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Trauma and insurgency in Nigerian Drama: A study of Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* (2006)

Tekena Gasper Mark

Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Email: tekena.mark@uniport.edu.ng

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3591-8818>

Abstract

Nigeria has been challenged by all forms of anti-government revolts from groups such as the Niger Delta militia, Boko Haram, and the Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers conflict. Most of these uprisings are due to the search for survival by millions of Nigerians who continue to wallow in poverty while the mighty few continue to amass wealth for themselves. Survival for the average Nigerian becomes traumatic and results in a counter reaction by Nigerians through violence and other anti-social behaviours, so as to free themselves from the mental agony and stress of surviving in the harsh economic climate of Nigeria. This study examines trauma and insurgency in Nigeria drama using Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground*. This is a qualitative research. The study adopts Sandra Bloom's (1999) "Trauma Theory" as its theoretical framework and observed that when people undergo traumatic experiences, these experiences are not erased, rather they continue to intrude in the consciousness of the victims and express themselves through reenactment for the victims to be free temporarily. This study recommends that people with traumatic experiences should be given early medical attention to enable them heal from past wounds, reconstruct and reconnect with their internal and external worlds.

Keywords: drama, hard ground, insurgency, Nigeria, trauma

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Introduction

Imitation has remained an inherent quality of man and this is seen in the fact that unborn babies dance in their mothers' wombs, while trying to imitate the sounds and events they perceive in the outside world. Similarly, drama is simply the imitation of human experience by actors for the benefit of an audience. For Okoh (2007) drama is "a method of expression for the playwright, who tries to give order and clarity to human experience. It can be presented as a dialogue either on stage, television, and radio" (p.21). It is common for children to imitate their parents and for parents to act or behave in certain comic ways to make their children laugh; stop them from crying or to get their attention. This shows that drama can be used for entertainment and information. For the Greeks, attendance to dramatic events was a civic responsibility, and drama was used to inform, educate and entertain the public. Azunwo (2014), in his conception of drama as a play, defines drama as "a creative and an artistic letter composed by the supposed conscience of the theatre" (the playwright), "first and foremost to the director, actors, and other members of the production crew, informing them of his current ideological standpoint, vision and positive commitment to the development of his society" (p.52). Drama therefore, is a social weapon employed by the playwright to proffer solutions to the problems in his society.

Nigerian dramatists such as Hubert Ogunde, James Ene Henshaw, J.P. Clark, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola and Wole Soyinka, who belong to the first generation of Nigerian dramatists, as well as the second and third generations of Nigerian dramatists, such as Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Sam Ukala, Ahmed Yerima, Emeka Nwabueze, Bakare Ojo Rasaki, Alex Asigbo, Esiaba Irobi and others, have remained committed to mirroring the anomalies prevalent in the Nigerian society in their plays. Speaking on what makes drama or a play Nigerian; Nzewi (1981) argues that:

A play is not necessarily Nigerian if it discusses Nigeria's cultural milieu within the formal and typological framework of Euro-American plays. A play would start becoming uniquely Nigerian when the conceptual and creative approaches cast off the mental constraints imposed by acquired Euro-American standards (p. 437).

From the foregoing, a drama is Nigerian when it reflects the social, political, economic and religious climates of Nigeria, and attempts to correct its societal ills in a content and form that is uniquely Nigerian. Having examined the meaning and nature of Nigerian drama, it is against this backdrop that this study examines trauma and insurgency in Nigeria drama using Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground*.

Theoretical Framework

Traumatic experience impacts the lives of people and alters the way they perceive the world. Sandra Bloom's (1999) "Trauma theory" argues that an innate sense of reciprocity and the need for fair play guides human activities, and this has led to the creation of justice systems, as such "you cannot hurt anyone, most importantly children, without setting the stage for revenge that will be exacted either upon themselves, upon others, or both" (p.2). Again, humans or animals will either fight or seek flight from a potential harm or danger (fight or flight reaction), but in many cases, the victim cannot fight or escape the harm, making him helpless. "This helplessness can cause changes in the animals' ability to recognize and escape from danger so that once the animal becomes accustomed to trauma, it fails to try and escape from danger" (Bloom, 1999, p.3). This is phenomenon is called 'learned helplessness'.

When an individual is under stress or undergoes trauma, the mind preserves the traumatic experience in a frozen state in the form of images or body sensations (smells, touch, tastes, pain, and strong emotions) which play out in form of flashbacks. According to Bloom (1999), “during a flashback, people become overwhelmed with the same emotions that they felt at the time of the trauma. Flashbacks are likely to occur when people are upset, stressed, frightened, or aroused or when triggered by any association to the traumatic event” (p.7). During a flashback, the mind becomes flooded with images, emotions, and sensations associated with the traumatic event, and the individual becomes trapped in “speechless terror” since the verbal memory is turned off because of the arousal of fear and tension, and the individual cannot articulate his experience. The nonverbal memory becomes the only memory the individual has about the trauma. The individual experiences amnesia or memory loss. However, the memory presents itself in form of nonverbal behaviour and sometimes, a reenactment of the traumatic event, because, “when someone experiences a flashback, they do not remember the experience, they relive it” (Bloom, 1999, p.7).

Overtime, as people try to avoid situations or relationships that can trigger or arouse traumatic emotions, they become numb to all emotions, feel depressed, empty and alienated. In this state, to feel a sense of being alive, they will need greater stimulation or engage in risk taking behaviours for them to feel inside themselves again (Bloom, 1999, p.7). To heal from traumatic experiences, the victims must be given early medical intervention that enables survivors to open and heal old wounds, remember and reconstruct their traumatic pasts by building new hopes and possibilities, resolving the painful emotions associated with the past, and reconnecting with their internal and external worlds. In applying this theory to this study, this research will examine how the manifest actions of Nimi, the major character and his mother Mama in Ahmed Yerima’s *Hard Ground* are informed by their traumatic pasts.

Insurgency in Nigeria

Insurgency has remained a major characteristic of the post-colonial Nigerian state since its independence in 1960. Insurgency here simply means the act of revolt by armed groups against a ruling government to topple it. Galula (1964) defines it as “a protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order” (p.4). Similarly, Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that insurgency is “a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas” (p.75). The above definitions relate insurgency to the use of military tactics and guerilla warfare to fight and obtain power. However, while guerilla warfare is directed at military ends, insurgents are more interested in obtaining political power. In this regard, Lyall and Wilson (2009) see insurgency as “a protracted violent struggle by non-state actors to obtain their political objectives – often independence, greater autonomy, or subversion of existing authorities – against the current political authority,” and the insurgents may employ guerrilla warfare strategy via the use of “small, mobile groups to inflict punishment on the incumbent through hit-and-run strikes while avoiding direct battle when possible” (p. 70).

The end goal of every insurgency is political, as such, at the early stages, if it is not contained, it could escalate into civil war. Pustay (1965) opines that insurgency is a “composite conflict phenomenon which can be defined as a cellular development of resistance against an incumbent political regime and which expands from the initial stage of subversion-infiltration through the intermediate stages of overt resistance by small armed bands and insurrection to final fruition in civil war” (p. 5).

Nigeria has witnessed various forms of insurgencies in various parts of the country

and despite government's response through military interventions, new insurgents groups continue to emerge and grow more lethal. As a result of this, the Nigerian government has sort for other ways of addressing the grievances of these groups through dialogue and amnesty programmes. In the Southern part of Nigeria, Niger Delta militants continue to wreak havoc and threaten the peace and security of both the indigenes and oil companies in the region. Kidnapping of foreign nationals, hostage taking, pipeline vandalization, and oil bunkering are some of their nefarious activities. These insurgents argue that the Niger Delta has been neglected by the Federal government despite contributing enormously to the nation's economy through crude oil production, which is the Nigeria's economic mainstay. Ekpu (2007) comments on the consequences of this when he states that:

There is no doubt that the spate of militancy in the Niger Delta has made Nigerians oil fields among the most dangerous in the world and has also increasingly become a major threat to the nation's main source of revenue. Nigeria has lost billions of dollars in oil revenue through the activities of the militants (as cited in Inokoba & Imbua, 2010, p. 102).

Furthermore, Inokoba and Imbua (2010) add that the activities of the criminal elements of the Niger Delta militancy have created a state of insecurity, anomie and distortion of the value system of the communities of the region. With the increasing spate of blood-letting, the recurrent hostage-taking, the sporadic shut-down of production facilities, and the panicky withdrawal of some foreign oil firms from the region, it is clear that the Niger Delta question deserves an urgent solution (p.102). Other regions of Nigeria like the West, East and North have also witnessed the rise of insurgents. The O'odua People's Congress (OPC) in the South-Western region, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the South-East, Boko Haram and the most recent which is the Fulani Herdsmen in the North.

According to the International Crisis Group (2014), the origin of Boko Haram is traceable to the 1990s when it's pioneer leader Abu Yusuf Mohammed Yusuf, popularly known as Mohammed Yusuf led a radical Salafist Islamic youth group called Shababul Islam meaning Islamic Youth Vanguard (as cited in Gilbert, 2014, pp. 150-151). ICG (2014) records that it is generally believed that the group was formally established in 2002 under the name Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad, meaning: a people committed to the promulgation of the teachings of Prophet Mohammad (as cited in Gilbert, 2014, p. 151). The name Boko Haram means "Western education is sin" as such, the group has continued to fight all forms of western education and advocated for Sharia laws (Islamic religious laws in its place). The group had been overpowered by the intervention of the Nigeria military but later re-emerged in 2010 with a new leader Abubakar Shekau, and ever since, the group has continued to fight the military having resolved to avenge the death of their pioneer leader killed the Nigerian military.

Tracing the genesis of the Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers clashes in the north, it is important to note that that insecurity in the context of herdsmen and farmers relations in Nigeria dates back to when in the first instance the Fulanis began to feel insecure in their place of origin and began to search for solutions outside their place of origin. According to Ahmed-Gamgum (2018), insecurity arose amongst the non - Fulani farming communities when the Fulanis came from their communities, and engaged in activities that pointed to attempts at dislodging the indigenes of the communities from their natural rights as land owners (p. 37). The conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers has spread to the Eastern

and Southern parts of Nigeria and attempts by the Nigerian government to forestall their activities have not yielded positive results.

The Concept of Trauma

Trauma is a distressing and unpleasant experience that alters a person's sense of themselves. Traumatic events like wars, natural disasters, death and even stress can affect a person's well-being and how they perceive their environment. Hence, traumatic events can lead to psychological trauma – a situation in which the psychological world of an individual is destabilized by an event. According to Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995), psychological trauma is an event or an experience by an individual in which the individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed or the individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life (p.60). When traumatic events happen, the victims are helpless because of their ability to cope is overwhelmed by the event and the fear of death, annihilation set in, and can even lead to psychosis. According to Yoder (2015), trauma is a Greek word which means 'wound.' It originated from the verb 'ti-trosko' which means 'to pierce' or to inflict an injury on someone leaving a physical mark on the skin pierced. Trauma therefore, is a reaction or result of an overwhelming stress that surpasses an individual's ability to cope, or assimilate the emotions involved with the experience (as cited in Amusan & Ejoke, 2017, p. 54). Traumatic events can happen to an individual or a group and affects them physically, emotionally and spiritually.

In Nigeria, events like kidnapping, sexual abuse, rape, brutality by security agents, bullying in schools, war, natural disasters like flood, domestic violence and political violence can lead to psychological trauma. In Rivers State for example, flooding has remained a common phenomenon especially for people living in coastal areas. According to Chiadikobi, Omoboriowo, Chiaghanam, Opatola, and Oyebanji (2011):

The overflow of Ntawogba creek in 2002 and 2004 caused untold hardship to inhabitants living along the street bordering the creek in Port Harcourt. Disposal of refuse into the creek is another contributing factor. Port Harcourt is particularly at risk from sea-level and flood because of its low elevation over extensive areas (p. 288).

The most recent devastating flood in Port Harcourt occurred in 2006 and 2007 respectively, leading to loss of lives, properties as well as psychological trauma on the victims. Askew (1999) adds that:

Floods are among the most devastating natural hazards in the world, claiming more lives and causing more property damage than any other natural phenomena. In Nigeria today most people living in and around the banks of the rivers, coastlines are very vulnerable to flooding since their means of livelihood depends on the river and the adjoining creeks. This is very prominent in states of the Niger Delta and other states in the flood plains of Nigeria. Across the globe, floods have posed tremendous danger to people's lives and properties. Floods cause about one third of all deaths, one third of all injuries and one third of all damage from natural disasters (as cited in Brown and Chikagbum, 2015, p. 34).

However, what might be traumatic for one individual may not be for another. Some persons do

not experience psychological trauma during violent situations. Several factors are responsible for this. Yoder (2015) argues that, whether or not a situation is overwhelming cannot be determined by looking only at the events. For her, what overwhelms and traumatises an individual or a group might only be stressful to another depending on such factors as age, the meaning associated with the event, quality of social networks, genetic makeup, previous history and knowledge on coping with trauma on the part of the victims. Jon Allen (1995) reminds us in his book *Coping with Trauma: A Guide to Self-Understanding* that a traumatic experience can be objective and subjective. He argues that:

It is the subjective experience of the objective events that constitutes the trauma...The more you believe you are endangered, the more traumatized you will be...Psychologically, the bottom line of trauma is overwhelming emotion and a feeling of utter helplessness. There may or may not be bodily injury, but psychological trauma is coupled with physiological upheaval that plays a leading role in the long-range effects (p. 14).

A trauma is therefore, defined based on the experience of the victim. Trauma comes in different forms and a variety of ways but the effects on the victims are similar. Lenore Terr (1991) distinguishes between a single blow and a repeated trauma. Natural disasters like earthquakes, hurricanes, criminal violence like robbery, rape, and homicides are examples of single blow traumas, and produce a single shock but can have prolonged trauma effects like mental health problems on the victims. Repeated traumas or prolonged stressors are traumas that extend over a long period of time. They can be natural and made-made.

Prolonged stressors, especially the ones deliberately done to harm others, are harder to cope with when compared with natural disasters. Most mental health patients are people who have been victims of abuse or violence by another. For example, Traumas resulting from an amorous relationship or a parent-child relationship is far more difficult to deal with because of the psychological effect it has on the victims. Examples include war and political violence, kidnapping, torture, domestic violence, sexual abuse, child abuse etc. Giller (1999) adds that "more disturbance is associated with more severe abuse: longer duration, forced penetration, helplessness, fear of injury or death, perpetration by a close relative or caregiver, coupled with lack of support or negative consequences from disclosure" (p. 4).

Abuse can be physical and psychological and can also be directed at one's self or towards others. Examples include physical or verbal abuse of one's children, substance abuse, self-injurious behaviour or suicide attempts. The level of impact the trauma has on the victim is dependent on if it was done by a human, repeated, vicious, many-sided, unpredictable, experienced during childhood and perpetrated by a parent or a caretaker. Some of the effects of psychological trauma are substance addiction and abuse, depression, personality disorders, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders and many others.

Synopsis of *Hard Grounds*

The play is about Nimi, an eighteen year old boy and militant, who drops out of school and takes up arms to emancipate his people. Things go bad when the table is turned against him. Nimi is accused of masterminding the deaths of the Don's boys (his Master), and for this reason the Don is after his life. His parents, Mama and Baba pay for his ransom. Mama, Baba and Nimi's uncle, Inyingifaa, enquire from Nimi the real nature of what happened in the creek. Nimi affirms that he is innocent and accuses Kingsley (a Reverend Father) of

revealing the secret that led to the death of his colleagues. Alabo and Tonye, the chiefs of Nimi's community and a crowd of people come to honour Nimi with gifts and drinks, for his efforts in fighting for their rights. Alabo is disappointed when Nimi tells him that they want a revolution. Alabo tells Nimi that the world does not listen to young men in headbands, with AK47 guns from the swamp and leaves in disappointment. Chief Tonye calls Nimi their new hero but his mother shouts at them and they leave. Inyingifaa brings news that the Don has agreed to see Nimi, after which Nimi collapses from the effects of a poisoned drink given to him by chief Tonye, while his mother is overtaken by an epileptic attack.

Tingolongo, a fearsome masquerade comes to take Nimi's life, Nimi pleads and Tingolongo warns him of his wicked acts against humanity. Nimi asks for forgiveness and swears to change. Inyingifaa brings news that the Don gave orders that Pikibo, Nimi's girlfriend, who is pregnant for Nimi be killed with the child for revealing the secret that led to the deaths of his boys. Nimi decides to go back to the jungle and avenge the deaths of Pikibo and his unborn child. Father Kingsley reveals that the Don would be visiting. He tells Nimi and his mother that his father, Baba, would not be there to meet with the Don as he does not trust what would happen when he (Baba) meets with the Don face to face, and so he leaves money with Mama, instructing that the Don be entertained properly. Nimi says that his father has failed him and decides to kill the Don by himself. The Don visits, Nimi strikes him and discovers that the Don is Baba (his father), he screams upon this realization, while his mother collapses in shock.

Trauma and Insurgency in *Hard Ground*

The first dawn of this traumatic tale begins in a pensive mood as Nimi, the central character, regrets why he was rescued after his parents paid for his ransom. He has been accused of being responsible for the deaths of his colleagues, and his master the Don is after his life. Nimi's words reveal the gory tale of the life in the creek and the consequences awaiting him:

Nimi: I did not ask anyone to rescue me. Now I shall be labeled a vulture. Any child with a knife can butcher me, tear me apart, or even hang me by the neck till life drips out of my body like river water, and I shall be left to die a slow and painful death... They shall smoke me out like they do all vultures. They will track me down, slowly and steadily, I will be chased like a trapped rabbit. They shall fling me to the wolf boys who will spit on me first, like hungry crocodiles, their watery fangs shall await the bitterness of my flesh (Yerima, 2006, p. 9).

Nimi's words detail the gruesome nature and animalistic tendencies of the Niger Delta militants. They are used to butchering and slaughtering of human beings, and it means nothing to them. His mother reacts to his creek name the Scorpion and comments on his change of behaviour; the life in the creek turned Nimi into another man. In her words:

Mama: I did not give birth to a scorpion, but a human being. Nimi, you are my only child, my source of joy, but now you must take my life. We sent you home to learn the language, to be properly brought up in our ways, not to become a scorpion (Yerima, 2006, p. 10).

The name Scorpion symbolizes his dangerous nature as a militant. Like a scorpion, Nimi is capable of killing and can sting like a bee. Speaking on how he was recruited into militancy

and why death no longer means anything to him, having been accustomed to pain, Nimi speaks to his mother:

Nimi: ...You live in pain, and then it sounds right to join the struggle, first as a boy of a group, then as the eye or a spy. By the time you are halfway through primary school, you carry guns for the boys, and by the time you are eleven, in these days of automatic guns, you become an expert. You see people die every day. Either of hunger or just death, so it means nothing to you (Yerima, 2006, p. 12).

It is common for new initiates (militants) to feel remorse and pity when they kill and inflict pain on their victims. Some even experience traumatic nightmares of the people they have killed, but as they continue, with time they learn to live with the guilt and justify in their hearts that the people they killed had to die, until killing and inflicting pain on others and on themselves means nothing again. Nimi's mother asks him if he can sleep with all the atrocities they commit, and Nimi responds thus:

Nimi: With nightmares at first, the foam of the blood of your dead foes making you sweat at first in the nose, then mouth, then your neck even on cold harmattan nights, then soundly as the faces of the dead people multiply, and killing means nothing anymore, soundly, your eyelids shut to the cries of the world, and you justify in your heart that the people you killed are the enemies of the land, not yours as an individual...and then you sleep like a new-born baby each time you can catch a wink... I sleep, Mama...we all try to sleep (Yerima, 2006, p. 12).

Nimi tells his parents that he is innocent and that a parrot (a betrayer) had revealed their plans to the soldiers. Consequently, when they arrived the scene of the operation, the soldiers opened fire on them, killing eighteen of his colleagues, but he managed to escape. Now his Boss, the Don wants him dead and has promised a ransom for anyone who can reveal the whereabouts of Nimi. Nimi's mother fears that the Don will kill Nimi. She speaks of how she lost her brother ten years ago. The memories and the psychological trauma of the experience still haunt her. In her words:

Mama:..His blood still splashed on the doorway of my family house when he was killed trying to run into the family compound. He was butchered like a dog by the same men who played with him as a child and fed with him as a man. To date we never saw his body...not even a finger or a toe. All we have of him are memories...(Yerima, 2006, p. 15).

The psychological trauma of seeing her brother killed before her eyes and his body taken away has remained fresh in the memories of Mama and her relatives, and she suspects that the Don was responsible for her brother's death. It is common for traumatic survivors to avoid anything that reminds them of past traumas and tendencies of going through similar experiences, especially when they are yet to heal. This is what Mama is trying to do - trying to protect her son from being killed by the Don like her late brother.

Father Kingsley, a Reverend Father arrives and the Nimi wrestles him to the ground, places a dagger on his neck, asking him to confess. Nimi suspects he told the soldiers about

their plans because Nimi confessed to him when he visited them in their camp. Father Kingsley swears that he is innocent, and after the plea of Nimi's uncle, Inyingifaa, Nimi sets him free. Nimi's behaviour is typical of traumatic victims. They easily become irritable, angry, suspicious, impulsive, anxious, unable to manage aggression, and will do anything to establish some level of self-control, even if it means killing.

Later, Nimi tries to sleep but yells out. His mother comes into his room with a rosary and a Bible. She covers him with wrappers and kneels down to pray by him, then Nimi wakes up with another yell. Obviously, he is experiencing a nightmare. He tells his mother that he saw the headless bodies of his pregnant girlfriend Pikibo and his unborn son, and the jeers of his dead colleagues. This nightmare is an intrusion of his traumatic experiences mixed with fears that are buried in his subconscious. They are playing out because they have not been resolved. Mama tries to console him, but Nimi resolves to go and rescue his girlfriend and child.

Mama tells Nimi that she lost a daughter after him and the distress that comes with this memory is traumatic. She also tells him of how she was brutally raped by his father in the stream years back. He waited for her and in swift move, he forced himself on her. That was how she became pregnant of him. Her brothers were going to drown his father but she took pity on him and decided to marry him. Nimi tells her that he does not want to be like his father Baba, whom he calls a coward. Mama also reveals to Nimi that his father has a mistress by name Amatu, whom he spends more time with in the barracks. As a result, he does not provide money for the family. He does not even eat her food. In her words: "He does not eat here, anymore. My food is not good enough for him. He has not been the father of my child since you left. And he has not been my husband since my illness" (Yerima, 2006, p.29). Mama's psychological traumas are many sided. First, she has to deal with the Don trying to kill her only son. Secondly, her husband has abandoned her for another woman, leaving her to herself in spite of her condition as an epileptic patient. The pains that come from all these memories are traumatic for one person to deal with.

Nimi's mother also goes through another level of trauma as she suffers from epilepsy. The psychological stress and discomfort further compounds her problems. Resigned to fate and helpless, she accepts her condition as a burden she must carry. She tells Nimi about it:

Mama: (*She begins to sob*) Some people say, I am a fallen angel of the sea goddess, and I must have wronged her, and she tried to strangle me, and this is why I cannot breathe when I have the attack. So with each attack I am choked to remember when the sea goddess tried to put me to death...Sometimes I can feel my skin dry, and my lips cake, like scales, and my waist is all painful, until I go to the river to bathe. Then and only then do I become born again with the skin of a baby...supple like the day I was born. Not a worry in the whole wide world. My mind free like the wind. And my lungs like gills, breathe freely. (*Pause*) Maybe I am really a fish, walking this puddle (Yerima, 2006, p.30).

Also, Nimi suffers another betrayal and trauma when a group of Niger Delta chiefs come to thank him for his efforts in saving their land from greedy politicians, but they leave after poisoning him. This further reduces the chances of Nimi trusting anyone aside his Mother. He later experiences a trance, in which he is warned by Tingolongo, a fearsome masquerade to stop wasting the lives of innocent young youths. Inyingifaa arrives and reveals to Nimi that his girlfriend Pikibo was the parrot who revealed their secret to the soldiers and the Don

gave others that she should be killed with her unborn child. With this, Nimi resolves to kill the Don.

Like a neurotic animal, Nimi's psychic energies and traumatic past are not erased but buried in his subconscious and continue to play out in his consciousness as they seeking fulfillment and gratification. The circles of nightmares, trance and his inability to deal with his traumatic pasts reveal signs of post-traumatic stress syndrome. Nimi feels alienated from his true self; the world and lack a sense of purpose and direction as his traumatic past continue to haunt him in the present. For some traumatic victims, this could lead to self-destructive tendencies like drug addictions or suicidal tendencies. But for others like Nimi, compulsive fury and rage at others dominate their lives, and it is this fury that makes Nimi a threat to the safety and well-being of others. This is what plays out in the final scene. The Don visits and Nimi hacks him to death with a machete, only to realize after the deed that the Don his father Baba. Having killed the Don, Nimi feels relieved but only for a while. He needs medical attention to enable him heal from his traumatic past in order to properly reintegrate with the present and function as a psychologically stable individual in the society. Else, he would continue to relive his past in the present.

The entire play is a tale of traumatic events woven around the lives of the main characters. However, most of the traumas except the death of Mama's female child and her epilepsy are man-made, and this makes them very difficult to deal with, especially those perpetuated by one family member on another. Examples of traumas perpetuated within Nimi's family include that of Baba against Mama, The Don (Baba) against pregnant Pikibo and Nimi, and Nimi against the Don. Traumas perpetuated outside Nimi's family circles include that of Nimi against young innocent Niger Delta youths, the Niger Delta Chiefs against Nimi, and the Soldiers against Nimi and his colleagues.

Conclusion

The greatest challenge facing humans is the challenge to live life, find a path, or survive, and this comes with a lot of stress, especially when one deals with people from different social backgrounds. It is therefore, impossible to interact with other people and not get hurt, even if they are your immediate family members. The responsibility of surviving in the harsh economic climate of Nigeria is a tasking and stressful one, especially for the middle class and poor families. It is also common to find many Nigerians slide into depression or exhibit suicidal tendencies because of stress and the traumas they have to deal with in order to survive. Similarly, we have seen situations where repentant insurgents or ex-militants return to the creeks or re-group to commit heinous crimes once they are unable to integrate properly into the society. A lot of things might be responsible for this, which may not be unconnected with post-traumatic stress disorders. It is therefore, imperative for people to avoid stress as much as they can, and for those who are going through stressful situations or who may have experienced one form of trauma, to seek medical attention as soon as possible; this is for their own good and for the good of others. This study observed that when people undergo traumatic experiences, like the character of Nimi, these experiences are not erased, rather they continue to intrude in the consciousness of the victims and express themselves through reenactment for the victims to be free temporarily. This study recommends that people with traumatic experiences should be given early medical attention to enable them heal from past wounds, reconstruct and reconnect with their internal and external worlds.

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