REDEFINING 'RELIGIOUS TERRORISM' AND THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN PLAYWRIGHT

Kasarachi Collins OKPEH
Department of Theatre & Film Studies
University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Enugu State, Nigeria
Email: kascollinso@yahoo.com

Abstract
In our nation and in the world over, terrorism today is a subject of major concern and discourse affecting every aspect of human existence, be it political, religious, economic, sociological etc. Terror without a gun is now our present day religious reality, just as the popular axiom "stealing (without a gun) with the pen" has been the bane of our national politics for some time now. Terrorism has left the periphery of arms and ammunition and graduated into a more conducive atmosphere that masks its ugly face in our religious groups and organisations. Religion in which man is supposed to take refuge and consolation in the face of life's anomalies has become a subject of disillusionment as it has followed the path of terror, orchestrated by religious leaders who often smartly twist and turn until they find justifications in the holy writs to steal and milk their unsuspecting victims all in the name of God. The upsurge of religious businessmen in our societies has championed the corresponding emergence of a litany of churches and worship centres littering all the nooks and crannies of our streets. In view of these, this paper seeks to highlight the masked terrorist tendencies prevalent both between and within religions, to re-assess the role of playwriting and the Nigerian playwright in countering this menace, and to chart a much sought course. In achieving these ends, this research utilises the literary and artistic research methodologies.

Introduction

Terrorism is a phenomenon that has punctuated human existence for some time now. Being a universal phenomenon, it is a threat to humanity that no culture of the world is immune to. Little wonder why many nations of the world have dedicated whooping chunks of their national economies to the fight against this monstrous menace. The historical 9/11 terrorist attack of the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon and the Pennsylvanian country side in the United States of America in 2001, orchestrated by founder and one time leader of al-Qaeda Osama Bin Laden is indeed a blow that shook the world. Many lives were lost in this devastating experience that still stands as the fieriest terrorist attack on the American soil, and one of the fieriest terrorist attacks in recorded history. In the discourse of the impact of terrorism, this experience cannot be overemphasised.

Again, Nigeria, in particular, has had her fair share of this universal headache, especially with the activities of Boko Haram and other such groups operating within her

sovereign space. The 9/11 attack on America took the format (physical violence) which the attacks on Nigeria are taking presently. This perhaps contributes to one of the reasons why terrorism is typically situated today within the restrictive circumscribes of physical and psychological violence. However, this work takes a look at another dimension that terrorism has begun to take; a dissimulative dimension domiciled within the religious circle, which is not really physical.

An Overview of Terrorism

Terror in simple terms stands for violent action(s) which create or result in extreme fear. Violence here is not restricted to the use of physical force to hurt or inflict injury or pain. Cindy Anene Ezeugwu, in her PhD thesis, titled, "Shades of Violence in the Works of Three Selected Nigerian Playwrights", categorised those that fall within this circle as, *Physical Violence*. Ezeugwu is of the view that;

> hate speech, hypnosis, gestures, manipulations, body shamming, threats, charms, forceful oath taking, favouritism and all those situations that do not involve physical contact "using parts of one's body or harmful objects" were categorised as non-physical violence (30-31).

In the same vein, it is worthy of note that terror as a violent action, does not mean that terror is restricted to just physical actions since the subtlest of words or gestures can do the most gruesome of damages by drilling the largest of holes in the hardest hearts.

When we hear the word 'terrorism', unconsciously, our minds often begin to paint gloomy pictures of blood and death, with surviving victims either moving or being moved to and fro dilapidated houses and streets. We begin to imagine about gruesome pictures of bombs, guns, grenades, bullets and many other instruments of physical violence. We begin to paint mental pictures of lifeless bodies littered all over the places, paramedics and care givers at work, the sirens of ambulances blaring, displaced children crying, the badly injured dying, news agencies writing and reporting, security operatives digging and investigating, intelligence officers analysing intelligence reports and specimens, government representatives blaming and assuring, sympathisers lamenting and so on. This is because our minds are hugely conditioned to the primary type of terrorism which is embodied in physical violence.

Defining Terrorism

Terrorism is derived from the Latin word, '*terere'*, meaning, 'to frighten'. It is one of the activities that top the chart in the list of violent crimes in the wake of the 21st century. It is a concept that is not easily defined, probably because a single definition cannot wholesomely do justice to its ever changing and ever evolving dimensions. C. U. Ugwoke speculates on two possible reasons behind this difficulty in defining terrorism. He states that:

> terrorism as a concept is not easy to define. Two major factors are perhaps responsible for this. First, terrorism has different meanings for different people.

> In order words, it is a relative concept. Secondly, the concept is elusive and as such has not been static in meaning. It has experienced a number of definitional modifications (*Criminology* 193).

He further outlines seven typologies of terrorism which includes:

a) Political terrorism (use of terrorist tactics in actualising political objectives);
b) Criminal terrorism (used to advance criminal objectives);
c) Narco-terrorism (related to drugs);
d) Nuclear terrorism (nuclear warfare in pursuance of objectives, especially political);
e) Biological terrorism (employment of biological weapons such as anthrax and other poisonous gases in pursuance of terrorist objectives);
f) Religious terrorism (use of terrorist tactics to achieve religious aims); and
g) Cyber terrorism (use of the internet technology in accomplishing terrorist goals) (194).

Many attempts have been made towards an all-encompassing definition for terrorism, but none of these definitions have been able to capture its aspects wholesomely. Like earlier stated, many definitions existing in the public domain tilts their focus on violence as the watchword in defining the concept of terrorism. Stephen Jones defines terrorism as, "an emotive word designed to emphasise the extreme fear caused by apparently indiscriminate violent actions of individuals and groups claiming to be operating on behalf of some particular cause" (*Criminology* 50). The United Nations, however, has provided a definition of terrorism as acts of violence resulting or likely to result in major economic loss, when the purpose of the conduct, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organisation to do or abstain from doing any act is terrorism according to the 2001 United Nations interim draft of the definition.

But terrorism in this context is not entirely hinged upon 'acts of physical violence' as is the case with many perceptions of the concept. This work therefore tries to present a paradoxical redefinition of the concept of terrorism as not being strictly restricted to physically violent actions, but also encompassing the subtleties in non-violent actions, especially those perceivable in the area of religion. Therefore, of all these typologies of terrorism earlier outlined herein according to Ugwoke, this paper shows particular interest in religious terrorism since it is the type that seems interwoven into the fabrics of human existence and its multi facets may not be immediately recognised as terrorism by the faithful.

Perspectives on Terrorism and Religion

On the other hand, when we hear of "religious terrorism," we begin to relate it with certain religious sects, fundamentalists or extremist groups that see physical terrorism as a means of actualising their set objectives. Notwithstanding the fact that examples abound of such groups, religious terrorism has since broken the walls of physical

violence and has swerved into other very sensitive areas of life. The scope of terrorism has often been restricted or thought to be restricted to the unleashing of mayhem through the instrumentality of violence, especially with arms and other weapons of mass destruction, but it has widened to accommodate other non-physical aspects of terror which are often not considered terrorist in inclination.

Sometime in May 2016, I lost an uncle who in his days was a devoted and an active congregant in one of the present day churches in Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. He gave virtually all he could, including time, money and energy to the service of a church that turned her back on him in his death because he was not financially up to date. The church refused to accord him his final respects by burying him according to her traditions because of a paltry sum he could not pay up before his death. This led to a little misunderstanding between my family and the church which was later resolved by the both parties. Had my uncle known that this was going to be his fate after such a long period of service to his church, it is inconceivable to think that he would still have stuck around with the church. If he had any inclination of what transpired in his death, he would be lying in his grave today with loads of regrets. This is quite irreligious and unfair of a religious group. Although this seems subtle, it is fearful and worrisome and thus, isn't too minute to pass as a dimension of religious terrorism.

Damian Opata, in the introduction to his book, *Faith, Culture and Individual Freedom*, notes:

> Were the Catholic Faith ever to wane in influence in Nsukka Diocese, it would not be because Christ is not a model of true spiritual living. It would also not be that the Catholic Faith is not dynamic enough to accommodate modern and traditional cultural experience and exigencies.... If ever Catholicism wanes in Nsukka diocese, it would be a result of the miscarriage of Christ to the people by some propagators and defenders of the faith (13).

This position is prompted by the way his (Opata's) family was treated during the funeral of their parents by the Parish priest who asked parishioners not to attend the funeral ceremonies because they "were to be done in the traditional customary manner" (16). The priest in question went as far as punishing offenders by prohibiting them from receiving the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion). But to Opata, the truth remains that:

> in his earthly ministry, Christ never for once intimidated people to accept a belief system. Christ never penalised any people for holding onto a different belief... Indeed, to date Christ stands tall as a true ecumenist who condemned many condemnable practices, especially hypocrisy, but never banned people from freedom of association... (13).

If Christ and his disciples had remained within their comfort zones (amongst believers alone) in the first place, how would Christianity have spread? If Christ had not mingled with the unbelievers, how would the good news have spread across the world? Is

it possible for pills to heal without making contacts with the afflicted? This is another instance of religious terrorism as is obtainable even in the contemporary times. Some men of god ban members of their congregation from certain activities that define their faith because of some issues that are more or less personal, forgetting that the Christian faith is built upon the bedrock of love, acceptance and understanding even for the unbelievers. These illustrations are necessary to point out the fact that religious terrorism does not just begin and end with physical violence. Again, it is not just domiciled in one particular church or religious denomination, but cut across different religions of the world.

It has made its way into shrines, churches as well as mosques and other worship centres, and now dwells among priests, pastors, reverends, Imam, custodians and their congregants. In the battle for supremacy and survival, we see another dimension of terrorism between religions. In other words, religious terrorism has gone both inter and intra, that is between religions and within religions respectively. This work focuses on the non-physical aspects of terrorism in the religious circle, which are often not perceived or seen as such, but felt undoubtedly. Terrorism within the given context has gone both inter and intra.

Inter-Religious Terrorism

Religion and terrorism seem to have forged a dastardly chemistry in our world today. Nigeria particularly is made up of various religions of which three: the African Traditional Religion, the Christian religion and the Islamic religion are the most prominent. These religions have always launched criticisms and counter criticisms about themselves, with each arguing and seriously marshalling justifications as to why their doctrines and perspectives should be the adopted and the preferred. The ATR adherents would never agree to the supposition that their religion is inferior to those of their Christian or Islamic counterparts, and so would stop at nothing to prove it, even if it means exploiting the extremes. This feeling is common among all religions and so is not peculiar to one. Perhaps that is the reason why Ken Wear maintains that, "we all have a natural preference for people like ourselves. That was, after all, the origin of society as our numbers grew from the cave man days…" (*Christian and Muslim Extremism*). With this being the case, the members of each group would resort to slander, defamation, shaming and other irreligious practices against the other groups, in order to score some points.

Many times we hear some religions making such suppositions about Islam being driven on the wheels or doctrines of violence and terrorism. Many assume that Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, Isis and even the much dreaded Boko Haram that have ravaged our very own Nigerian society for more than a decade now all have their roots in Islam, and this is probably the reason why Islam as a religion is considered by many to be terror oriented. Jihads (holy wars) have been fought over and over in defence of religious dogmas and faith, claiming countless number of lives and property. Again, non-Muslims (and Muslims converting to other faith) are regarded as infidels, (the unfaithful) meaning they are candidates for the sword.

But the truth still remains that no religion on earth can lay claims to having a clean slate in the discourse of terrorism. The Christian church cannot say, for instance, that the Muslims are terrorists since the Christian religion on its own part is not devoid of bloodstains from the past (history), owing to its great record of bloodshed during the era of the "crusades" (fighting for lost holy lands). This period was characterised by battles and killings carried by the Christian faithful in attempts to retake lost holy lands. There were fierce Knighted warriors of Christ who waged wars against the Muslims with the conviction that their cause was just. The history of Knighthood today in the Church can be traced to this period in history. Even in the Christian bible, instances abound of a series of battles and wars fought and won or lost between the "people of God" (Israelites) and other nations.

Same goes for the African Traditional Religion and many other religions of the world. In the African Traditional Religion, there have been instances of terror in the way or manner it had been practiced in the past. In the past before the Christianisation of Africa, twins under the auspices of the African Traditional Religion were considered a taboo in some parts of Africa and Nigeria in particular. They were therefore, candidates for destruction and specially meant for the evil forests. Human sacrifices were also rife in "cleansing the land" of evil spirits in order to avoid the wrath of the gods. The burial of a dead king in some areas was characterised by head hunts in order to procure human heads that would accompany the king to the great beyond. These head-hunters terrorised communities until they get the required number of heads for the funeral. These are a few instances of terrorism in the African Traditional Religion. Even if any (religion) at all would still insist that it is clean, then what happens to the subtle gestures that are suggestive of terrorism of which this work is inclined to review? Even in religious denomination, terrorism still exists.

Inter-Denominational Terrorism

Even within religions, terrorism manifest in various ways between members of different denominations of a particular religion. For instance, in Christianity, we see church pastors and reverends mounting the pulpits and making very sensitive statements about other churches they perceive as threats to their own existence, all under the umbrella of Christianity. The Catholic Church over the years have been accused of idolatry by other groups who think their doctrines are based on idol worship because of their use of materials such as holy pictures, statues, chaplets, the crucifix and other items of worship and veneration, and they in defence of themselves would most times go political by using the phrase "mushroom churches", as a derogatory remark to describe these other churches that they think do not really have strong bases. These priests and pastors make all manner of image threatening remarks about themselves in trying to dissuade their members from pitching their tents in those directions.

The Muslim religion is not free from this inter-denominational conflicts and battles for supremacy which constitutes a kind of terrorism which is not typically physical, but has the propensity of translating to physical terrorism with the passage of time. Islam is undoubtedly one of the many religions of the world that has splintered into many sects. It is a religion that is multi-factional, with different Nigerian Muslims

belonging to different factions, such as, the Sunni, the Shi'ite, the Izala, and so on. In Nigeria, the Shi'ite Muslims headed by Ibraheem El-Zakzaky occasionally clash with other factions all in the unending battle for supremacy. Considering other non-Wahhabi Muslims as infidels, they are regarded as people doomed by Allah, and so are potential candidates for the sword. In reassuring their members of their ingenuity, they make destructive statements about themselves to the applause of their members. This is a form of terrorism, although not physical.

Intra-Denominational Terrorism

Many terrorist tendencies rear their ugly heads even within a religious denomination. They are made visible in the way that pastors, priests and reverend gentlemen construct their preaching around particular areas for their personal interests. Of course, they have to find biblical support to these even where they are non-existent, so as to make the pills more digestible to their congregations. Pastors and reverends for instance mostly prefer to dwell on areas dealing with tithing, seed sowing and, first fruit offering, alms giving to the church among others. They keep terrorising these members who are constantly in pursuit of eternal life until they succumb to their pressures. Even members who live below the income line of ₦400 to ₦500 per day and consequently cannot afford three square meals daily are not left out in this religious extortion. In fact, they are the most susceptible since according to the gospel of Luke, the measure you give is the measure you will receive.

The implication is that these religious businessmen start to live big and flashy while their victims remain impoverished, believing God for a miracle one day, while still pumping the little they have into the coffers of the church. Many of these pastors today have big schools, water plants, banks, universities, bakery, bottling companies and other establishments that only the bourgeois can afford. Most members of these churches can only attend these expensive institutions only in their dreams and wildest imaginations. Although this does not involve any form of violence, it can be rightly captured as terrorism. Their religious leaders fly in expensive jets and move in exotic fleets of cars while most of their congregants trek until their shoes and sandals wear out. These same men mount the pulpits to the awe of their faithful who have grown to become hypnotised and brainwashed by their kind of sermons. It is no longer news in contemporary Nigeria when we hear that an Imam, pastor or man of God is caught pants down with a member of his sect who has to succumb to his manipulative "prayer and deliverance" sessions. The victims in these instances bend to these deceptions not out of their personal volitions, but due to these "men of God's" expertise in brainwashing them in the name of God and Allah.

The 'Whistle-Blowing' Role of the Playwright

The playwright has always remained and must continue in all diligence and focus in commenting on the ills of the society, even in the face of adversities. By this, it is clear that the task of the playwright as a creative artist is a dangerous affair that must be undertaken if he is to remain the voice of the voiceless, the mirror of the society, the societal watchdog, and the social cum moral activist. He digs, pokes, pries and risks

getting hurt, all in his zeal to expose the ills of the society with a view to help recreate a better society for mankind.

In the colonial times, playwrights such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'O of Kenya, Hubert Ogunde and his Nigerian contemporaries like Moses Olaiya, Duro Ladipo, Wole Soyinka, and a handful of other dedicated dramatists, refused to cower in the face of colonial oppression. They continued to push back circumscribes of colonialism until they fell apart. Till this present day, the playwright has not stopped in the fight for a better society. After this battle for religious freedom had been fought and won, the fight continues as other challenges emerge. Every finish line is indeed the beginning of a new race, and for each new issue, the playwright must brace up to confront the challenges ahead.

Today, the issue of terrorism is one of those challenges that have become as persistent as a cankerworm, piercing, sucking and eating deep into the security of the society, causing a lot of division and harm in the homes and the society at large. Religious terrorism is holding sway in our various denominations manifesting in different shades and dimensions, and many playwrights have taken the centre stage to address these anomalies. Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Emeka Nwabueze, and a host of other playwrights have taken the forefront in the move against the non-physical aspects of religious terrorism. In his play, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, for example, Soyinka presents us with a typical representation of the lives and activities of many Nigerian and African self-acclaimed men of God. For a play written in 1972, it is a visionary recreation of present day religious realities.

Trials of Brother Jero

Brother Jero is a fake prophet who is merely in the prophetic business to survive. His whole being is built on lies, deceit, manipulation and craftiness. The excerpt below from the play reveals him as a religious businessman:

> **Jero**: …I am glad I got here before any customers–I mean worshippers – well, customers if you like. I always get that feeling every morning that I am a shop-keeper waiting for customers. The regular ones come at definite times… (55).

He helps his master the Old Prophet get the Beach side land by leading a campaign against other prophets, but later with his craftiness, he collects the land from his master. With his prophet deception, he becomes indebted to Amope, Chume's wife who sells him a velvet cape he cannot pay for. Again, this excerpt reveals this:

> **Jero**: I don't know how she found out my house. When I bought the goods off her, she did not even ask any questions. My calling was enough to guarantee payment. It is not as if this was a well-paid job… this velvet cape which I bought from her. It would not have been necessary if one were not forced to distinguish himself more and more from these scum who degrade the calling of the prophet (54).

Chume, his most loyal congregant, on discovering that he is a fake prophet tries to kill him; but with the help of a politician, who becomes his next victim, he gets Chume into an asylum.

Trials of Brother Jero is an embodiment of the happenings in our society all in the name of religion. The extortionist tendencies in present day pastors, betrayal, character defamation/assassination, futility and a world in need of miracles are some of the realities in the play that parallels with the religious realities of our present day. Extortion can be seen in Brother Jero's dealings with Amope. With his prophetic guise, he is able to get Amope to sell to him even though he has no money to pay. Amope on her own part sees it as a privilege to sell to a prophet of the Lord.

This is how many self-acclaimed pastors and men of God use the name of God to extort money from members of the society. Betrayal is seen in Jero's dealings with his Master the Old Prophet from whom he collects the beach side land for his own church. Before then, he had carried campaigns against the other men of God who wanted that piece of land at the beach; defaming and assassinating their characters and slandering them until he is able to help his master secure it. A world in dire need of miracles can be seen in Jero's encounter with the politician who wants a place as minister in the nation. It is also evident in the case of Chume who the prophet has promised and prophesied that he will be promoted soon in his place of employment. All these constitute another shade of terrorism which can be categorised as non-confrontational, subtle and time wasting.

I Will Marry When I Want

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is a foremost African playwright. Even though he is not a Nigerian playwright, his work, *I Will Marry When I Want* has become very important to the context of our discussion since it tackles this issue of religious terrorism in Africa. In the play, we are presented with a similar situation when the members of a church who claim to belong to the sect of the poor visits Kiguunda and his wife, Wangeci, for alms. They claim they want to build their own church, and so they resort to religious terrorism to raise money. The excerpt below captures this:

> **Leader**: We belong to the sect of the poor.
> Those without land,
> Those without plots,
> Those without clothes,
> We want to put up our own church.
> We have a haraambe.
> Give generously to the God of the poor.
> Whatever you have put aside.
> To ward off the fate of Ananias and his wife (8).

From this excerpt above, we see terrorism come to play in the conduct of these religious businessmen who hide under the cloak of the poor to extort the masses in the name of God. This is seen in the way they craftily attached a warning to their plea when

the leader says: “Whatever you have put aside, to ward off the fate of Ananias and his wife” (8). This is the kind of situation that has beset us today. They attach these subtle threats in order to intimidate their victims and leave them with no alternative but to comply. And when the owner of the house tells them that they could hardly afford to feed their bellies, talk more of giving for a haraambe, the group immediately raise a song thus:

Soloist: *The devil of stinginess*
Must be crushed!
Chorus: *Hallelujah lets crush him*
And press him to the ground,
For the second coming is near (8).

They label Kiguunda a stingy man because he tells them he cannot afford to contribute to their cause. This again highlights the subtleties that constitute terrorism as they are obtainable in our societies today. Ahab Kioi tricks Kiguunda and his family into using their title deed which represents their only hope of hand ownership while still hiding in the guise of religion. They accuse Kiguunda and his wife of not having a proper wedding and gets them to use their only land to obtain a loan for the wedding, a loan which they were unable to pay back. They make a whole lot of noise about the church and holiness, singing hymns and praising God, (just as pastors, Men of God, Reverends, and so on, in our society do to create the impression of godliness and holiness) terrorising these poor people until they take possession of their only land. This represents the reality of the countless number of churches in our society, making noise and terrorising the populace with their deafening loudspeakers.

In many cities in Nigeria, it is not new to have more than one of such churches operating at the same time with their separate loud speakers terrorising the entire city with their noise. Even when the church is so small that it can only manage to take just a few people, these monstrous loudspeakers would still be mounted. The result is that these concurrent sermons rendering from separate units produce clashing sounds that constitute nuisances and becomes a problem to the society. If a hospital with patients for instance is situated close to these churches, the noise will be enough to intensify the conditions of the ailing patients. It is therefore not out of place to attribute such realities to terrorism, even though there is no form of physical violence but we can liken such acts to psychological violence.

When the Arrow Rebounds

In Emeka Nwabueze's *When the Arrow Rebounds,* which is a dramatic adaptation of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, we once again come face to face with instances of religious terrorism. Ezeulu, driven by pride as the chief Priest of the Ulu Oracle crosses his bounds when he decides to punish his own people for not reacting to his detention by the white colonialists. He refuses to eat up his remaining three sacred yams in order that the harvest of new yams could commence. The implication is that these yams are to be left in the fields to perish. This would undoubtedly translate to famine in Ulu.

But Ezeulu who is bent on revenge cares not about this. Instead, he seeks justification within their culture by insisting that he must follow due process (one yam per new moon) and will not go contrary to the traditions of their ancestors by speedily consuming the remaining three yams. The situation is captured in Ezeulu's words below:

> **Ezeulu**: I welcome you all. Your mission is a good one and I thank you. But I've not heard that there's a disagreement about the New Yam feast. My assistants came here earlier and said it was time to announce the day of the next festival and I told them that it was not their place to remind me. But with you, I need not speak in riddles. You all know what our custom is. I only call a new festival when there is only one yam left from the last. Today I have three yams and so I know that the time has not yet come for the feast (62).

He does not care if the whole yet to be harvested yams in the fields rot away since he has more than enough yams from his previous harvests to sustain him and his family. But his arrow rebounds on him when his people, hungry and dissatisfied with his punishment harvests their yams in honour of the white man's gods (Christianity) after hearing that the Christian God can protect them from the wrath of Ulu.

This instance where a man decides to use his religious office to punish his own people illustrates religious terrorism in the African Traditional Religion. Although Ezeulu uses neither a gun nor a knife against his people, his decision to leave them to die of starvation while they had yams in the fields could be considered act terrorism. Another example of religious terrorism deducible from this play is visible in the clashes between the African Traditional Religion and Christianity in which one tries to outweigh the other by making efforts towards downplaying the relevance of each other to the people. This clash informed Oduche's imprisonment of the sacred python after being told in his Catechism classes that the python is barbaric and powerless before the Christian God.

The tussle between Ezeulu and Ezeidemili in this play is another pointer to the battle for supremacy which is also obtainable within the African Traditional Religion adherents. On the issue of the imprisoned sacred python, the excerpt below highlights the rivalry between these two priests:

> **Azuka**: All right. Ezeidemili wants to know how you intend to purify your house of the abomination committed by your son.
>
> **Ezeulu**: What? (*Jumps up*). Go back and tell Ezeidemili to eat shit. Do you hear me? Tell Ezeidemili that Ezeulu says he should go and fill his mouth with shit. (*Moves a step to* **Azuka**. *He begins to withdraw*). As for you, young man, you may go in peace because the world is no longer what it was. If the world has been what it was I would have given you something that would always remind you of the day you put your head in the mouth of a leopard. I would have taught you that you don't pull a tiger by the tail (26-27).

It parallels with those visible in the Christian religion between men of God who often try to outweigh each other in order to gain more followers, which often lead to activities and practices that could be considered irreligious and acts of terrorism within the given context. The role of the playwright in the fight against societal ills including religious terrorism remains indisputably indispensable. He continues to remain valid in the fight for a better society.

Africa as a continent believes so much in the influence of the supernatural. Her people believe so much that every activity of man on earth is overseen by a supreme being. Thus many African men consider it important to be in good fellowship and communion with this being, and that is why Africans have been tagged or branded as "too religious." This explains why the church business in Africa is now considered a lucrative enterprise with a good number of self-acclaimed men of God rushing into it to partake in scooping from the “honey pot” on a daily basis. This also explains why churches and worship centres are located at almost every nook and cranny of Nigeria cities and villages.

Religious businessmen have discovered this and are now exploiting this means for survival. At the same time, they have created more problems for the society than they have solved as rationality is slowly and steadily being slain on the altar of religion. Although Nigerian playwrights have done a lot and deserves some credit for their efforts in capturing religious terrorism within this context, more work still has to be done in this regard. More playwrights need to key into this societal menace as a matter of urgency. There is need for more playwrights to urgently delve in and address this issue of the African man's "over religiousness" that tends to make him susceptible to these "men of God". A more radical approach with radical texts as well as performances will aid in the salvation of the African man from the stranglehold of these modern day businessmen.

Conclusion

This research has attempted to dig into the area of religion to see some types of behaviour domiciled within the religious circle that are suggestive of terror, although they are not violent in expression. The study identifies terrorism beyond the everyday kind of terrorism which we are familiar with. The researcher is of the view that this kind of terrorism which has done a lot of damages to the African and Nigerian society particularly has not received the much needed attention it deserves from playwrights. A pastor, who decides to excommunicate a member of his church for any reason whatsoever, is as guilty as that individual whom he or she has excommunicated because according to the scriptures, judgment is not for man, but for God. The playwrights whose works have been x-rayed herein have done a great job in the fight against religious terrorism, but more playwrights should, as a matter of urgency tilt their narratives towards this area of religion in order to salvage the teeming populace who have become vulnerable to these religious merchants in the wake of the 21st century.

A new definition of the concept of terrorism should be free to accommodate subtle instances and gestures that are not really physically violent (by mode of delivery or expression) but are terrorist (killing) in impact. They could be words or expressions and actions that do not connote violence in the primary sense of the word, but may have the

propensity of becoming confrontational and violent at the long run. On this note, terrorism can be defined as purposeful acts and expressions which could be violent or non-violent, resulting or likely to result in major economic loss, intimidation of a population and compelling a government or an organisation towards unfavourable behaviour.

Again, this definition cannot be said to have holistically captured its dimensions as terrorism is a relative concept that keeps evolving with the passage of time. The religious doctrines of this present day have taken terrorist dimensions, and the playwright as the societal watchdog, social critic and whistle-blower should brace himself and stand as a potent talisman to effectively match this trend in combat for a better society.

WORKS CITED

Ezeugwu, Cindy A. "Shades of Violence in the Works of Three Selected Nigerian Playwrights". PhD Diss. Submitted to University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2017.

Jones, Stephen. *Criminology*, 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Nwabueze, Emeka. *When the Arrow Rebounds*. Enugu: ABIC Books, 2005.

Opata, Damian. *Faith, Culture and Individual Freedom: Notes and Extrapolations from Lejja Catholic Parish, Nsukka Diocese.* Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers, 2011.

United Kingdom: The Terrorist Act 2000 [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland]. 20 July, 2000. http://www.refworld.org/docid/46e552412.html.

Soyinka, Wole. *Three Short Plays*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Ugwuoke, Christopher. *Criminology: Explaining Crime in the Nigerian Context*. Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers, 2015.

Wa Thiong'O, Ngugi. *I Will Marry When I Want*. London: Heinemann, 1982.

Wear, Ken. *Christian and Muslim Extremism in History*. Retrieved 3 Aug. 2018 from www.rationallink.org/religextr.htm.