

THE INTERSECTION OF MARXIST AND TRAUMATIC READINGS IN FESTUS IYAYI'S *HEROES*

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Abstract

The casualties of wars are not only determined by the apparent brutalities of both warring camps but also the deception and betrayal that often characterize such violent engagements. This usually is seen between the ruling authority and common soldiers in both camps. The novel, *Heroes* (1986) by Festus Iyayi, therefore, functions as an insightful narrative intersection through which the Marxist tempers and traumatic incarcerations of the novel connect to evaluate the socio-political intricacies of war and class struggle in postcolonial Nigeria. Many critics have subjected the novel to diverse interpretations particularly in relation to its revolutionary dispositions. However, in extending this idea, this article throws more light not only on the Marxist's tendencies inherent in the novel but also interrogates the depth of its psychological trauma. Therefore, relying on the theories of Marxism and Trauma by Karl Marx and Cathy Caruth respectively, this article probes the class hostilities and deep emotional wound the characters confronted/ experienced? during the Nigerian civil war. The convergence of these theories, undoubtedly, underscore the double tragedy that constructs the enraged encounters of Iyayi's characters which foreground the condemnation of class oppressiveness, imperialistic combat and bizarre veneration of nationalistic heroism.

Keywords: Marxism, Trauma, Nigerian civil war, Festus Iyayi

Introduction

Prior to the publication of *Heroes* in 1986, most literary and critical works available on the Nigeria civil war dwelt on the nationalist considerations and the heroic deeds of the army generals from both the Nigerian and Biafran sides. While the sacrificial contributions of the common soldiers-from both sides- on the fronts are either regrettably ignored or was/were given little attention. This informed the success that greeted the novel on its appearance on the literary scene, because its thematic preoccupation captures the contribution as well as the traumatic incarceration the ordinary people including soldiers were subjected to during the war. What the novel seems to expose is that, after all, the celebrated victories of the generals were only made possible by the patriotic zeal of the common soldiers on the fronts. Emenyonu and Nnolim (2014) reveal that:

Iyayi presents a totally new perspective of the war from other writers. The story does not depict any support overt or covert on the part of novelist to any of the

warring factions. Iyayi manifests very clearly that class consciousness is at the very root of many ills in the society whether in a military or civilian regime. His 'heroes' and here lies the significance of the title of the novel, are people from the 'third army', the suffering masses on both sides of the conflict. .(p.141).

As they observed, the novel manifests class consciousness which had obviously overridden the critical explorations of the novel. Most studies on the novel, however, dwell on the class structure which had been Iyayi's utmost concern in his literary engagements. According to him, through the character of OsimeIyere, there must be a formation of the "third army" which will comprise the ordinary soldiers on both sides of the conflict. The representation of the novel in accordance with the Marxist revolutionary temper seems to have made other critical consideration of the novel less important. Udumukwu's (2007:108) contention of the novel is noteworthy. According to him "Festus Iyayi in his novel *Heroes* attempted a class analysis of the effects of the war. But its concern with the issue of heroism blurs the real human consequence of the war." A critical survey of the novel shows that Iyayi is not so much concerned about the class imbalance as the traumatic injuries the victims were subjected to. The narrative structure of the novel depicts the psychological trauma of the major characters as they are constantly exposed to traumatic events.

The novel dwells on the experiences of the journalist, OsimeIyere whose encounters with both the federal and Biafran soldiers show the brutality and inhumanity that characterized the Nigerian civil war, revealing the sufferings and trauma that eclipsed the lives of the common people both the civilians and soldiers. The protagonist is molested by the soldiers and the shooting of his landlord opened his mind to the terrible side of the war. When he eventually went to the warfront, he discovers to his chagrin, the corruption and ill treatment that bedeviled the institution meant for the protection of its citizenry. Arms and ammunition are sold to the rebels, soldiers are sent to the warfront on the eve of their pay day, and those who survive and come back are summarily eliminated on the account of desertion so that their salary will be taken by their commanders. These are some of the evils that went on at the warfront. The most callous experience is the abandonment of the soldiers at the warfront, who were certain that reinforcement was on the way, not knowing that the commanders had gone to Lagos for the Head of State's ostentatious wedding ceremony. In spite of the casualties suffered by the troops as a result of being abandoned, the commander comes back with a promotion. These repugnant revelations confirm Osime's conception that the war was that of the privileged class exploiting the fortunes of ordinary people.

Marxist and Trauma Theories: An Intersection.

Marxist literary criticism draws from the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, centering on the connection among literature, ideology, and material conditions of survival. Significant to the Marxist theory is the notion that literature reveals and is

fashioned by the socio-economic focus of the society in which it is created. A society that recognizes the class structure of the bourgeoisie and proletariat where the former exploits the former/late to its advantage. Quoting Terry Eagleton, Nnolim (1992:29) insists that “the narrative Marxism has to deliver is the story of the struggles of men and women to free themselves from certain forms of exploitation and oppression” Nnolim (1992:29) further underscores it as that which “depicts the plight of the masses” In *Heroes*, the Marxist theory probes the political economy of war, class stratification and exploitation. The novel focuses on, how the Nigerian civil war strangely upsets the common soldiers at the war fronts and the working class, while the army officers-the ruling class- influences nationalist grandiloquence for personal gain. The theory unloads the following: the commodification of human lives during wartime, the ideological manipulation of nationalism, and class conflict as the root of social injustice.

Trauma theory, relying on the work of scholars like Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra Judith Herman, investigates how persons and societies undergo, recount, and recall devastating occurrences that breach the psyche and historical continuity. Trauma as a field of study dates back to the early twentieth century when Sigmund Freud established his aspect of psychoanalysis. He altered the meaning of the term “trauma” from indicating “physical injury” to psychological injury” (p.34). In the mid-1990s Trauma Theory had a revival. Theorists like Cathy Caruth, Kali Tal, Maria Root, Dominick LaCapra, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman among others used Freud's theory as a basis to shape their diverse notions on trauma. These theories center on the psychological effects of the Holocaust (in the long run), the first and second World Wars and Vietnam War. These impacts in the form of injuries surpass bodily infliction/affliction and position themselves in the realm of the mind. In most cases, the mind finds it challenging to liberate these injuries. In literary studies, trauma theory surveys how narratives convey the horrifying nature of trauma, often through fragmented storytelling, muteness, repetition, or variations. In *Heroes*, trauma theory allows an analysis of how war bears the psychosomatic well-being of individuals, particularly soldiers and civilians who are exposed to ruthlessness, displacement, and existential misery. The novel does not only portray physical devastation but also underscores the emotional and mental toll of war. Iyayi centers the conflict between the state's exaltation of war and the real trauma suffered by those on the frontlines. While Marxist theory explains the underlying and universal causes of violence, trauma theory gives expression to its emotive and mental repercussion validating Fanon's (1967) contention that “man's chronically neurotic state of mind cannot be alienated as long as the social economic structure that brought it on him remained unchanged” (p.120).

Marxist and Traumatic Readings in Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*

Osime Iyere, the central character suffers both physical and psychic trauma in the hands of the warring soldiers. As a journalist, he has the privilege of witnessing some of the atrocities during the war. According to Felmen (1995, p.19) writing about the position of

a witness reveals that:

... the narrator-doctor-witness feels both obligated and compelled to 'chronicle' the 'grave events' of the catastrophe he has survived and to 'play the part of a historian... 'to bear witness' as he puts it, 'in favor of those plague-stricken people, so that some memorial of the injustice done them might endure.

The above quotation synchronizes with Osime's position as the narrator-journalist-witness during the Nigerian civil war. He bears witness "so that some memorial of the injustice done them might endure". Having so much confidence on the federal army that he brazenly persuaded his landlord, Mr. Ohiali to present himself at the registration camp in order to avoid being tagged a traitor. His confidence, however, on the federal army began to wane on the day he was psychically brutalized at the stadium. Typical of a traumatized mind, he finds himself suffered mental anguish. This is revealed in his conflicting consciousness:

'You shouldn't be bitter,' his other self said to him. 'you had a mighty opinion of the federal troops.'

'Heroes!' he flung at himself.

'They still are,' his other mind said. 'three men do not make an army.'

'Yes,' he agreed. 'Three men do not make an army but one man is enough to represent what the current regime stands for'

'Brutality?' his other mind asked...

'There are different types of brutality,' he answered himself. 'This was not simply brutality. It was sadism, fascism. You see what I mean? (p.32).

OsimeIyere's dual voices capture the trauma that the ordinary people endure. He seems not to undergo both the physical and mental torture unleashed upon him by the federal army he had come to identify with. Kicking him at his testicle- the most vulnerable part of the body- is simply harrowing and a sheer dramatization of bestiality! "... He removed his pants and examined his penis and testicles carefully. The flesh was not broken but the pain was there all right. *They really meant to kill you*, he thought. *Yes, they really meant to kill you by kicking you in the most vulnerable places of all* (p.35)". This distressing event activates OsimeIyere's consciousness and he comes to self-awareness in his journey towards traumatic realities obtainable in the day to day experiences of the civil war. Unfortunately, this incident exposes his utter helplessness. According to Bessel Van Der kolk and Onno Van Der kolk (1995, p.175) "Many writers about the human response to trauma have observed that a feeling of helplessness, of physical or emotional paralysis, is fundamental to making an experience traumatic". In fact, to worsen his situation, his colleague Ade relayed the gory picture of how his own landlord was shot five times after they had killed the Biafrans who took refuge in his house by

opening fire on the ceilings where they were hidden as blood dripped effortlessly. "Osime placed his glass of beer on the table and his hands "trembled" a little." 'You mean your landlord has been shot?' (p.16). With these frightening encounters with the federal troops coupled with his manhandling at the stadium by federal soldiers, Osime becomes disillusioned and decided to dissuade his landlord from going to register himself at the camp:

Having submitted himself for investigation at the registration camp that lasted about one hour, Mr. Ohiali is asked to "go and wait" at a place. After the whole interrogation exercise, the affected men are set aside for execution, of which Mr. Ohiali was among. Osime could not bear the ongoing melee as he vehemently protested the verdict and demanded to see the commander of the section. He is yet to gather himself as:

There was a shot and then another, and the three more, and Osime could see two bodies lying on the ground away from the wall, and five soldiers were holding their guns and pushing one of the remaining seven away from the wall, into the open space that led to the bank of the river. Then there were four more shots and another body lay on the ground, and even as he looked, Osime saw *his landlord break away from the rest of the group of men and make a run for the river.* (emphasis added; p.56).

This scene summarizes the trauma of life that characterized the conflict. Knowing fully well that his end has come, he needed to take a final desperate chance to see the possibility of escape even though such attempt will still end in futility. Osime watches helplessly:

There were immediate shouts but the soldiers let him run for some time for they must have known that on that bare naked ground, the man hadn't the slightest chance in the world. Then just as he reached the bank of the river, there was a sudden outburst of gunfire. It looked for a moment as if Mr. Ohiali would make the river. Then he seemed to bend over backwards and crumble as bullets hitting him first propelled him forward and then broke his back and he fell not forward but on his back, his face twisted, his hands frantically but unconsciously trying to push his intestines back into his stomach as they came out of the large gaping hole in his belly. (p.56).

Osime, whose fears have been confirmed and could not stand the gruesome sight anymore, was thrown into traumatic agony as he "watched ... and could not believe his eyes and all of a sudden he felt very sick and he was holding his stomach why? and bending down over the grass and the vomit came out of his mouth and the water came out of his eyes", (p.57). What has just taken place, according to Osime is nothing but murder. And, "he would describe it exactly as he had seen it" (57). This event unsettles Osime. It recalls a similar account of a Hiroshima survivor who witnessed a related

horror. According to GorgesBataille (1995, p. 227), “*He had to keep consciously repeating to himself, 'These are human beings'*” Moreover, given the shock of the murder, he contemplates that “He did not want to think about Ndudi.” (p.57). He seems not be/to bear the devastating and traumatic thoughts about Ndudi's condition, since he was the person persuading her father to go for the registration.

One of the narrative techniques of trauma is flashback. Flashback brings back the hunted memory of a victim. While Osime was still waiting for the commander in other to register his disenchantment about Mr. Ohiali's murder, his mind flashed back to the violent scene:

OsimeIyere sat back in his chair and again he saw his landlord running zigzag across the sand of the river bank, and heard the sound of the shooting and saw his landlord plunge forward, and then seem to fold at the knees and dissolve like salt that has absorbed a lot of water. He shook his head vigorously because the smell of his vomit was back in his nose and the water was almost in his eyes.(p.59).

In another instance, he keeps dwelling on this traumatic incident:“I took him to his death, he thought. I took him to the hill to have him shot”(p.65). Bessel Van Der Kolk and Onno Van Der Hart (1995) posit that “Certain happenings would have indelible and distressing memories – memories to which the sufferer was continually returning, and by which he was tormented day and night (p.158). The memory of this scene keeps haunting him because of his involvement in the entire confusion. His meeting with the commander rather turned out to heighten his already traumatized mind, as the commander shows him the photographs of women raped in front of their husbands, pushing sticks into their vaginas, and cutting of their husbands and children's throats among others. Because of the grimy condition of those pictures, Osime murmured to himself, “Oh my God.”, he dropped the photographs because he could no longer look at them. At his home, while trying without success to stem the tide of his bitterness and anger as a result of the earlier incidents, the memory of the events replayed back in his mind:

Momentarily, he closed his eyes because he could see the long sticks that had been driven into the women's vaginas, he could see the heads as they lay on the dust severed from their bodies and the eyes of the women as they popped out even in their death and the eyes of the men and the children were closed. Then again, he could see his landlord running for the river, and then he could hear the shots and see the man's hand as they worked frantically, even in those last moments, to push his intestines back as they rushed out of his body. He thought and felt sick, and his mind grew bitter.(p.63).

It is quite revealing that Osime “closed his eyes because he could see the long sticks being driven into the women's vaginas”. How can he see such an act in his waking

moment, not even in a dream or trance! It captures a traumatized mind. Even when they got to the village for the man's burial, his troubled mind couldn't find peace, “*Yes, that was why I couldn't sleep. Guilt. I feel guilty for his death. That was why I came, to try to reduce the guilt feeling but it only became worse in the night. It became so bad that I sat up in bed to prevent myself from hearing the voices. But, it did not help*”(p.78). Osime's feelings of guilt is in consonance to what Krystal (1995, p.77) called “... problems of (survivor) guilt feelings,... as 'intractable to psychotherapy' The repetition of these reenactments have started telling on him, increasing the bitterness in his heart. Even the voices he continued to hear only underscore the condition of a traumatized mind. According to Caruth (1996, p.1), “these repetitions are particularly striking because they seem not to be initiated by the individual's own acts but rather appear as the possession of some people by a sort of fate, a series of painful events to which they are subjected, and which seem to be entirely outside their wish or control” In accordance to the above assertion, Osime could not control the reenactments of these horrific pictures in his mind, they simply overwhelm him. Osime's traumatic symptom is manifested in his memory being haunted by flashbacks of gory pictures, while Ndudi's own trauma becomes apparent in silence. Silence is synonymous with a traumatized mind:

How else could Ndudi have looked at the face of her father as he lay dead and not gone out of her mind, broken down? She had stood there, dazed and speechless, and her heart that was her pain absorber had taken in the tragedy...(p63).

Osime eventually finds himself in the camp of federal soldiers who were preparing for an attack on the Niger Bridge in order to capture Onitsha. While at the army camp, he insists on seeing the commander in order to ascertain the position of the war. But, he faces a lot of questionings aimed at discouraging him from seeing the commander and probably to know his real intentions, nevertheless he persisted. In fact, at a point he is accused of being a saboteur and, was consequently threatened. The threatening re-echoed the trauma that has previously battered his psyche:

The tall lieutenant came back into the room and went and spoke with the major, and then he went and sat down. Osime looked past the major at the window. *Only glass louvers. But they will probably shoot me as soon as I get clear of the room. They did it to Ndudi's father. They let him run until he almost reached the river, then they shot him from behind, in the backp.94).*

This encounter, however, defines Osime's psychological composition, which had been evidently traumatized. Any seemingly disagreement with the soldiers seems to affect him adversely because of what they are capable of doing. After that encounter, he was obviously humiliated and defeated. He ponders bitterly:

What decency we have, he thought, the war makes bitter. Or perhaps we never were decent deep down. We simply pretended to be until the war came and then we acted naturally... The war is the great excuse for

our natural vices, or how else could we have shot Ohiali so cold bloodedly? How else could we have driven long sticks through women's vaginas and watched their eyes come out of their heads?... We loot, we burn, we rape, we murder, lie and steal.(p.95).

These thoughts reveal that Osime is both emotionally and psychologically traumatized. Evidently, what Osime has seen so far about the brutality of the soldiers is capable of keeping his mind always at the edge of disorientation. On his way back to Oganza to see Ndudi, whom he had promised that he would come back, he learnt that the Biafrans had mounted an ambush. Osime's premonition about the safety of Ndudi worries him, "My God, Osime said to himself. *Oh my God! I should have taken her with me!* He did not want to think about what the Biafran soldiers might do to her. He closed his eyes"(p.101). He is not the only one fearful of the consequences of the supposed ambush of the Biafrans, other passengers in the car bemoaned their helpless situation. One passenger simply identified as a woman in the car continues to weep profusely because of her children. After a series of consolations from Osime, he keeps quiet "having realized that it was useless trying to reassure her". (p.102). The other passenger, Umunna, by name, becomes crestfallen; the reference that his "eyes were tired and his mouth drooping a little and his hair whitening"(p.103) shows that he is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Lost in deep thought about Ndudi's safety, he fears about what could have befallen her in the hands of the Biafran soldiers. He experiences insomnia, another symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Throughout the night, he keeps awake thinking "nearly four o'clock, and he hadn't closed his eyes once"(p.114). "What was Ndudi doing now? Was she asleep? And the Biafran soldiers? Had they touched her?"(p.114). These fragmented thoughts occupy his traumatized mind and weighed him down. Being deeply tired as a result of these fearful thoughts, he falls into sleep which metamorphosed into a nightmare:

He fell asleep once and dreamed of Ndudi. She was holding the red suitcase and she was standing in front of their building, tall and elegant and beautiful, and he went to her and smiled at her but she turned her face away and when he wanted to help her with the suitcase she refused, and then Mr. Ohiali came out of the house and he was frowning and in his hand he held a cutlass. OsimeIyere turned quickly away from the house, and behind him he could hear Ndudi's voice saying, 'Don't come back! Don't ever come back!' He woke then and looked at his watch and found out he had been asleep only half an hour.(p.114).

Nightmare as an indication of a traumatized mind has the propensity of hunting the victim to the extent that sleeping becomes consciously dreaded, and that turned out to be Osime's decision. "He didn't attempt to sleep anymore"(p.114) in order to avoid a

repetition of the nightmare. According to Krystal (1995, p.85) “'pseudophobia', fear of one's dreams and of one's own emotions, are all the result of this post-traumatic depletion of the consciously recognized spheres of selfhood”. He becomes disillusioned even when sergeant Kesh Kesh met him and enquired:

'Well, journalist? Did you sleep well?'

'No. I didn't sleep at all.'

'You don't like the conditions then?'

'You want return to your kind?'

'No. it's not that. I kept thinking. I couldn't sleep.'

... 'I understand,' he said finally and seriously. 'Many nights I lie awake thinking.'

'[About] what?'

'The war. My wife, children, father, mother. The soldiers...(p.115).

Deep thinking functions effectively instead of sleep in the life of a traumatized mind. From the above dialogue, it is evident that Osime was not the only victim; Sergeant Kesh Kesh also thinks deeply about his family as well as the soldiers he leads to the warfront.

The horrific experiences at the warfront put Osime agonizingly face to face with violence as it continues to wound his battered psyche. At the warfront where he decided to witness the battle first hand, it takes him deeper into self-awareness beyond his imagination as a result of humans' impiety and callousness. An ambush deployed by the Biafran soldiers had taken them unawares, and as a result, many soldiers suffered casualties. Osime could not bear the death of Obilu who had taught him how to shoot few days ago:

'It's no use,' he said. 'The man was shot in the chest.' He looked closely at the man's face and then with a sharp movement stood up. He looked down now at Obilu and a vision flashed before his eyes of the smile of the man, teaching him to hold the gun. He wiped the sweat off his face and in the process smeared the man's blood on his face. He bent down again to see what he can do but it was too late. The groaning had stopped and the man was dead.(p.190)

Osime is not only mourning the death of a dear friend but the staggering number of soldiers that were lost in that ambush. This scene captures Felman's (1995:53) observation that “... everyone is leveled off, people die as numbers, not as proper names”. “Fifty-eight, Jato said (p.190), about the death of Obilu whose death has added the total of the dead soldiers to fifty eight. Osime could not come to terms with these casualties, “Yes, Osime agreed thoughtfully. Fifty-eight, and that doesn't count fifty-eight widows, fifty-eight fathers and as many mothers who have lost their sons. That doesn't count the children of the fifty-eight soldiers. More than a hundred perhaps. And

then add the brothers and the sisters and the grandparents and their friends. This was a friend of mine”(p.190-1). As if that was not enough to traumatize him, an officer commanded that a wounded soldier very close to him should be shot should he continue screaming! “Shoot him if he continues to scream!, they heard the officer shout to one of the hesitating men...” (p.191). Visibly shaken, the wounded soldier fears the worst, “... for he stopped screaming and rolled over, slowly on the concrete surface of the bridge. He had lost consciousness.” (?? p.191).

Overwhelmed by the trauma of being shot by his colleagues, the wounded soldier passes out. It would have been different if he were the one who instructed the shooting. Since it is commonplace in war situations to see such a traumatic episode where a wounded colleague orders his death by shooting to avoid being captured by the enemy, thereby facing an imminent traumatic and horrible torture. In furtherance of the fierceness of the battle at the warfront, the federal troops find themselves retreating while hopelessly waiting for reinforcement that never came. Silences become the norm that characterizes their vivid situation typical of traumatized psyches. “Kolawole's black eyes went blacker. He didn't say anything. *What did one say at moments like this?...*”(p.194), “*Osime was silent. There are times, he thought, when you suddenly realize that there is nothing more to say...*”(p.195). These scenes of silence do not suggest the inability of the soldiers to communicate to another, but they show the helplessness as well as expression of traumatized minds for people who had seen violence at the warfront.

The warfront becomes emblematic of trauma and all it represented. This is so because man's real self comes into picture. Face to face with death, man's ability to withstand shock comes under test as well the decisions he takes. For Osime, therefore:

You get to know a man in periods of crisis, not when everything is normal and your only problem is how you are going to get from one day to another. That is routine of living and what a man is then may not be the real man at all. You do not know a man because you go out for a drink together, because you go out to play whatever it is together... It is only in times of crises that you discover who you can trust, who can be a traitor, who can be a coward. Crisis is the screen on which the quality of a man comes to be displayed. (Iyayi, p.212).

Against this backdrop, Jato's inability to comport himself comes into consideration. He has the opportunity of knowing that Commander Otunshi and his colleagues have abandoned the soldiers and left for the head of state's wedding ceremony in Lagos. This knowledge, unfortunately, becomes his greatest undoing because when the bridge was blown down, he knew for certain that their end had come since there will be no reinforcement coming. Confirming the news of the advancing Biafrans by Sergeant Kesh Kesh, Jato inadvertently goes into hysteria. He becomes visibly overtaken by fear, which throws him into loquaciousness as a hopeless palliative:

Why don't you just shut up?' Osime glared at him.
' why should I shut up? I am hungry and afraid and tired and I can't swim. And in another five hours, I will be dead. Why shouldn't I say the things now I may never have opportunity to say again?... I am going to talk.' ... my parents are farmers... I have a wife and three little children, you know, "three children depending on me..."(p.203).

Before now, he had already been in deep panic, telling Osime from time to time that they were "cooked and finished". He became so terrified that he jumped into the river without waiting for Osime's help since he could not swim:

As the massacre was unleashed, sergeant Kesh Kesh stood up and he was very calm. But the man Jato panicked. He made a rush for the railings of the bridge and coiled with them and fell and picked himself up immediately and before either Sergeant Kesh Kesh or Osime could stop him, he had climbed clumsily over the railings and jumped for the river.(p.209).

Knowing fully well that he cannot swim, Jato's resort to the river calls to mind the trauma of a panic stricken self. This underscores Osime's shock "Jato surprised me most of all, he thought. Jato surprised me most and yet taught me most. He surprised me because I expected him to be strong. He taught me most because I found out how to know who a man really is, what he really is"(p.211). Jato's reaction should not have surprised Osime as such since Krystal (1995:85) has observed that "Death tests everyone's integrity; the dying person's immediate survivors".

Jato's trauma, therefore, defines a micro manifestation of the painful casualties accessible at the warfront where many soldiers participated actively and had their share of the trauma. While returning from the battle ground, the captain of the troop becomes dejected and traumatized. His constant repetition of "They abandoned us"(?? p.213) more than four times simply betrays a mind entangled in trauma. Completely shattered, Osime compares the captain's disorientation to that of Jato, "*This is another Jato here. But his collapse is nothing to do with fear. He is shattered because he feels betrayed.*"(p.215). Some soldiers' condition deeply reenacts the various forms individuals can be traumatized minds: "Still there were others who walked in a sort of trance, like the insane in their pure moments of madness"(p.215). Osime also shares in his own trauma, as he began to hear voices typical of a disoriented mind:

He closed his eyes quickly. And then he heard voices.
' it was a terrible beating, ' the first voice said.
' yes, ' the second agreed promptly.
' we lost more than a thousand men. The river is full of the bodies of our dead and many of them are afloat. It is a horrible sight.'
' yes, ' a third voice agreed
' Is the Brigadier back?'

'No.'

'Then we must act quickly...(p.216).

The voices continued the conversation revealing the fear that might turn the soldiers' anger into a mutiny because of the betrayal and abandonment from their commanders. But the first voice suggested that the soldiers' anger should be directed against the rebels immediately without waste of time. These conversations continue until "the voices faded into the distance" (p.216). The collective trauma that gripped the federal troop as a result of the defeat is profoundly felt that the general ambiance in the camp was deeply disheartening. Some of the soldiers find distraction in drinking, other simply looked on dazed. In spite of its collective nature, the traumatic condition is felt individually. In demonstration of the soldiers' anger of the defeat, they promptly round up the Biafran's prisoners of war, whom they had "played and laughed with" before the defeat and opened fire on them killing all in revenge. The civilian journalists, including Osime are ostensibly "shaken" and went back to their various rooms in "silence". The shooting spree continues as Brigadier Otunshi, now a General, ordered for the execution of thirty seven soldiers accused of desertion. Ironically, instead of taking the blame and finding avenues of assuaging the already battered and traumatized wounds of the abandoned army, Otunshi heightens their collective despondency by killing some of their colleagues still suffering from the trauma of abandonment and betrayal.

Returning to Oganza in apparent relief of leaving the trauma-ridden camp and the excitement of seeing his heartthrob, Osime's troubled psyche seems to be never ending. Having promised Ndudi that he would be back for her, and having been delayed as a result of the ambush laid by the Biafran soldiers, Osime finds himself caught in a dilemma of gaining Ndudi's trust once again having disappointed her earlier. These are what overwhelmingly occupied his mind as he came back to Ndudi's house only to see two federal soldiers leaving the room while zipping up their trousers! Startled, he goes into the room and finds Ndudi weeping profusely. "Ndudi told them that she had been raped twice on that same morning, first by the departing Biafran soldiers and secondly by the incoming federal soldiers. And each time, she had been raped by two men" (?? p.246). The ensuing trauma from this violent incident on the psychological and emotional makeup of Ndudi could only be imagined! It completely delineates the traumatic violence that characterized the war on both sides of the conflict and the vulnerability of women.

Conclusion

Conclusively, it can be asserted that *Heroes* is profoundly anchored on its intersectional perspectives where both Marxist and trauma considerations uncover the multifaceted imbroglio of utter exploitation and psychological anguish within the narrative of war. The novel contests the exaltation of state backed brutality by showing how the Nigerian civil war helped the interests of the ruling elite while exacting irreparable damage-both bodily and emotional-on the masses. Marxist

criticism reveals the fundamental discriminations and class tussles entrenched in the war arrangement, while trauma theory conveys to light the unseen wounds, silenced pain, and disintegrated personalities that remain in the aftermath. The experiences of both the civilians and the junior officers during the war underscore not only how these set of people were shortchanged based on their class identities enabled by Marxism but also suffered traumatically as a result of this class structure.

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