gbemisola Adeoti, 'Territory, Terrorism and the Absolutist Space between: A Study of Yerima's *Little Drops*, *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*', in *One Muse, Many Masks: Reflections on Ahmed Yerima's Recent Drama*, ed. by Gbemisola Adeoti (Kraft Books Ltd., 2021), pp. 293–324.

2 Jonathan, p. 83.

3 Agboola, p. 108.

4 Ibid.

5 Adeoti, p. 293.

for 'political elites [to] exploit resurgent identities for both political and economic gain'.⁶ Solomon is concerned that most scholars writing about Boko Haram focus on the religious identity of the perpetrators, missing the inexcusable link of the Nigerian political class and other people to (the outbreak of) terrorism. Yerima's *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*, as will be shown below, reflect some of these 'fault lines' in their representation of perpetrator trauma and implicated subjects. Seen alongside Kjell Anderson's submission that 'artistic and cultural representations of the perpetrator often mystify evil rather than bring us any closer to understanding or empathy, promoting a sense that evil is meant to be feared, not understood',⁷ it becomes easier to explain why the complexity of the identities of Musa and Ibrahim as perpetrators of crimes remains underexplored by critics. Our major argument is that blaming, shaming and condemning the perpetrators of Boko Haram terrorism without examining the totality of identities and relationships that enable injustice is an ineffective means of understanding the conflict, where understanding is a crucial step towards curbing conflict. There is, then, an urgency to assess the perpetrator as a human being, rather than as an 'incomprehensible "monster" that needs to be contained, controlled, and/or even exterminated'.⁸ As Elizabeth Dauphine avers in *Politics in Exile*, a perpetrator's confessions could provide useful insights into a conflict.⁹ Dauphine manifestly shows that access to truths is usually blocked when identities are erased by blame and simplified narratives.¹⁰ This article foregrounds Yerima's concern that digging deep into the perpetrator's humane side, in their weak state, can be a springboard to understanding the complexity of the conflict. In contrast to the tendency to misconstrue an attempt to understand perpetrators as a form of empathy, this study agrees with Christopher Browning's view that '[e]xplaining is not excusing; understanding is not forgiving'.¹¹

6 Hussein Solomon, 'Boko Haram, Identity and the Limits of Counter-Terrorism', *E-International Relations*, 3 November 2013 <<https://www.e-ir.info/2013/11/03/boko-haram-identity-and-the-limits-of-counter-terrorism>> [accessed 16 February 2025].

7 Kjell Anderson, 'The Perpetrator Imaginary: Representing Perpetrators of Genocide', in *Researching Perpetrators of Genocide*, ed. by Kjell Anderson and Erin Jessee (University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), pp. 23–48 (p. 25).

8 Olga Michael, 'Looking at the Perpetrator in Nina Bunjevac's Fatherland', *Journal of Perpetrator Research*, 4.2 (2022), pp. 80–110 (p. 105), doi:10.21039/jpr.4.2.111.

9 Elizabeth Dauphine, *The Politics of Exile* (Routledge, 2013), p. 167.

10 Ibid.

11 Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), p. xx.

In our critical analysis of the two texts, we arrive at two propositions. The first is that the perpetrator can better be understood when approached as a human being who can also experience trauma. Denouncing them as mystifying, unknown and unknowable not only complicates the status of perpetration/complicity, but it also encourages a one-dimensional method of seeking justice for the victims. An exploration of the humane side of the perpetrators in both texts via Saira Mohamed's thesis, which underscores the importance of investigating perpetrator trauma, reveals this proposition.¹² The second proposition is that when other seemingly innocent characters are analysed alongside the perpetrators and the victims in the plays, it can facilitate a better understanding of terrorism. This proposition aligns with Michael Rothberg's understanding of the complex terrain of implication, which stresses the possibility of some individuals (termed 'the implicated subjects') not being conscious of their implication in regimes of oppression and injustice.¹³ In other words, we do not stop at discussing Musa and Ibrahim as perpetrators who also exhibit some symptoms of trauma in the plays, we go on to identify and analyse certain characters who, though not perpetrators themselves, are implicated in the prolongation of terrorism in northeastern Nigeria. Such implicated subjects are referred to as 'cultural/societal agents' in our analysis because their actions are reflective of their culture and society.

Delineating the Concept of Terrorism and Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria

It is imperative to discuss the concept of terrorism at this juncture. Terrorism – like war and insurgency – is a form of political violence that is invariably destructive. Terrorism is defined by the United States Department of Defense as 'the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological'.¹⁴ Virginia Held, however, declares as 'obviously unsatisfactory' the US Department of Defense's

12 Saira Mohamed, 'Of Monsters and Men: Perpetrator Trauma and Mass Atrocity', *Columbia Law Association*, 115.5 (2015), pp. 1157–1216.

13 Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 8.

14 United States Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Joint Publication 1-02, 2005). n.p.

definition of terrorism which conceives it as activities of sub-national groups.¹⁵ To counter this definition, Held gives examples of political terrorism perpetrated by Israel and state-sponsored terrorism that happened when the US supported the Contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s.¹⁶ Related to Held's submission, the propensity to treat 9/11 terrorism in the United States (US) by Al Qaeda as an exceptional and unprecedentedly atrocious experience has received a lot of criticism from scholars in the field of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS).¹⁷ Scholars such as Louise Richardson and Bruce Hoffman have raised concern that terrorism studies is veering towards a scholarship positioned to sanction American superiority and/or imperialist tendency.¹⁸ It thus appears as if terrorism studies has been overly preoccupied with the terrorist activities in the US and the West. As Richard Jackson and others noted in 2017, CTS is challenged by inattention to the perspectives on terrorism from the global south.¹⁹ They, therefore, argue that there is a need to de-colonise the field by encouraging the publication of works by scholars from the global south.²⁰

According to most definitions, terrorists use violence, coercion or threat as a means of advancing certain ideological or political positions. In distinguishing between terrorism and war, Vitelio Brustolin posits that war usually represents the interest of a community or serves as a national policy whereas terrorism could be instigated by an individual.²¹ Mustafa C. Ünal argues that both insurgency and war are largely perceived as legitimate because they are associated with fighting for liberation and freedom and patently demarcate specific geographical areas for confrontation.²² As Marco Sassoli observes, meanwhile, terrorism entails the flouting of international humanitarian laws and

15 Virginia Held, 'Terrorism and War', *The Journal of Ethics*, 8 (2004), pp. 59-75 (p. 62), doi:10.1023/B:JOET.0000012252.68332.ff.

16 Ibid., p. 63.

17 Richard Jackson, Jeroen Gunning and Marie B. Smyth, 'Introduction: The Case for a Critical Terrorism Studies', *European Political Science*, 6.3 (2007), pp. 225-27 (p. 225).

18 Ibid.

19 Richard Jackson and others, 'Introduction: 10 Years of Critical Studies on Terrorism', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 10.2 (2017), pp. 197-202 (p. 198).

20 Ibid.

21 Vitelio Brustolin, 'Criteria for Defining War, Terrorism, and Guerrilla Warfare Based on Clausewitz's Concepts of the Nature and Essence of War', *setembro/dezembro*, 25.3 (2019), pp. 643-73 (p. 663).

22 Mustafa C. Ünal, 'Terrorism versus Insurgency: A Conceptual Analysis', *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 66.1 (2016), pp. 21-57 (p. 25).

deliberate killing of civilians by non-state actors.²³ Held rejects this position, arguing that different kinds of war can be as unjustifiable as terrorism since counterterrorist acts of the state which claims not to target civilians at times result in more civilian casualties.²⁴

Boko Haram, which began as a peaceful religious sect interested mainly in propagating Islamic fundamental values, was initially organised around providing social welfare to its members in trying to make up for failures of government.²⁵ The origin of the group dates to the formation of Sahaba Islamic group by Abubakar Lawan in 1995. In 2002, Lawan travelled to the University of Medina for further studies and stepped down for the much younger Muhammad Yusuf. Under Yusuf, the sect denounced Western education and culture, became radicalised and styled after al-Qaeda and the Taliban.²⁶ On 30 July 2009, the Maiduguri home of Yusuf was raided, and he was arrested following his call for an overthrow of Nigerian democracy and Western education. The group reorganised itself and made a violent comeback after the killing of its leader by Nigerian security forces in 2009.

Etymologically, Boko Haram is derived from two words – ‘boko’, a Hausa word meaning ‘Western education’, and ‘haram’, an Arabic word meaning ‘sinful’ – combined to assert ‘Western education is a sin’.²⁷ Accordingly, the main goal of Boko Haram in causing insecurity and chaos through massive killing, kidnapping and destruction of property is to overthrow the government and implement Sharia (Islamic law) across Nigeria in order to get rid of social vices assumedly instigated by Western civilisation.²⁸ Notably, while Wisdom O. Iyekekpolo opines that the historical context of (Northern) Nigeria can help situate the causes of and solutions to Boko Haram terrorism,²⁹ the negative consequences of terrorist activi-

23 Marco Sassoli, ‘Terrorism and War’, *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 4 (2006), pp. 959–81 (p. 980), doi.org/10.1093/jicj/mql076.

24 Held, p. 68.

25 For more on the history of Boko Haram, see Ette Mercy and Joe Sarah, ‘Boko Haram in the Nigerian Press: The Politics of Labeling’, *Journal of African Media Studies*, 11.1 (2019), pp. 65–80, doi:10.1386/jams.11.1.65_1

26 Cf. Sogo A. Olofinbiyi and Shanta B. Singh, ‘Bad Governance as Socio-Historical Springboard of Youth Recruitment into Boko Haram Terrorism’, *African Renaissance*, 17.2 (2020), pp. 59–82 (p. 60).

27 Tanure Ojaide, ‘Introduction: The Boko Haram Phenomenon: Challenges for the Nigerian State and Society’, in *The Markas: An Anthology of Literary Works on Boko Haram*, ed. by Tanure Ojaide and Razinat Mohammed (Malthouse Press, 2019), pp. xvii–xxix (p. xvii).

28 Cf. Osman Antwi-Boateng, ‘Boko Haram and the Islamic State: A Tale of Two Terrors’, *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 18 (2017), pp. 20–39 (p. 21).

29 Wisdom O. Iyekekpolo, ‘Boko Haram: Understanding the Context’, *Third World Quarterly* (2016), pp. 1–18, (p. 2), doi:10.1080/01436597.2016.1177453.

ties are mostly felt in northeastern Nigeria. People have been affected socio-politically, economically and psychologically. With 5478 people killed in 2015 alone, Boko Haram was considered the second deadliest terrorist group by the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) that year.³⁰ Boko Haram is also ranked the deadliest group in Sub-Saharan Africa having been responsible for 'approximately half of the deaths since 2002'.³¹ From 2007-2021, Boko Haram had recorded a total of 8450 deaths, but between 2020 and 2021, deaths caused by the group reduced by 72 percent as a result of pragmatic measures taken against it.³² In its ranking of countries most impacted by terrorism over the period of 2011-2021, the GTI shows that Nigeria was the second most impacted in 2015 and 2016, falling to the 6th in 2021.³³

Saira Mohamed's Perpetrator Trauma and Michael Rothberg's the Implicated Subject

Mohamed's thesis on perpetrator trauma and Rothberg's theory of implication support our analysis of the texts. The choice of these theoretical frameworks hinges on two points. First, they deemphasise utter condemnation of perpetrators. Second, both are located within the area of trauma theory. Originally referred to as a bodily wound or injury, the Greek word 'trauma' has over time been adopted in 'medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text' to mean 'a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind'.³⁴ To Cathy Caruth, trauma is not just a simple and healable wound, but an event that is 'experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor'.³⁵ The non-availability of trauma to consciousness that underlies trauma theory is a carryover from Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Despite the unspeakable nature of trauma, many scholars are agreed that literature remains the best place to represent

30 Global Terrorism Index, *Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* (Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), 2017), p. 46.

31 Ibid.

32 Global Terrorism Index, *Measuring the Impact of Terrorism* (Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), 2022), p. 2.

33 Ibid., p. 19.

34 Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 3.

35 Ibid., p. 4.

trauma and have devised various modes of its representation.³⁶ But it has also been observed that much attention has been paid to victim trauma to the neglect of perpetrator trauma.³⁷ Indeed, perpetrator trauma is generally 'under-theorized' in literary trauma studies.³⁸ As Anderson puts it, '[t]here is little research or academic literature on genocide perpetrator trauma. The act of perpetration is itself morally repugnant, and thus it seems dissonant to consider the trauma suffered by some perpetrators as being worthy of concern'.³⁹

Over the years, trauma has been treated in cultural and literary scholarship, for the most part, as an exclusive, moral property of the victim. Even though Dirk Moses has recently highlighted the problems of a one-sided means of victim-identification,⁴⁰ the treatment of trauma as a sublime experience makes the notion of perpetrator trauma seem eccentric to many people. This kind of misperception makes Dominick LaCapra aver that 'trauma may be transfigured into the sublime or the sacred, and the traumatised may be seen as martyrs or saints'.⁴¹ Perpetrators are generally characterised as immoral people who deserve no empathy. Following Mohamed's postulation,⁴² our study acknowledges the existence of perpetrator trauma and explores its representation in Yerima's *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*.

The notion that trauma belongs to victims might account for why previous scholars such as Jonathan, Agboola and Adeoti have failed to investigate the trauma suffered by Musa and Ibrahim in both texts.⁴³ Closer to our study is the portrayal by Onoromhenre Agofure, Zulfa'a Waziri and Kuranga Funmilayo of the childhood trauma that led to Musa's involvement in terrorist acts in *Heart of Stone*.⁴⁴ But the critics

36 A comprehensive thesis on the modes of, and the rationale for, representing trauma in literature can be found in Michelle Balaev, 'Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered', in *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, ed. by Michelle Balaev (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 1-14.

37 For an analysis of perpetrator trauma in literature, see Erin McGlothlin, 'Perpetrator Trauma', in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, ed. by Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (Routledge, 2020), pp. 100-10.

38 Raya Morag, *Waltzing with Bashir: Perpetrator Trauma and Cinema* (I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 3.

39 Kjell Anderson, *Perpetrating Genocide: A Criminological Account* (Routledge, 2018), p. 226.

40 Dirk A. Moses, *The Problem of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgress* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 46.

41 Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (John Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. xiv.

42 Mohamed, p. 1157.

43 Jonathan, *Ibid.*; Agboola, *Ibid.*; Adeoti, *Ibid.*

44 Onoromhenre Agofure, Zulfa'a Waziri and Kuranga Funmilayo, 'The Works of Ahmed Yerima and Helon Habila', *ANSU Journal of Language and Literary Perspective of Terrorism in Contemporary Northern Nigeria: Studies (AJLLS)*, 2.2 (2021), pp. 198-209 (p. 205).

do not fully examine the trauma he experiences after committing crimes. Drawing on two documentaries – Joshua Oppenheimer’s *The Act of Killing* and Rithy Panh’s *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* – Mohamed identifies lack of sleep, feeling of remorse or regret, guilt, seclusion and avoidance of sites of crimes, reenactment, dancing and taking drugs and alcohol to forget the crimes committed, and traumatic memory as symptomatic of how perpetrators experience their crimes as trauma.⁴⁵ Examining these symptoms of perpetrator trauma suggests that perpetrators too deserve more focus in literary scholarship. Holocaust fiction now attends to this point with works like Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* representing realities of the pre-war scenarios and the perpetrators’ crimes in the concentration camps.⁴⁶ Sue Vice’s reading of Holocaust fiction indicates that the perpetration of evil acts is not necessarily inspired by insanity as these acts were carried out by rational, educated and professional people like Nazi doctors.⁴⁷

Following Mohamed, we also argue in this study that Musa and Ibrahim experience certain symptoms of trauma after perpetrating terrorist activities in the texts. Our analysis also shows that merely blaming or condemning the perpetrators for their atrocities during this traumatic state complicates the status of complicity rather than leading to a better understanding of the conflict. Mohamed maintains that we need to see perpetrators beyond the labels of criminals, sadists or monsters.⁴⁸ To her, acknowledging perpetrator trauma will ultimately help curb criminality and injustice.⁴⁹ Hence, a critical examination of the trauma experienced by Musa and Ibrahim (as perpetrators) in *Heart of Stone* and *Pari* respectively aligns with this postulation.

In *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, Rothberg attempts to enrich the vocabulary of power, injustice and trauma by interrupting the restriction of their discourse to the binary figures of the victim and the perpetrator, and including the yet-to-be-researched figure of the implicated subject.⁵⁰ Traditionally, the analytical framework for understanding traumatic violence and injustice is anchored on the attitudes of mourning, indictment, and accountability which are respective responses to victimisation and perpetration. These attitudes are not

45 Mohamed, p. 1193.

46 On that, see Sue Vice, *Holocaust Fiction* (Routledge, 2000), p. 112.

47 Vice, p. 129.

48 Mohamed, p. 1162.

49 Ibid.

50 Rothberg, p. 1.

less important modes of responding to violence, but including implicated subjects in this conversation provides a non-legal framework for instigating justice and collective responsibility.⁵¹ To Rothberg, there is enough literature on victims and perpetrators of oppression to be able to identify them and understand their positions, but the implicated subject remains an obscure figure whose position is as important as that of the former.⁵² Rothberg's theory, Colin Davis expands, portends our indirect implication in crimes through our personal opinions, cultural orientations and lifestyles.⁵³

Implicated subjects, Rothberg specifies, are not limited to stereotyped, sometimes privileged people such as white supremacists, intellectuals and politicians, but include family members, survivors of genocide, friends, artists, co-workers, lobbyists, etc.⁵⁴ So, a clear understanding of implicated subjects helps us unmask and confront the conditions and other intricacies of violence that perpetuate past/ongoing suffering. This point is particularly true because implicated subjects 'occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes'.⁵⁵ Implicated subjects are neither direct victims nor perpetrators of oppression, but 'their actions and inactions help produce and reproduce the positions of victims and perpetrators'.⁵⁶ By indirectly (re)producing the positions of victimhood and perpetration, implicated subjects continue to encourage traumatic experiences. Rothberg, thus, sees implication entangled with the intersection of 'a diachronic (historical) dimension' and 'a synchronic (contemporary) structure'.⁵⁷ This means that implicated subjects are entangled with the dynamics of past and contemporary power and violence. In all, Rothberg's theory 'advanc[es] solidarity among victims of trauma(s), without totally excluding perpetrators or ignorantly ignoring implicated subjects in gaining justice under regimes of oppression'.⁵⁸ Following Rothberg's postulation, our analysis brings to the fore the charac-

51 Rothberg, p. 1.

52 Ibid.

53 Colin Davis, 'Trauma, Poststructuralism and Ethics', in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, ed. by Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (Routledge, 2020), pp. 36-44 (p. 42).

54 Rothberg, p. 1.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

58 Adewuyi Ayodeji, 'Holocaust Studies and Postcolonial Trauma: Reading through Rothberg's Trauma Model', *Academia Letters*, Article 4050 (2021), pp. 1-6 (p. 4), doi:10.20935/AL4050.

ters who, through their actions and inactions, unconsciously contribute to the persistence of terrorism, injustice and trauma in *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*. As Rothberg proposes, the study examines how the characters are both diachronically and synchronically implicated in terrorism without being actual perpetrators themselves. This analysis shows how an exploration of the relationship between/among the perpetrators, the victims and the implicated subjects of Boko Haram terrorism facilitates a better understanding of the conflict.

Synopsis of *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*

Heart of Stone is a play about the rampaging attacks by Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria.⁵⁹ As noted above, the story centres on the character of Musa, a hardworking borehole digger-turned-terrorist who was raised by his grandmother, Kaka Patu, after the death of his mother during childbirth. Having lived most of his childhood as an *Almajiri* (a boy under the tutelage of a Qur'anic teacher), Musa had been involved in the burning of a church. The play begins with Kaka Patu breaking the news of Musa's six-week disappearance from home to Achief, the head of the family. After a communion with their ancestors, Achief assures her that Musa will return home safely soon. True to his word, Musa returns home a changed man, having joined a terrorist group. He and his partner, Ali, have been given an assignment to bomb the church venue of the wedding of his former girlfriend, Gladys, where his relatives like the bride's mother (called his surrogate mother), Kaka Vero, are present. Ali detonates a suicide bomb that kills eighty people including Vero and Gladys while Musa, who lacks the courage to do the same, escapes home and gets arrested by the police. He is sentenced to death by a firing squad but commits suicide by drinking poison on the night of the execution.

Pari tells the story of Hyelapari (shortened to *Pari*), the eponymous character, who by the time the play begins has been in the den of terrorists for two years.⁶⁰ The play reenacts the abduction of girls from Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria on 14 April, 2014. Through the characters of *Pari* and her parents, the play depicts the agony both the girls and their families go through. Within the period of *Pari*'s abduction, her Christian mother, Ama, has

59 Ahmed Yerima, *Heart of Stone* (Kraft Books Ltd., 2013).

60 Ahmed Yerima, *Pari* (Kraft Books Ltd., 2016).

converted to Islam to appease the God of the terrorists while her father, Tada, has married a new wife as a result of family pressure. Pari escapes from the terrorists and returns home, already married to a terrorist, Ibrahim, and with a son. The mother finds this strange love incredible at first but must ultimately accept Pari's decision to live with Ibrahim.

Symptoms of Perpetrator Trauma in *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*

This section demonstrates how Musa and Ibrahim exhibit some of the symptoms of trauma, such as traumatic memory, paroxysm of anger, feelings of guilt and regret, and reenactment, highlighted in Mohamed's thesis.⁶¹ The analysis explores how other characters (usually relatives of the perpetrators or of the victims) mainly blame or condemn the perpetrators instead of paying serious attention to their traumatic experiences and confessions. Besides acknowledging the participation and complicity of the perpetrators in terrorist activities, the analysis indicates how other characters become too preoccupied with blaming and condemnation to process facts that could point towards resolution of the conflict, rehabilitation of the perpetrators and justice for the victims. We attempt to answer the following questions in the course of the analysis: Can a terrorist be so humane as to abandon his cause? Can a terrorist be so cowardly as to avoid death by a firing squad? And why does Musa feel ashamed to face Patu and Amina, his closest relatives, in prison? All these questions point towards a denial or irreconcilability of Musa's identities. Musa is portrayed as a character who picks up disparate identities at different times: he grows from humanity to heartlessness to guiltiness. Ibrahim's case is similar except that he deliberately owns up to being a terrorist and admits his guilt without the force of any legal process.

Clearly, both Musa and Ibrahim live with a traumatic memory of their terrorist activities in the plays. According to Caruth, as noted above, trauma is a wound of the mind arising from a tragic past that continues to haunt the survivor.⁶² Musa, in *Heart of Stone*, begins to nurse a psychological wound as an *Almajiri* after his involvement in the burning of the church, as instructed by their Qur'anic school teacher, Sheik Sani. Musa recounts this ugly reality of his life when Sheik Sani

61 Mohamed, p. 1157.

62 Caruth, p. 3.

meets him in prison after being sentenced to death for later involvement in terrorist activities. Sheik Sani's initial condemnation of Musa is met with unexpected provocation from his once submissive pupil:

SANI I sense bitterness, a deep, seething melancholy in your words.

MUSA [...] as *Almajiris* you used us. You exploited the faith. You told us one day to burn churches. That Allah said so. We could not doubt a man of God, so we as little boys burnt churches.

SANI It is such a long time ago.

MUSA But the scars are here. To the Christians we became the devils. Satan. The prayers and songs became chants and evocations commanding their God to destroy us.⁶³

Musa traces his negative, inhumane personality to the church incident and emphasises how it has left a scar in his mind, which no one cares about. He goes on to compare himself to a dreg of his grandmother's *burukutu* (a local alcoholic drink made from guinea corn) and 'a living carcass ready to meet his maker'.⁶⁴ That is, ever since his involvement in the arson as an *Almajiri*, he continues to live the meaningless life that led to him joining a terrorist group and to his eventual imprisonment. Musa informs his former teacher about the group's grievances and justifications for terrorism. It is clear from the conversation between them that Musa sees Sani as the agent of his destruction and shows his aversion to his presence and views. Henceforth, Musa, with the perpetration of the first crime, sustains a psychological wound.

Musa lives with a traumatic memory caused by his childhood crime that overwhelms his life. Christian gatherings make him relive the memory of his crime. For instance, he becomes unnecessarily overwrought during a prayer session at Gladys's wedding introduction held in his grandmother's house and walks out of the venue. When confronted by Amina, his fiancée, he claims the song and prayer are a form of attack on Muslims: 'The song is saying that all Muslims are siblings of Satan, who should be trampled upon'.⁶⁵ The song is insignificant and innocuous to Amina as it only contains a prayer point. But Musa sees

63 Yerima, *Heart of Stone*, pp. 55, 58.

64 Ibid., p. 55.

65 Ibid., p. 38.

the song beyond that denotative meaning. Not only has his religious extremism, developed from childhood as an *Almajiri*, made him interpret it as an attack on Muslims who are indirectly referred to as Satan, but the sheer presence of Christians also reminds him of his prior involvement in the burning of the church. The anger displayed here only serves as an alibi to escape a scene that stimulates such a memory. Yet, Amina could only chide him for his strange behaviour.

The explanation to this reliving of past crimes could be better explained in his dialogue with Vero, whom he calls his second mother. Vero reveals that Musa angrily leaving the venue signals his attempt to avoid the memory of a crime scene she witnessed. She recounts:

what happened in our church became our dark little secret. We have never spoken about it until tonight. But I always knew that there was some seething anger burning in you in your quietness. Your deceitful gentle nods. Your almost childlike amiable character. And what happened to-night [...] confirmed my fears. As I watched you stare at us with [...] the redness of your eyes, and as you looked at the pastor as he prayed, I knew that the playful madness was back again.⁶⁶

Behind his innocent, respectful countenance and prolonged silence is Musa's devilish personality which is not hidden from Vero. Vero knows that the traumatic experience at the church haunts Musa whenever they both meet and that informs his recourse to silence. Just like the redness of his eyes, the oxymoron – 'playful madness' – connotes his traumatic life which he cannot independently manage. Musa only tries in vain to deny all the criminal allegations levelled against him; his composure simply gives out in the midst of Christians. Still, Vero dwells on Musa's eccentricity and criminality, blaming and criticising him.

Paroxysm of anger is another symptom of trauma experienced by Musa in *Heart of Stone*. This is particularly obvious when he returns to his village after spending six weeks training in the terrorists' camp: he becomes unnecessarily aggressive. Amina is the first person to notice this strange trait. When Musa asks her to bring him water to drink over a meal but she seems to take a longer time to return, he becomes unnecessarily angry at her. His fearsome action towards Amina is illustrated in the following stage direction: 'MUSA is cold, speaks with a controlled amount of anger. He snaps at her once in a while which brings fear to the eyes of

⁶⁶ *Heart of Stone*, p. 43.

AMINA'.⁶⁷ The fact that his controlled anger instils fear in Amina indicates that Musa is now a changed person. He visibly displays his anger when he shouts at Amina who asks him: 'Move on the double? Where did you learn this awful language from? You sounded like the Zuma masquerade. With its frightening guttural voice fit only for the worship of the stone god. Ha... Musa, you have become impatient!'⁶⁸ Amina's fear grows when her long-time fiancé begins to address her with foul language which, unknown to her, he has learned from the terrorist group he just joined. Amina too resorts to insult and abuse, comparing Musa to the Zuma masquerade, a spirit dreaded by their people.

This strange verbal and physical expression of anger confirms her reservation about the evil intent behind Musa's disappearance from home. He is no more the man she used to know and admire. Musa appears less moved by Amina's expression of concern and shock over the abnormal change in his personality. Instead, he lights a cigarette, blows the smoke in her face and she begins to cough. Amina hurriedly brings out her inhaler and holds it to her nose. His mind is too hardened now to be sensitive to Amina's asthmatic condition. It is only when Amina decides to leave that he grabs her and apologises for his misbehaviour to her. Not convinced, Amina snappily remarks: 'No, you are not. There you are standing like an effigy. God, I must leave. You don't need me here'.⁶⁹ Her comparison of Musa to an effigy further points to his utter insensitivity and carelessness. It is this same carefree attitude that makes him dare to smoke before her for the first time. As Mohamed observes among the perpetrators she studied, they always seek escapist strategies.⁷⁰ Smoking becomes an escapist strategy for Musa at this moment.

For scholars such as Stef Craps who believe that escapist or healing strategies for trauma victims could emanate from their social and historical contexts,⁷¹ prayer can be said to play the same role in Musa's case. Musa resorts to prayers for forgiveness after his return to the village from the terrorists' camp. It is his belief that these prayers, if answered, can earn him God's mercy in death. Underlying these prayers for forgiveness is his perception that, contrary to the terrorists' false instruc-

67 *Heart of Stone*, p. 17. Italics in original.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

70 Mohamed, p. 1201.

71 Stef Craps, 'Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma Theory in the Global Age', in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant and Robert Eaglestone (Routledge, 2014), pp. 45-61 (p. 51).

tion that killing infidels is a path to heaven, terrorist activities are a grave sin against God. Patu, his grandmother, gets a hint of his secret prayers for forgiveness in her dream of Musa's late mother and challenges him, but he denies it. This denial portends a personal reflection on his crimes. Besides, the fact that he furtively does such prayers and pleads to Patu not to expose his secret shows that he feels guilty about joining a terrorist group, a move which he does not want anybody to know about. In fact, all his evil actions are clouded in secrecy. In the same scene, it is revealed that Musa had earlier asked Patu to keep a shroud for him on his return from the terrorist camp. He had secretly given her the shroud with a caveat never to unwrap it. Patu is stunned to know that Musa had all along prepared for his own death, but she cannot fathom the reason for that decision.

Mohamed, as discussed above, identifies remorse or regret as another symptom of perpetrator trauma.⁷² After Ali, his accomplice, has informed Musa on the phone that he is on his way to deliver the (bomb) bag to him, Musa voices his regrets: 'It is all happening so fast. I thought I would have some time to say my farewell. *If only. If I could hold. No. I would have. No. I should have ... But no. By Allah, my mind wavers. Not now. Not me. Not here. Too late.*'⁷³ In his interpretation of Musa's regretful words in the scene, Jonathan states, 'Musa waivers (sic) and his heart fails him because he felt he will have time to enjoy the money given to him and suddenly realises that it is too late.'⁷⁴ This is a misreading of Musa's intention as there is no reference in the text to him regretting merely because he will not live to enjoy his money. Rather, his confusion and restlessness signal an overwhelming feeling of remorse. He wishes that he had not joined the terrorists but concludes that it is too late to renounce his membership of the group. He tries in vain to hide his restlessness and regret from Ali, but the latter eventually notices and warns him: 'Don't think. We are not trained to think. Are you alright? Um? Remain focused on the course.'⁷⁵ Nonetheless, when they part, Musa continues to regret his action: 'Tomorrow. Oh my God. What have I done? What do I tell Kaka Patu?'⁷⁶ The rhetorical questions further depict the extent of his regret over the imagined disappointment of his grandmother.

⁷² Mohamed, p. 1178.

⁷³ *Heart of Stone*, p. 47. Italics added.

⁷⁴ Jonathan, p. 85.

⁷⁵ *Heart of Stone*, p. 47.

⁷⁶ *Heart of Stone*, p. 48.

Lying also becomes a way of masking his shame and regret. Recently, the role played by shame in escalating and perpetuating violence has been explored by Kieran Mitton with reference to the Sierra Leonean civil war.⁷⁷ After escaping from the scene of the bomb explosion, Musa lies to Patu about his whereabouts to cover up for his involvement in the crime. Visibly disturbed and fidgety, he feigns sickness to seclude himself, instructing Patu against allowing any visitor into the house. His denial of participation in the criminal act before the police at the point of his arrest is likely an attempt to avoid punishment. At the same time, he is too ashamed to admit involvement in the killing of Vero and Gladys in the presence of Patu and Amina. Even in prison, the already condemned Musa feels too ashamed to face Patu and Amina. His shameful countenance is described in the stage direction: 'KAKA PATU and AMINA come in crying and holding on to each other. MUSA sees them and turns his back to them'.⁷⁸ He totally refuses to face or talk to Patu who castigates him and leaves more devastated. However, on the night of his execution, Musa voices his regret: 'Now which God do I face when the bullet touches my skin, and pierces my heart? Which God will come to receive me?'⁷⁹ It has finally dawned on him that he was deceived to kill innocent people. He fears that God will not forgive him for this enormous sin. In a bid to eschew facing the firing squad though, Musa agrees with the suggestion of one of the warders that his drink be laced with a rat poison. Although Musa's words are full of regret and admission of culpability, his decision to poison himself portends an evasion of justice and responsibility for his crimes.

In another instance, Musa prefers to remain silent and this resolve worsens the case for him. Silence is a salient feature of trauma.⁸⁰ Nobody, not even his beloved Amina, knows what goes through Musa's mind. When Amina asks him about his disappearance and how he got the money he gave to her, he does not disclose anything. When Patu asks him why he prays unceasingly for forgiveness and paradise, he denies the act. In addition, he refuses to discuss his involvement in the burning of the church with Vero until the latter challenges him. These are moments when he could have articulated his devilish intention, but he trusts no one anymore. He chooses to be silent rather than talk to people who can-

77 Kieran Mitton, *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in the Sierra Leone Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 12.

78 *Heart of Stone*, p. 60. Italics in original.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

80 Craps, p. 55.

not effect any needed changes. The reason for his silence is now clear: his words (and those of other terrorists) are of no significance. He discloses to Sani that both religious and political leaders can only exacerbate their suffering, so they cannot be trusted. Musa furthermore tries to put the blame of their involvement in terrorism on the selfish elite who make hard economic policies and aid corruption in the country.

In *Pari*, Ibrahim also lives with the traumatic memory of his terrorist activities. He needs healing and forgiveness, so he owns up to Ama and Tada, the parents of his abducted victim-turned-wife, Pari. He narrates how he and his group had bemoaned God's indifference to their plight and were angry at Him too:

He [God] had predicaments strewn all over [...] and God stood silently by. We were ready to burn and blow up the sky where we believed He lived in smugness and allowed life to pass us by. Even after a while, the promise that we would go straight to *aljanat* [paradise] faded. With time, the *aljanat* we believed was what we created. It was nowhere but where we stood. We were gods in the *aljanat* we created. With guns and bombs, even Allah was afraid of us.⁸¹

The terrorists implicate God in the earthly chaos and blame him for allowing them to suffer. They have lost all the reverence they had for Him. If possible, they would have blown up His abode in retaliation. The heavenly ecstasy they craved at the beginning becomes a utopia as they now create happiness for themselves amidst a frenzied lifestyle. The implication of this line of thought is that these terrorists are not fighting for God; rather, they were deceived to think so initially. Ibrahim further clears the air on the religious undertone of terrorism:

IBRAHIM A thread of sacred faith lies which I believed would save me on judgement day derailed my senses and unwillingly, I became the harbinger of death. (Pause.) But with each passing day, it slowly dawned on me that I was the fool. A wild murderous joker [...] stupid fool.

TADA But you frightened us to the pit of our stomachs.

IBRAHIM Yes. As we grew in stature, we realized that we were growing alone. We had left the people we set out to fight for behind.⁸²

81 Yerima, *Pari*, p. 47.

82 Ibid., p. 51.

Now armed with the gradual realisation that he fell into religious deceit, Ibrahim appears to have regained his humanity. He believes that he was too naïve and stupid to have killed the same people whose cause they proposed to fight. Ibrahim's remorsefulness stems from the self-realisation of the futility of their horrific activities. He attests to the enormity of destruction caused by the terrorists. According to him, it is the realisation of the deliberate killing of the innocent people they pledged to fight for that informed his decision to repent. He finally becomes convinced that they, the terrorists, are treading a lonely path. Then, he becomes markedly guilt-ridden and says sorry to Ama and Tada, but Ama rejects his apology:

AMA Sorry? Oh, I hate that word. May God on high punish that word, 'Sorry'.

IBRAHIM What else can I say? It was all part of the story ... a dark story that hid the real person I ... we really are. I am sorry. From the fanning embers of our deadly act ... all that is left is a stream of blood of burnt-out human shells ... cut and sliced skins of bled-out carcasses and whole villages turned into large crypts of half-buried souls forced to die.⁸³

His confessions and apology never touch Ama who is consumed by her hatred for him. When Ibrahim confesses to her that he cannot sleep as a result of his crimes and that only Pari lulls him to sleep, Ama gives him a sedative to take with the intent to kill him in his sleep. This shows that Ama is only concerned about avenging her daughter's abduction.

Ibrahim relives his crimes in the form of a nightmare. While still apologising to Ama and Tada, Ibrahim discloses that he often has a nightmare about his terrible acts of terrorism.⁸⁴ Nightmares are one of the ways in which a traumatic experience returns to haunt the victim.⁸⁵ Here, the perpetrator claims to have a nightmare about the crimes he has committed and that it is only Pari who helps him to regain his senses. This means that Ibrahim is haunted by his evil past even as he shows a readiness to change by confessing his sins before his victims. Ama continues to question the audacity that made him visit his victims, but Ibrahim quickly admits his guilt. When he is asked to leave so that Pari can heal, Ibrahim agrees to the decision, promising

83 *Pari*, p. 52.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

85 Caruth, p. 91.

I swear by Allah, I shall come back for my son ... and maybe her ... if she wants me. (He kneels by PARI.) Pari, I am sorry ... I have not been a good man to you. I am sorry I am who I am. ... I swear, Pari. I will not fail you again. I swear not to rejoin the fray. I shall be more steadfast.⁸⁶

Eventually, Ama gives a different condition for Ibrahim's salvation: he must become a Christian bearing Abraham. Ibrahim finds this absurd at first but agrees to this change of religious identity to escape from the security personnel.

The discussion here has centred on the symptoms of perpetrator trauma in Yerima's *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*. By employing Mohamed's thesis on perpetrator trauma, the analysis indicates how the perpetrators in both texts exhibit paroxysm of anger, feelings of guilt, shame and regret after perpetrating terrorist activities.

Dimensions of Implication in *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*

It is never out of place to recognise implicated subjects and examine how they participate in reproducing both Boko Haram terrorism and trauma in *Heart of Stone* and *Pari* considering their underrepresentation in Nigerian political discourse. Dissecting the relationships among the perpetrators, victims and implicated subjects of Boko Haram terrorism in the plays can open up new discussion about how the lines between complicity and implication are blurred. Hence, the analysis here helps us identify characters in the texts, especially relatives of the victims and perpetrators, as implicated subjects because their actions indirectly reproduce terrorism, trauma and injustice. In our analysis of the texts, we call these implicated subjects 'cultural/societal agents' because their actions show how a misapplication of certain cultural norms such as spirituality and familial tie/protection – though positive in themselves – contribute to the perpetuation of terrorism. The actions of implicated subjects, as Rothberg explicates, can be analysed both diachronically and synchronically.⁸⁷ That is, the characters exploit cultural or historical factors (the diachronic dimension) and contemporary issues/factors (the synchronic dimension) to indirectly or unknowingly contribute to the reproduction of terrorism.

⁸⁶ *Pari*, p. 65.

⁸⁷ Rothberg, p. 11.

In *Pari*, Ama and Tada can be identified as implicated subjects because they indirectly enable terrorism by twisting their culture to set Ibrahim free despite the enormity of his crime. As such, the perpetrator's forgiveness and freedom are facilitated by familial ties and African traditional spirituality. Many African people, Northern Nigerians included, traditionally value extended family and communal system which are positive aspects of African culture,⁸⁸ but these cultural values are misused by the victims of terrorism in the play. In effect, forgiveness serves as a spiritual obligation by Ama to heal Pari from trauma. In this sense, forgiveness of the perpetrator by the victims results from familial and spiritual protection. It can be argued that these cultural norms serve as diachronic or historical factors that enable the spread of terrorism and injustice. But we can also affirm that lack of trust for the security forces reinforces this development in the play. With Ibrahim's unexpected visit to Pari's house begins an uneasy course to forgiveness. As already broached above, Ama blatantly rebuffs all his rueful talks about his terrorist activities and proposes handing him over to the police, but Tada declines on the ground that he might be killed or be helped to escape as happened previously. Because the victims have seen the police help previous perpetrators escape justice, they try to devise other means of getting justice on their own. This scenario raises the question of the complicity of the security forces in the perpetuation of terrorism in Nigeria. By Rothberg's definition, the police are figures of legal responsibility whereas the implicated subjects we have here are figures of political responsibility.⁸⁹

To a large extent, the failure of the security forces, which mostly leaves the victims helpless, is a vice in contemporary Nigeria. In *Pari*, with the perpetrator gaining access to the parents of his victim, the father, Tada, becomes the first to buy into Ibrahim's consanguine sentiments. The mother, Ama, however, flares up when Tada says it will be Pari's undoing if they give up the father of their grandson. Tada calls him 'family' who needs their protection, but Ama denounces the grandson as a 'product of the forced relationship, [...] a good-for-nothing

88 For more on extended family systems and the significance of communalism in African traditional society, see Banu Akcesme, 'Gendering and Spacing the Trauma of Sexual Assault: A Father's Story, a Daughter's Unspeakable in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *English Literature and Language Review*, 4.4 (2018), pp. 62-69; Ngozi Uloqu, 'African Literature and the Changing World: The Antithetical Ideologies of Individualism and Communalism in Chinua Achebe's Novels', *Villanova Journal of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities*, 1.1 (2019), pp. 110-23.

89 Rothberg, p. 8.

bastard [...] not my blood'.⁹⁰ For Ama, the child born out of the forced marriage between Ibrahim and Pari only brings the memory of a gloomy past and accepting him into the family means living with the trauma forever. The sympathy and protection for the perpetrator on the part of Tada is based on the need to protect their daughter's (and the family's) image too. Considering the society they live in, they cannot help but be secretive about the affectionate relationship between Pari and her perpetrator. Whereas Pari is too traumatised to regain her sense of self, the whole family is stigmatised by the society which ordinarily ought to sympathise with them. It thus appears to Ama as if Ibrahim had come to intrepidly ridicule the family again after inflicting suffering on them.

Not wanting the family to be subject to societal ridicule, Ama, as noted above, laces Ibrahim's drink with a sedative and tries to kill him in his sleep. The step she hopes will 'cure the world of a harbinger of nightmares'.⁹¹ By using this phrase, Ama implies that killing the perpetrator is a path towards uprooting the cause of trauma suffered by many people like herself – because she has had nightmares during the two-year period of Pari's abduction. Ama has transformed into a violent woman. Tada appears at that moment to stop her from carrying out her plan. Tada then reiterates Ibrahim's status as the father of their grandson, but Ama is still traumatised by all his atrocities: 'He is a human thief. He stole my only child ... took my daughter's virtue ... and killed Vero's husband. He must die by the knife he has brandished so well'.⁹² Ama's lingering unforgiving spirit and Tada's push for familial protection for Ibrahim are a testimony to the enormity of terrorism on the psyche of the victims. Because the mother appears more adversely affected, it becomes too arduous for her to forgive Ibrahim even though a soothsayer, Shaagu, had earlier told her to let Pari leave with Ibrahim after her return. She wants him dead for killing innocent people and abducting her daughter for two years.

It takes the efforts of her sister, Kwacheche, to convince Ama to let Ibrahim leave for Darak (where his aunt lives) in order to escape arrest by the police and soldiers. Already, Ama considers Ibrahim's presence in the house as traumatic for the family, so she advises him: 'For now it will be good to give us some distance to heal her'.⁹³ She believes that Ibrahim distancing himself from the family will afford Pari the

⁹⁰ *Pari*, p. 54.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

opportunity to heal and ensure peace returns to the house. Because Askirau-Uba is a predominantly Christian community, Ibrahim (now named Abraham) is disguised as a Christian and is ready to leave with Pari. Whereas Tada can only trust Ibrahim's promise to change, Ama has more assurance that the decision is for the best for their daughter having been earlier informed about the prophecy by Shaagu. Suffice it to say that Ama and Tada unknowingly have different reasons for forgiving the perpetrator. For Ama, forgiveness is a tricky yet spiritual necessity for healing the trauma suffered by Pari; for Tada, it is all about familial protection.

In *Heart of Stone*, Vero, Achief and Amina can be categorised as implicated subjects as a result of their different relationships with Musa. Vero's forgiveness of Musa which stems from the culture of familial tie/protection contributes to his eventual radicalisation. Vero is privy to the crime committed by the boy but decides to remain silent until he joins a terrorist group. She knows Musa's dignified personality has changed since he was involved in the burning of a church where she was 'heroically' rescued by the same boy but leaves him to live with his 'playful madness'.⁹⁴ She neither reports him to the law enforcement agencies nor discusses him with Patu, his grandmother, because he had saved her as his second mother. Perhaps taking such an action could have deterred him from joining a terrorist group as a young man. Not until she senses he could be planning another crime that would affect her daughter's wedding does she call him and reprimand him for the previous crime. But it is too late for him to change his mind. Unknown to Vero, Musa has a clandestine mission to bomb the church venue of Gladys's wedding. Perhaps if she had exposed or chided him earlier or had turned him in for justice, he would have been saved and she would have saved herself and other victims too. She and Gladys are among those killed at the venue of the latter's wedding. That is a harmful consequence of forgiving and shielding a perpetrator from justice – it replicates a circle of injustice.

Yerima implicates society in Musa's transition to a perpetrator in *Heart of Stone*. He presents him as originally a well-recognised hard-working borehole digger in his and surrounding villages. Even Achief, Musa's uncle who is bitter about him being honoured with the family's chieftaincy title in childhood, derisively acknowledges the boy's toil: '*An earth digger with blistered palms, and sore feet!* Um! That is the small

94 *Heart of Stone*, p. 43.

boy you gave my father's big traditional title to?'⁹⁵ This description derides the kind of dirty, hard work Musa does which has made parts of his body deformed. Patu too confirms that the work is unbefitting of her grandson, but insists that he is just a victim of the society: 'If he had grown up a Koranic teacher, he would have been ten times better than a borehole digger'.⁹⁶ Achief's condescending statement represents the opinion of most about young people like Musa who participate in hard labour to fend for themselves despite being products of societal neglect. Yerima dexterously yet cuttingly captures how the culture of hard work is being subject to ridicule in postcolonial Nigeria.

The stigmatisation Musa faces as a result of his job, coupled with the lack of corresponding financial gain, makes terrorism a better offer for him. This is evident in his explanation for his six-week disappearance from home: 'I went to work. To make money for us. How many boreholes do we need to feed you and our children?'⁹⁷ By joining the terrorist group, he is able to gather enough money to finance his wedding to Amina. He now claims to have some financial freedom: 'All is well now. My employers promised us good life'.⁹⁸ 'My employers' is a euphemism for the terrorist group which now pays him more money than he could ever get from borehole digging. Musa does not acknowledge himself as a terrorist; he hides his newly formed identity from Amina. Maligning Amina's casual job at the hospital to parry any discussion of the terrorist group, he asks her to quickly go and hide the huge sum of money. Amina herself is too carried away by the money to insist on knowing the 'new employers' of her boyfriend.

Unequivocally, the conversation between both lovers demonstrates the effects of societal pressure on and the overvaluation of money among young people. This vice is obvious in the way marriage is now monetised by society. For instance, there was a plan to marry off Amina to Aliyu Danbata in Birnin Gwari within six weeks of Musa's disappearance from home. And if he had not returned with plenty of money, Musa might not have this bragging right: 'I shall see your brother this evening. Tomorrow, we shall give your mother all the money she needs to buy the *kayan awure* [Hausa traditional wedding paraphernalia]. Your bridal load must be the best in the village'.⁹⁹ While custom demands that he pay the bride price for

95 *Heart of Stone*, p. 10. Italics added.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

98 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 21. Italics in original.

his would-be wife, his last statement creates the impression that he wants to do more than is required, so as to show off. The culture of hard work and accountability is gradually getting eroded as society fails to question people's source of wealth. Undeserved celebration of wealth leaves room for the perpetrator to spend his ill-gotten money unchallenged. This is the situation in most of contemporary Nigerian society where affluence creates an unsettling silence. In finding absolute solutions to the threat of terrorism in Nigeria, this synchronic dimension of implication needs critical investigation.

Conclusion

Yerima's *Heart of Stone* and *Pari* present perpetrator trauma and implicated subjects as crucial aspects of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria deserving of critical attention to better understand the conflict, and potentially contribute to its curbing, not least through working through trauma. Beyond focussing on the binary figures of perpetrators and victims of Boko Haram terrorism, Yerima explores the complexity of perpetrator identities and of their relationships with implicated subjects. Mohamed's thesis on perpetrator trauma and Rothberg's theory of the implicated subject which revolve around deemphasising the condemnation of perpetrators offer us the best means to explore Yerima's depiction of these complicated identities and relationships. The first section of the article discusses how Musa and Ibrahim relive the traumatic memory of their terrorist activities. Other characters (particularly relatives of victims and perpetrators), overwhelmed by the perpetrators' participation and complicity in crimes, mostly resort to blaming and condemnation.

The second section of the article addresses diachronic and synchronic dimensions of implication in *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*, showing how certain characters (mostly relatives of victims and perpetrators) are implicated in Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. We call these implicated subjects 'cultural/societal agents' in our analysis because their actions show how a misapplication of certain cultural norms such as spirituality and familial tie/protection – though positive in themselves – contribute to the perpetuation of terrorism, trauma and injustice. The implicated subjects identified in the texts apportion blame without being conscious of their entanglement with crimes. As established in both sections of the article, Yerima stresses how a focus on the perpetrator-victim binary and the status of complicity fails to deepen under-

standing of terrorism in northeastern Nigeria. In all, *Heart of Stone* and *Pari* exemplify recent Nigerian plays on terrorism which explore the complex identities and relationships – of perpetrators, victims and implicated subjects – that perpetuate the conflict as well as the necessity of collective responsibility, rather than a blame game, in its curbing.

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