

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ACCULTURATION IN YERIMA'S *HEART OF STONE* AND *PARI*

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Abstract

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o says, the writer, "must be a writer in politics". This is an authoritative positioning, also in line with the Marxists' maxim that the writer, in the arts and in the theatre more particularly, must be read, or seen to be contributing committed and concerted commentaries to the day-to-day socio-political issues prevalent in their geo-political environment. Against this background, the typical contemporary Nigerian dramatists stand out in their commentaries through their works, toward the social, economic, political and communal acculturation and reengineering of the Nigerian space. This paper examines the themes of anti-terrorism and socio-political acculturation in Ahmed Yerima's *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*, against the background of the overwhelming national challenge of growing insurgencies, terrorism, and impunities, in various parts of the Nigerian geo-political space. One-on-one interviews, case study analysis and focused group discussions, are largely employed, and data collected, subjected to content analysis. The selected Yerima's works are instructively contributory to the socio-political acculturation and conscientisation of the Nigerian polity against the ills of terrorism and growing insurgencies in the society.

Introduction

From the pre-colonial days the Nigerian nation, like any other nation in other parts of Africa and indeed, the world over, has been bedevilled by one form of civil crisis or the other: inter-tribal and boundary rivalries, civil protests against colonial or local authorities, struggle for independence, and religious conflicts that sometimes turned uncontrollably violent, are a few cases in point. The immediate post-independence political intra and inter-party conflicts also took their tolls on the nation's unity, peace and tranquility which eventually degenerating into the major Nigerian Civil War in the late 1960s; and then of course, the subsequent political crises that birthed various military interregnum, and then, the era of bomb-blasting in the anti-military intervention days of NADECO are all terror testimonials of varying proportions that have been a prevalent intrusion in the development process of the Nigerian nation. Incidentally, the situation has not abated since then. In fact, colonial complexities have not made the situation better as the neo-colonial structures that took the place of what the imperialist left behind became an off-shoot of new and exacerbated forms of civil and violent terror crises.

According to Akinola, some key contributors to the various crises in most African countries, beyond the issues of ethnicity, are

colonial heritage through resource exploitation, and inability of ethnic nationalities within African States to negotiate the terms of their statehood, inept political leadership, poverty and alienation, misrule and corruption and 'sit-tightism' has predisposed African States to the intrigues of violent conflicts (265).

The crises have however manifested in diverse forms such as large scale armed robberies, high-profile kidnapping, oil bunkering and hostage taking of oil company nationals, religious intolerance-induced violence reminiscent of ethnic cleansing and genocide, which finally birthed the dare-devil boko-haram insurgency. This has also brought about the regime of suicide-bombing and massive bombing of public institutions and buildings, market places, religious worship places even while worshipers are gathered therein. This had been *inter alia*, alien to the Nigerian society.

Nigerian dramatists have over the period, showed their concern and empathy with these terror incidences that have bedevilled the pre and especially, post-colonial Nigerian State. From socio-political debacles, ethno-religious conflicts to economic doldrums, from military interregnum to the civil society and mass protests, various Nigerian playwrights have captured these moments through various approaches and styles of dramatic presentation and representation. This is in tandem with Ngugi's posturing in believing that a writer must be a writer in politics. He posits that:

a writer responds, with his total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of sensitive needle, he registers, with varying degrees of accuracy and success, the conflicts and tensions in his changing society (Ngugi 51).

Over the time, the dramatists have continued to interrogate the contradictions and imbalances in the society through their works.

It is against this background also that Ahmed Yerima represents the Nigerian crises and terror incidences by way of socio-political and civil commentaries, historical narratives and sometimes, satirical parodies of the status quo. This is his medium of conscientising the general polity comprising of the authorities who advertently or inadvertently create the background environment for the crises, the perpetrators of the terrors who on their own take advantage of the situations created for them, and ultimately, the direct and indirect victims of the insurgencies. Yerima has very creatively been able to graphically capture the various essences of these insurgencies in various areas of the nation chief of which are: the insurgencies arising from the oil crises in the Niger Delta, as illustrated in his *Little Drop* and *Hard Ground*, and that of the boko haram in the Northern part of Nigeria, as graphically illustrated via his *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*.

This paper interrogates the theme of anti-terrorism and socio-political conscientisation and advocacy particularly in Yerima's *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*. It looks at the extent to which the plays illustrates, represents, parodies and tacitly conscientises against the issue of mindless violence, high-profile kidnapping, and mass destruction of innocent lives and properties in the guise of unguided religious biases, social discontent, and political marginalisation on one hand, and their attendant ill-consequences on the ordinary citizenry who becomes direct victims of these onslaughts, on the other hand. In *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*, Yerima, through the model of realism, provides a succinct understanding to the psychological and sociological implications of the boko haram insurgencies and faith-induced mayhems on its direct victims, relations and the entire nation at large, therefore confronting the nation with the sole option to jointly condemn the acts regardless of religious, tribal or socio-political sentiments or rationalisation.

Heart of Stone

The plot of *Heart of Stone* is built around the character, Musa who incidentally gets caught in the complexities of religious conflict of beliefs and intolerances that exist in the Nigerian nation especially in the Northern part. Musa epitomises a young adult Muslim adherent and bigot whose initially subtle but eventual violent indoctrination, brain-washing and convictions in the Islamic faith engages him like a magnetic force toward the blinded genocidal adventure against innocent Christian adherents which happen to include those of his kith and kin, through suicide-bombing. Incidentally, he is part of the secret plotting and eventual execution. In the process, members of his household including all the guests and celebrants of the Church marriage solemnisation event of his ex-fiancée, groom, ministers and all, perish. Only his present fiancée, Amina and his grandmother, Kaka Patu, escape death because of their unplanned absence from the bombing scene. Musa vacillates at the last minutes and runs away therefore narrowly escaping death by death by the suicide bombing mechanics to which he had enrolled. He however is arrested in the end and still eventually destroys himself through suicide by the ingestion of rat poison in his detention cell at the point he is to be taken away to be executed at the firing squad.

The play's opening, though a sub-plot, provides a background understanding to the network of the family relationship surrounding the play's main tragic character, Musa. Yerima, through this opening sub-plot, explores the sub-theme of feminine gender marginalisation in the typical African traditional setting through the dialogue between Kaka Patu, Musa's maternal grandmother, and Achief, Musa's paternal uncle. Regardless of Kaka Patu's courageous assertiveness of her feminine authority, rights and privileges in the family, Achief still brings to bear, the relegated second-rate position impression the typical African men place their women in the traditional family setting, even to the point of questioning the ancestral rights of Seluma – Musa's late mother and Patu's own daughter:

Patu: But not with my daughter. She is not happy. And I suppose now dead, she is one of our ancestors.

Achief: Is she? You cannot say that. She was a daughter in this family. A mere vessel. But she tried, at least, she gave us a son.

Patu: So, my daughter does not qualify? Now she is just a common vessel, even though she is buried in your ancestral land. The family black stone rests on her grave like any other member of this family but she is not an ancestor. She cannot share in the goat they eat and wet her throat with the *burukutu* offerings because she is just a common dead woman vessel.

Achief: Ah ah! I did not say so...

Patu: No wonder she cried like a baby in my dreams, her shroud stained, cheated even in the land of the dead. No wonder!

Achief: Woman, you try my patience.... Keep to your part of the family duties. You are our wife.... When your husband died, I told you to take one of his brothers and marry him. Did you? ... You felt too good for me, so you interpreted our tradition to suit your selfish purpose. See what you have become, a wasted, spent old widow, untouched, crying all over the place seeing ghosts in broad daylight. Um (Yerima 12, 13).

The play reverberates with the hate-temperament and socio-religious frustrations of Musa and his clandestine cohorts. He demonstrates this hatred and frustration towards the Christian sect even amongst his own kin when he storms out of the marriage event preparation of his ex-fiancée, Gladys, because of his misunderstanding and misrepresentation of their songs. This is illustrated in his dialogue with Amina, his fiancée:

Amina: Musa, why? Why did you leave that way? You got everybody worried.

Musa: You heard the pastor, didn't you?

Amina: I did. But what did he say? It was a prayer, Musa. What is happening to you? Why?

Musa: You heard the song? Didn't you?

Amina: Yes and what about it?

Musa: Who do you think is the Satan who fell into the smelly gutter of well?

Amina: No one, just Satan. Musa, it is a song.

Musa: A song, eh? Satan don fall for gutter, march am, march am. That's me. That's us. The song is saying that all Muslims are siblings of Satan, who should be trampled upon. We? Who did we ever hurt? I mean who are the peace-loving cursed docile illiterates? Us!...

Amina: Us?

Musa: Yes... us Muslims. All their songs... all their prayers insult us. They brand us as the children of the most evil spirit, the devil. Shetani! They want hell fire to burn us to smithereens. And yet they want us to be one. To be friends. They say we worship the same God. How can? I swear I will not go for the wedding if this is the kind of songs they will sing at

the wedding. Even their prayers are so militant, aimed at us described as blind ‘gambari’, beggars’ children of the devil (Yerima 38, 39).

Musa’s pent-up hatred and dastardly insurgent mayhem activities are further exposed through Kaka Vero’s dialogue with him when he storms out:

Vero: ...When Gladys came home one rainy night crying, saying that you had broken off your engagement to her because she was your sister, I knew the reason was that you had become the pure believer and suddenly we had become filthy kaffirs to you. Yes?

Musa: Yes, Kaka.

Vero: The sad experience broke Gladys’ heart. I sent her to live in Abuja with our relatives. And now she has been able to forget. She has met a man. Her type. Please let her go.

Musa: Yes, Kaka she can. I have no objections at all.

Vero: So when the prayers started, and you looked down at the kneeling couple and you walked out, I knew that knowing a little about how related we were, was dangerous for the soul. I will not rest well in my grave if I don’t tell you... when you became a teacher in a Koranic school, and suddenly we became dirty pigs... unbelievers in your sight. From the day I saw you as a little boy join a group of Almajiri to force a car driver to a stop and with your mouths you drew fuel from his car after beating him up for refusing to recite the Fathia; and as I watched, it first appeared like play to me, but in a frenzy of madness, you all ran towards our church, poured the petrol under the doors while the other wild boys broke the church windows and threw in burning rags into it... our eyes met, in one flash, I saw those red beady eyes of stones...

Musa: I am sorry. It was what we were told to do. The Ustaz had said Allah had decreed it. We were used...

Vero: When my maternal cousin’s house, Bitrus house was burnt in Koghum village in Wang District of Jos, with all five members of his family burnt alive, again, it was another trip of madness. Millions have died after

Musa: I am sorry.

Vero: The very words the political and religious leaders said...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. And what happened tonight...

Musa: Tonight? Yes, speak, Mother

Vero: Confirmed my fears. As I watched you stare at us with those same eyes that saved me in the church hidden by the frightening beard, and the redness of your eyes, and as you looked at the pastor as he prayed, I knew that the playful madness was back again.

Musa: Yes... (Yerima 41, 42).

Yerima explores the theme of blind hates and religious intolerance resulting from tribal and religious stereotyping, high-profile hypocrisy amongst the privileged middle and upper classes of the religious and political leadership. These are the major sources of crises, insurgency, uprising and socio-political discontent amongst minority tribes and general masses in the polity. This is given breadth in the expressions and narrations of Musa when he is finally incarcerated and waiting for his execution. His dialogue with Sheik Sani, the Koranic School teacher and Chief Imam, speaks clearly:

Sani: To which God have you just prayed?

Musa: To the one true God, Allah,

Sani: Then what are you doing here.... What are you doing here in prison, praying to the one true God? The Police Commissioner called me. He asked me to speak with you.... They want to know if that is what I taught you in my Koranic school.

Musa: And what did you say to them, Sheik? That you taught me all this?

Sani: I denied it vehemently...

Musa: You denied me, too?

Sani: Not so bluntly... but yes. As a man of God, I have a lot at stake. As Chief Imam of the State, a lot of responsibility is placed upon my shoulders.

Musa: ...I am sorry Sheik Sani...my great teacher (Yerima 54).

In the subsequent lines, Musa in response to the Sheik's probing for his gang's reasons for going overboard, goes ahead to express his discontentment, disappointment and a sense of betrayal, which he and his cohorts feel, about their leaders:

Sani: What happened to you? What happened to the best boy in my Koranic school?

Musa: He grew up. And as he grew, so did his perception about life. He started to see and feel things differently. He no longer believed those little stories about right and wrong, and how Allah lived in Heaven. And how piety guaranteed us a ticket to paradise. He became amazed at the capacity of man to be evil, and wondered if God indeed lived with us on earth anymore. He grew up, Mallam, seeing the dark hearts of men...

Sani: You are angry.

Musa: I am, Mallam. I should be! I must be!

Sani: Why?

Musa: I stand before you a used tool for dredging water from the earth. A dreg of my grandmother's *burukutu*. A spent spirit, uncared for even by faith itself, and a living carcass ready to meet his maker.

Sani: I sense bitterness, a deep, seething melancholy in your words. May Allah...

Musa: *Kai, Rankaidede.* Don't say one more word. It is better for me to die with you as my Koranic school teacher in my head. Rather than see pretension stand before me. You see why we kill even our own?

Sani: What?

Musa: Why even those who call themselves spiritual fathers, leaders of the *ja ma'a*, those who wrapped their heads with well-shaped *Rawani*, with well-manicured fingers and beard, and know the Holy Qur'an by heart, you see why we do not spare them in the judgement of death?

Sani: No.

Musa: Because it is better to be truthful with God. Hypocrites all! Dukaku! (Yerima 54, 55, 56).

Why not justifying Musa and the hate-infested arsons, genocides and insurgencies of his lots, Yerima through these lines however unveils the underlying roots of the uncouth vexations and heinous activities part of which is the hypocrisies and pretensions of the religious leaders.

Meanwhile, a violent-end prediction has always hung on Musa's head right from the deathbed last words of his great-grand father, as he is told through his own uncle, Achief and Musa's own late mother. in her appearance in Musa's grand-mother's dreams. Like an albatross and the sword of debacle, Musa deftly and, ironically dances toward that dismal end. So he does not take heed to any wise counsel that should lead him to a rather peaceful and worthy life. He evades all attempts by his elder kin, including that of his fiancée – Amina, to advertently and hopefully save his soul from the imminent devastation that hangs over his head.

Through some strategic characters in *Heart of Stone*, namely: Kaka Patu and Kaka Vero, as chief amongst the protagonists, and Achief, Musa and Sheik Sani as the antagonists, Yerima employs the realistic style in laying bare the day to day hard and bitter socio-cultural realities that dominate the Nigerian polity, especially as they relate to the predominant mayhem caused by the dreaded religious insurgents and deviants, the underlying ethno-religious factors that fan the ember of violence and its attendant consequences manifested in unjustifiable loss of innocent lives and properties. *Heart of Stone* is a lesson in advocacy and acculturation in a national anti-hate, anti-religious bigotry, anti-ethnic and anti-religious intolerance, and of course, anti-terror campaign.

Yerima in *Heart of Stone* maintains poetic justice in that he sufficiently ensures that the vices of insurgencies, terror and attendant bitterness and hatred are presented in very clear terms as evil to society. Musa's defence in his dialogue with Sheik Sani in detention, not withstanding, he in the end at least shows remorse and some humanity through his fear of death, which he himself had inflicted on others so wilfully and unemotionally. He evades death by the same suicide bombing he had been part of plotting, and eventually subscribes helplessly to the same suicide by rat-poison rather than dying by the more violent state-sanctioned death by firing squad. Therefore, this paper argues that, *The Heart of Stone* is a classic representation of a realistic advocacy against religious bigotry, intolerance and ultimately, insurgency.

Pari

Pari is Ahmed Yerima's profound realistic statement again, another contribution to the anti-terrorism advocacy in Nigeria, very pertinent in the campaign in showcasing the psychological effects and tolls of the senseless activities of the boko haram religious insurgents in the mindless mass kidnap of hapless school girls from the haven of their secondary school. A case in point largely referred as the creative raw material for *Pari*, is the kidnap of the Chibok school girls in a Northern Nigerian Girls Secondary school in 2014, and till date, the safe return of the entire number of the girls reportedly kidnapped is shrouded in government bureaucratic and political propaganda complicity.

Background to *Pari*

Over 250 innocent school girls, all identified to be students of the Girls Secondary School, Chibok, a village in Borno State, Nigeria, were kidnapped in one fell swoop a few days around their Secondary school leaving certificate examination, by the boko haram insurgents to an unknown destination but within the vast forest of Sambisa, also located in Borno State. This attracted a worldwide outcry and condemnation against the boko haram Islamic extremist group, and a lot of political pressure was on the then Federal Government of Nigeria led by Dr. Goodluck Jonathan to deploy the State power to have the girls released. However, till date, no one is certain how many of the girls are still alive, how many actually escaped, how many have been officially released and how many are still in the camp of their kidnapers. All of that remains shrouded in government officialdom and political bureaucracy. Secondly, the kidnap of the Chibok School girls also helped to reveal that there are numerous other women and children that are also in the cruel haven of the Boko Haram insurgents of whom their fate till date is not certain.

It is against this background that Ahmed Yerima based the plot of *Pari*. The story of *Pari* revolves around the escape of one of the kidnapped Chibok School girls, called, Hyelapari, (*Pari* for short), through the assistance of her forced, or adopted husband there in the camp of the boko haram insurgents, who also escapes with her. The play opens while *Pari*'s mother still passionately laments the loss of her only daughter, and wishes, prays and vows to do anything, including abandoning the Christian faith of which she had been a strict adherent, to have her daughter restored to her alive. She even decides, the husband's stance, notwithstanding, to rather switch to the Islamic faith in the hope that the god of the religion of her daughter's kidnappers would likely be more understanding and sympathetic to her plight and answer her prayers.

The plot takes an anti-climactic dimension when suddenly Hyelapari finally shows up in her parent's home, through a government representative channel, beaten into a psychological wreck, and turned a mother of one. This is not close to fulfilling the long-time dream and hopes of her mother and father. In an even stranger circumstance, *Pari*'s estranged 'husband', Ibrahim, also shows up. In the wreck that *Pari* has become, the only reality she now knows is that of her attachment to her said husband and child. All efforts her relations make, especially her mother, not to leave with Ibrahim at the point that family members make arrangement to whisk him away is aborted as she insists that they

are both inseparable. Pari and the child finally leave with Ibrahim, leaving her parent, and other family members helpless and hopelessly heartbroken.

Pari is an emotion laden piece that vividly, again using the realistic model which literarily represents the common day-to-day slice-of-life on the script or on the stage, illustrates the heart-rending pains and untold trauma experienced by the parents and relations of the kidnapped girls, in their waiting process for the release of the girls (daughters and wards), on one hand, and the psychological and physiological degradation and dehumanisation to which the kidnapped girls themselves were subjected. Even when some of them become free either through escape or by eventual release, they are never the same again having been put through forced family way, brutalised, forcefully Islamised, radicalised and completely disoriented. All of these experiences are encapsulated and well epitomised in the *Pari* that finally escapes the boko haram insurgents' den in the play. The play provides its version of the real incident that happened through the narrations of *Pari* to her parents:

Tada: (*Pari's father.*) Tell us, *Pari*, what happened from the last time we saw you in school on your visiting day, two years ago?

Pari: It was a dry night in school. Everything went on normally. We had dinner and we were preparing for prep...then all of a sudden, there was commotion. Gun-toting men, about two hundred, entered the school. There was no light in school, so the darkness helped their cause. We were frightened to the bones. Then they started to gather us together towards the gate. Some girls were lucky, they were able to escape at the time, but I was petrified... frozen with fear.... After a little distance from the school, we got to the place where vehicles were parked, and we were hauled into them like cattle. After some distance, we drove into the Sambisa forest (*Yerima 35, 36*).

Pari, in the above narration, gives a clear, pictorial representation of the sequence of the actual incident of the kidnap in Chibok. The play provides a realistic reportage of the actual incident. *Pari* goes further to enlighten her parents on her subsequent experiences:

Ama: So what happened after?

Pari: Hell broke loose. We were really scared, and the hooded men melted our very resistance. Then one day, they said we all had to get married. We resisted it. One girl who screamed her refusal was blindfolded and before our very eyes, she was killed. Petrified, we gave up everything. Then they started to rape us. Some of us died from the pain. Some died from the air raids, and some just died of heartache and pains. Those who lived or survived like me were living carcasses from the world beyond (*Yerima 36*).

Through these lines, Yerima recreates the brutal brazenness of the terrorists, and thereby further creating awareness to the insensitivity of the reign of impunity, and at the same time appeals to the sentiments and psyche of his audience and readers, and by implication, that of the Nigerian populace, about the evils of terrorism.

The dilemma of Ama, Pari's mother, in deciding to dump her erstwhile Christian faith for that of Islam, even when not forced to do so as in the case of the kidnapped girls, is a further illustration of the frustrations, confusion and overwhelming desperation into which the parents and relations of the direct kidnap victims are plunged by the incident and the after-effect of having to wait endlessly and hopelessly for the release of their children. At the play opening, Tada, Pari's father, happens on Ama, praying and reciting the Islamic prayers, and expresses dismay thus:

Tada: Jesus, Ama, what is this? There must be madness here tonight.

Ama: This is morning, not night. You can see that I am praying to Almighty Allah.

Tada: Almighty who? We are Christians, remember... I mean, you, a church worker, dressed up in their dark clothes. Speaking in their forceful tongue, with their harmful mind. On a prayer mat... But why Agnes? Or do you also have their name now?

Ama: Khadijat, named after the first wife of the Prophet.

Tada: Khadijat? I reject that name in...

Ama: I accept it. Remember, as the elders say, play begets play; madness and fear beget bad fear, the type that makes a woman desperate, empty, and ready to give up anything for her child. Those who took my daughter have plunged a spear of painful fear into my soul... forever.

Tada: Ama!

Ama: Leave me alone, let me talk. Our people say that, a dead child is better than one that is missing. So long as Pari... my only seed... is out there, I am desolate... like the cursed arid desert... (Yerima 7, 8).

Pari's mother, Ama, in the above lines, painfully bares her heart brokenness and hopeless frustration in the course of waiting endlessly for the release of her child, which also illustrates the sentiments of the parents and relations of the real victims of the Chibok School girls kidnap saga. As Tada continues to express his helplessness and frustration with Ama in her decision to dump her faith, Ama insists and expresses her decision and desperation further:

Ama: ...I want my child back. I will do anything to have her back. And if Jesus is going to allow this to happen to me, then I am done with him. I shall remain with the Prophet until I find my poor lost child. He must understand... I will try to find Pari through the language of the angered... the language of those who took her...

Tada: Um...

Ama: There must be a God out there. Their God. He must be alive and well. He must... because he must have been, when he guided them to where they took those girls. So I figured it out. I just need to find a way to talk to him. Reach him, speak his language like they do, wear his hijab like their women do, beg him... kneel before him, grovel, if I have to and by whatever other means they used when they broke into the Chibok School, dragged those poor girls out, loaded them into trucks and drove them out like prized princes. All I am saying is that I will do anything to have my daughter back... (Yerima 14, 15).

In the midst of these hopeless expressions of frustrations and desperations, Pari eventually suddenly shows up as the Local Government Chairman himself brings her to her parent's house, veiled. Meeting the mother at home, Ama does not recognise her child in that the Pari that comes home, standing before her is very different from the one that was taken away from them two years ago. She is a shadow and carcass reflection of the Pari that was kidnapped along with the other girls. Pari has become a psychological wreck, violated, abused and dis-oriented. This is bad enough to the point that her beloved mother who had been so desperate, anxious and expectant of her return even dares to reverse her wish and prefers that their prayer for her return had not been answered. The following dialogue bares it well:

Ama: They have changed my child.

Tada: How?

Ama: That girl is not my Pari.

Tada: It is alright. All she needs is rest.

Ama: You think so? Maybe we should not have asked God to bring her back. What He gave us back is a shadow of our precious princess. You need have seen how she drove all the government officials out. She kept screaming, "Go and bring back the rest of us. Give them what they want and bring them home. The girls are dying each day". Then in one sweep, she ran to the kitchen, carried the pestle and drove even the chairman out. She is not the same I swear! (Yerima 34).

In the play *Pari*, the author raises some questions inadvertently: should this brazen kidnap terror have happened in the first instance in a country where there is a purported government in-charge of the security of lives and properties? Why terrorise these hapless and innocent school girls, waste their lives, truncate their dreams and also consequently subject their parents to the psychological trauma they went through? What crime did they commit to deserve to be direct victims of these acts of mindless terror? For the losses of these innocent children and their parents, are there ever going to be commensurate reparations given to them by the authorities? Are there ever going to be official retributions on the terrorists? Who pays for all this?

The play in a sub-theme also provides a copious illustration of the heinous destruction of lives and properties that are consistently carried out by the boko haram

insurgents, beside the incessant kidnappings, especially as targeted against churches and those that worship in them, and the constant sorrow they subject the direct victims of these dastard mayhems. For example, as part of efforts in craving the return of Pari and her mates, prayer sessions are held in her parent's house. On one of such occasions, the family had prepared meals for the entertainment of 'the brethren' that will come for the prayers. The prayers never holds and the food is never eaten as news come instead, that there has been a bomb-blast in another location where some clergymen and other adherents familiar to them are all killed:

Luke: May Ubangiji bless this house. I am sorry that no one will come for the prayers today.

Tada: Why?

Hanna: Then you have not heard the news.

Ama: Heard what?

Luke: The dreaded boys attacked, burnt and killed thousands of our church members in Mubi and Uba. They burnt down the churches... killed even the pastors.

Ama: Jesus!

Luke: ... Sister Vero escaped. She was home, having just lost her pregnancy... but Reverend John gave up the ghost while gallantly fighting for Christ...

Tada: Fighting for Christ?

Hanna: Those who saw him killed said that he was slaughtered after he was asked to recite the *Fatiha*, and instead, he recited the Lord's Prayer.

Tada: Jesus!

Luke: Right there, he was killed (Yerima 19).

The above dialogue illustrates in clear terms, the brazenness of the unchecked impunity of the terror insurgents.

In a very subtle way, the play *Pari*, parodies the ineptitude and inertness of the authorities, in their inability to check these terror activities and safeguard the lives and properties of the citizenry; the characters resorting only to their faith in the God of their religious beliefs including those of the traditional religion as represented by the soothsayer, the Shaagu, for their consolation, hope and salvation. The individuals take their fate in their own hands as the government and its security agencies have completely failed in their civil and social responsibilities to the people. There is also a parody and subtle indictment of government and their political agents in their roles in fuelling the era of brazen terror. This is well illustrated in the confessions of Ibrahim, Pari's forced-husband:

Tada: But many died through your actions. You did not shed a thought for the innocent children... the scared women... whose hearts had become misshapened by fear. Many died.

Ibrahim: We knew. That is the character of war. Many always die in every struggle... or what you call insurgency. But one thing was clear to us, many die, no matter what you do.

Tada: And the government? They deny knowing about you. The former local government chairman says you even killed four of his brothers.

Ibrahim: Did he really say that? Well, this is a different story from what really happened. The irony is that they created us, nurtured us for their own good at first... and after they dumped us. Where did we get the arms? Where? From them, the military and black market. Where did we get the money we spend? Who fuelled our anger? Who? See how well they lie now that they do not know how to quench the fire they selfishly lit. Pity (Yerima 47, 48).

Through this conversation, a subtle searchlight is beamed on the high-profile hypocrisies of government officials in the manner that they are knowingly or covertly instrumental to these acts of terror in the first instance but now posing pretentious and politically intoned sanctimonious dispositions as though they are as alarmed and mummified as the general public and direct victims of the acts.

Pari ends on a very sad hopeless note in that the said recovered school girl from the kidnap saga, erstwhile lost to her parents, is actually never recovered from the trauma of the unfortunate incident. She never recovers her education that has been earlier truncated by the kidnap event; her violated innocence and virginity are never recovered; and she finally separates from the tender loving care of her dear parents into oblivion with his violator and kidnapper. So, what happens next? What hope does her future hold, her parents, and the other victims like her still being held by the terrorists in Sambisa Forest? Does she become emotionally stable again ever? What about the terrorists themselves, will they ever be caught and punished? *Pari* concludes, not providing answers to these puzzling rhetorics.

Conclusion

Indeed, the state of insecurity of the Nigerian polity has been sufficiently re-created in these Yerima's plays: *The Heart of Stone* and *Pari*, as represented in the mindless kidnap of hapless citizens – especially women – and innocent school girls, suicide bombing of public institutions, churches, lives and properties, especially as has trended in the Northern region of Nigeria for a number of years now: the reign of terror and impunity that has persisted, leaving the inhabitants of that section of the country in constant fear, uncertainty and trauma, paralysing businesses, abusing the faith and religious freedom of others and destroying churches and the people that worship in them.

This paper, through a comprehensive analysis of the two plays: *The Heart of Stone* and *Pari*, by Ahmed Yerima, has revealed the conscientisation and acculturation effects of the two plays. The paper argues that these effects are succinctly exemplified through the dialogues, and the unquantifiable psychological trauma inflicted on the direct victims of the terror and their direct relations and on the psyche of the entire nation's populace. The paper further argues that the realistic approach of the plays, in bringing

these haunting socio-political issues to bare, more than the awareness it recreates, also provides a provocative platform for one to begin to interrogate the system, putting the authorities on the hot seat until lasting solutions are proffered to halting the mindless madness.

Nigeria presently does not look good in the face of the world map with the boko haram terror, the Fulani herdsmen, (both in the Northern parts), and then the Niger Delta agitators in the South-south, still very much pervading and haunting the polity. Dramatic contributions like Ahmed Yerima's *The Heart of Stone* and *Pari* provide a wakeup call to the effect of making a bold statement in exposing the real issues: the forgotten and unhelped victims, the unstoppable and unscrupulous terrorists, and above all, the hypocrisies, pretensions, and ironically and sadly too, the seeming helplessness of the Nation's political and religious leadership in the face of this whole impunity saga. The two plays indeed, are an authoritative illustration and contribution to the anti-terrorism and socio-cultural acculturation advocacy in Nigeria as argued in this paper.

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