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HEROISM, DEFECTION, LIMINALITY OF FREEDOM AND THE NIGERIAN-BIAFRAN WAR IN EDDIE IROH'S *THE SIREN IN THE NIGHT*

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ABSTRACT: This article probes the demonstration of heroism, defection and the liminality of freedom in Eddie Iroh's *The Siren in the Night*, a fictional narrative that recreates the human and political intricacies of the Nigeria-Biafra War. The study, moreover, interrogates how the protagonist represents the fragile boundaries between patriotism and betrayal, and its psychological consequences. Iroh does not only examine the moral uncertainties of war where individuals are torn between loyalty and personal freedom but also explores the psychological transformation of an individual whose actions during the war differentiated him both as a hero and liminal figure. In other words, the novel paradoxically embodies a heroic character that also became a liminal figure. Critics of Iroh's novel seem to have ignored this status contradiction. In narrowing this gap, therefore, this article contends that Iroh's *The Siren in the Night* explores the liminal condition of a hero psychologically wounded as a result of his defection to the federal side towards the end of the Nigerian-Biafran war, an experience that subtly confines the protagonist at the frontiers of insanity. Focusing on the configuration of Kali Tal's trauma theory of liminality, the paper offers an analysis of the novel to demonstrate that the hero, traumatized by the war encounters, notwithstanding his heroic deeds, finds it difficult to resume his normal life after the war. It surmises that this character finds himself trapped at the margins of liminality becoming a problem not only to him but also to society at large.

KEYWORDS: heroism, defection, trauma, liminality, Nigerian-Biafran war

Introduction

Given his experience as a journalist and having worked as a desk editor for the Biafran War Information Bureau from 1967 to 1970 in the Ministry of Information, Enugu, Iroh's fidelity in handling the narrative of Nigerian/Biafran civil war is not in doubt; it clearly establishes him as a voice to be reckoned with in fictionalizing the Nigerian/Biafran civil war experiences. Amuta (1982) while compiling a reference source for the Nigerian war literature offers a bibliography of Nigerian Civil War texts. Accordingly, Amuta's work captures many authors from the three genres of literature especially those who participated in the civil war like Iroh. Iroh, moreover, has written significant works that explore the

Biafran/Nigerian war experiences especially his war trilogy namely: *Forty-Eight Guns for the General* (1976), *Toads of War* (1979), *The Siren in the Night* (1982). Thus, making him the only Nigerian writer to have written three novels on Nigerian/Biafran war experiences. He has received the following awards: *Recipient International Board of Books for Young People*, Tokyo, Japan (1986); *Honorary doctorate degree in public administration*, Imo State University, Owerri (2004); and *Officer of the Order of Nigeria (OON)* (2003).

Historically, the Nigerian-Biafra war occurred between 6th July, 1967, and 15th January, 1970. It was a fight entrenched in deep ethnic, socio-political, economic and political hostilities. Moreover, it persists as one of the most momentous and traumatic events in Nigeria's post-colonial history. Some of the issues that contributed to the breakout of the war are the colonial legacy and ethnic tensions, the January 1966 coup and the counter coup of July 1966 and the continued massacres of the Igbo ethnic group in other parts of Nigeria especially the Northern part. According to Nwankwo (2008, p. 6), "The Nigeria civil war, tells its own story, too, of the Nigerian tragedy or probably of a tragedy that is still unfolding...the roots of the war are as deep as the history of the country." The attainment of political freedom from the colonial empires flings fragmented societies like Nigeria into a sovereign state without a consideration of the multiplicity of its socio-political and religious realities. Stremmler (1977, pp. 16-17) identifies such fragmentations not just peculiar to Nigeria but also obtainable in some African states. He laments:

It was unfortunate that the African States have been broken up into different groups by the Colonial powers. In some cases, a single tribe has been broken up into four different States. You might find a section in Guinea, a section in Mali, a second in Sierra Leone and perhaps a section in Liberia. That was not our fault because, for over sixty years, these different units have been existing and any attempt on the part of any country to disregard this fact might bring trouble to this Continent. This is the thing we want to avoid.

In other words, the colonial course in Nigeria's social-political terrain paves way for armed conflicts, divisive politics, and corruption, rigging of election, favoritism, ethnicity and many vices that have entangled the polity and given rise to a general feeling of post-independence disillusionment. This, of course, deflates the ego of the false mantra that Nigeria unity lays in its diversity. In his exposition, Akingbe (2019, p. 116) reiterates that "Sadly enough, a crack in Nigeria's nationhood has proven that what is been continually exhibited to the entire world as 'model of unity in diversity' has always been an 'empty and false slogan.'" The "unity in diversity" model is a dubious posturing that underlies a divisive, incoherent Nigerian nationhood.

That the aftermath of these vices resulted in the outbreak of a civil war is an eloquent manifestation that the colonial project was a deep scar on the facial construction of the Nigeria state. Even at the wake of the colonial master's surrender of political power in Nigeria and their subsequent handover of power to

the natives, the disenchantment that trailed the post-independence era is quite traumatic. Appiah (1992, p. 165) argues that “the apparent ease of colonial administration generated in the inheritors of the postcolonial nation the illusion that control of the state would allow them to pursue as easily their much more ambitious objectives.” However, such ambitious objectives are not far-fetched from the manifestation of greed for power and materialism, corruption, nepotism, and embezzlement of state funds among others that have enveloped the Nigeria state. In fact, Udumukwu (2007, p. 305) summarizes the condition of post-colonial Nigeria thus, “It is a well-known fact that some of the traumatic events in postcolonial Africa and elsewhere have arisen out of the irreconcilable contradictions that are rooted in the Euro-Western colonization of those places. Others have arisen because the political elite in the new nations thrive on and deliberately promote those contradictions...” Significantly, a major outcome of such contradictions is the Nigerian civil war which brought untold miseries and trauma to millions of people. Nwahunaya (2003, p. 62), in his exposition contends that “The nature of the shake-up that resulted from the Nigerian civil war, the nature of the trauma that people went through at that time and the aftermaths which we still feel now, which we still experience now, are such that the civil war keeps on recurring.

Bemoaning the gravity of the war, Achebe (2012, p. 195) identifies that “One of the saddest images of the war was not just the dead and the physically wounded but also the mentally scared, the so-called mad men and women who had been psychologically devastated by the anguish and myriad pressures of war.” Awuzie (2021, p.1) in tandem with the above reference asserts that “grief is engaged to paint a picture of the Nigerian Civil War in order to bear testimony to what ‘really happened.” According to Dapo (2022, p. 132) “The level of havoc and devastation that characterizes civil war is unthinkable; hundreds, thousands, and even millions of people lose their lives; ethnic nationalities and communities become fragmented, disintegrated, fractured, and dismembered. In addition, physical infrastructure and human capital are also affected.” Going personal, however, Saro-Wiwa (1989, p. 39) agonizes “But it caused me considerable pangs of pain (...) The idea was anathema, or I did not see how the country could be allowed to go to the dogs. The judgment of history would be too severe on the generation that had allowed that to happen.”

Interestingly, Amadi (1973, p. 47) symbolically underscores the tragedy thus “The rising sun, done up in bright yellow, shone on every shoulder and cap. It was unlucky, I thought, that this symbol also represented the setting sun. Already it was sunset in Biafra, and a long gloomy night of horrors lay ahead.” Iwunze (2025, p. 94) confirms that “It conveys the unsettled trauma, identity fragmentation and the botched promise of unity and nationhood, underlining the apprehensions between Igbo identity and Nigerian citizenship even in contemporary times.”

In fact, Dutta’s (2014, p. 25) explanation is quite profound “(...) Things that remain unacknowledged are the collective trauma of people who had to lose

their families” Dutta’s submission captures what should be the creative writers’ thematic preoccupation of the war narratives. The pains and sufferings of the war victims should be emphasized. In the same vein Falola and Ezekwem (2016, p. 1) reveal that “The literatures also deal with the problem of apportioning blame, giving voice to trauma, and evaluating the war’s overall impact. There is also the difficult issue of trauma and memory, which shape narratives of war-related experiences. Many cultures and individuals who experienced traumatic events during wartime suppress these memories in their efforts to cope.” Vickroy (2002, p.1) rightly encapsulates the preceding thoughts “Their works reflect a growing awareness of the effects of catastrophe and oppression on the individual psyche, a perspective that emerged with examinations of the psychological consequences of wars.”

Therefore, in keeping faith to the expectation of Nigerian civil war fictional narratives, Iroh’s imaginative prowess comes to bear as he adroitly engages the traumatic construct of the Nigerian civil war in *The Siren in the Night* (1982) revealing the psychological disproportion that epitomized the survival of those who defected to the federal side during the Nigerian civil war. Particularly revealing, is the author’s handling of the experiences of Ben Udaja who was a principal actor on the Biafran side and his subsequent defection to the federal side to embrace amnesty call during the war. His defection was not only seen as cowardice but also treachery given his military and intellectual competences he exhibited during the war on Biafran side. Iroh’s characterization of Udaja reveals him as one whose heroic deeds, notwithstanding, pitches him as a liminal character evoking Okuyade’s (2013, p. 123) affirmation that during the war “(...) the combatants’ weakness and heroism are revealed. Acknowledging that affirmation, Diala (2019, p. 47) recognizes that:

Writers pay close attention to war given its proclivity to foreground experiences that underline the abiding paradox of the human situation: the grandeur of the human spirit and the mortality of the human condition, human capacity for heroism, and will for unbridled evil to which war also gives full rein.

Divided into three parts, *The Siren in the Night* conscientiously captures the tragedy that defines the socio-political realities of post-traumatic experience of some veterans long after the war has ended. According to the author’s remark at the back page of the novel, he reveals that “The Nigerian civil war has ended. Biafra has surrendered. But a new war is just beginning.” These statements accurately describe the liminal experiences of the protagonist, Udaja. The author employs the character of Udaja to underscore the liminality of peace that trail survivors during and after the war. The war has ended physically, but has not ended psychologically for people like Udaja. In spite, of Udaja’s re-integration into the federal state and his subsequent appointment as a director of Office of Civilian Coordination in charge of distribution of food and clothes to the war ravaged Biafra after the war, he is yet to be fully incorporated into the society. He is still apprehensive that his past encounters will catch up with him sooner or later,

especially fear of reprisals from his former Biafran collaborators. Incidentally, the likes of Colonel Mike Kolawole, head of the Federal Security and Intelligence Directorate does believe that “amnesty should not be taken as amnesia.” As a result, he finds it quite strange as well as disturbing that Udaja should be pardoned and appointed to a higher position. Convinced beyond reasonable doubts that Udaja and other defected Biafran soldiers are hiding under the amnesty call to organize a rebel resurgence, Colonel Mike intensifies his effort to thwart such a move by psychologically destabilizing Udaja whose roles in the defunct Biafra still infuriate him.

Notably, common to some war survivors’ struggle is their inability to resume their prewar lives during post war period. In both *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) by Shimmer Chinodya and *Echoing Silences* (1997) by Alexander Kanengoni, the authors demonstrate the importance of job provision as a way of rehabilitating war survivors. But, Iroh’s narrative identifies a war survivor whose position as Director of the Office of Civilian Co-Ordination in the federal side did not mitigate his circumstances; rather it contributes to his liminal condition. Reabsorbing war survivors into the society by providing jobs for them facilitates both social and psychological integration. It expedites not only healing but also distracts the victims from the psychological burden experienced during the war by engaging them productively. Over the centuries, wars have assumed a designation of cataclysmic confrontations where human tragedies are recorded beyond numerical proportions. Considerably, an aspect of the war’s aftermath, that has become the thematic engagements of many literary discourses, is the manifestation of post-war disorientation among war victims. However, this paper focuses, not only on the protagonist’s disorientation which culminated to his status contradiction but also the inherent challenges of post war rehabilitation.

To be certain, the aspect of status contradiction which encompasses heroism and the liminal state of the protagonist in Iroh’s *the Siren in the Night* (1982) has not received sufficient critical attention. Granting that, Coundouriotis (2014, p. 10) advances an interrogation of the novel from a traumatic perspective; he contends merely that Iroh depicts traumatic narrative as a representation of the status of new Nigeria. Which, according to him, is “(...) paranoid, haunted by the unfinished business of the war after the war.” His analysis, however, does not reflect the status contradiction inherent in the traumatic disorientation of the protagonist in the novel. Again, Asaram (2018, p. 56) posits that “Iroh’s novel, *The Siren in the Night*, is an imaginative and dramatic recreation of the period of post-war reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The novel is based on a historical moment in the history of Nigeria – the aftermath of the Civil War – after surrender of the Biafran Armed Forces to the Federal Forces.” Asaram merely locates the historical realism through which he analyzed the novel. The above analyses of the novel function as the literary depiction of the Nigerian civil war which often underscored the impressive narrative of patriotism, sacrifice and subsequent reintegration, leaving no space to probe the psychosomatic convolutions experienced by such heroic individuals during the war. However, the

novelist's portrayal of traumatic incarceration as well as the status contradiction embedded in the protagonist's personality, emphasizing the contradictions of heroism, the interruptions caused by defection, and the liminality of freedom is what this article subjects to critical investigation. Employing the theoretical framework of trauma focusing largely on liminality, this article will be interrogated revealing not only disturbing portrayal of war as well as confronting common nationalist myths but also the ambiguities and paradoxes associated with a defected hero during and after the Nigerian-Biafran war.

Trauma Theory of Liminality

Regarding the ambivalent essence of human nature, especially during war times, the interaction between heroism and liminality becomes an underlying paradox that condenses the tragic experiences of some war veterans. What has become consistent in the recent scholarship of trauma theory is the recognition of its overwhelming impact in the psychological nature of man. With the diverse publications of trauma theories in the 1990's by Cathy Caruth, Van Der Kolk & Van Der Hart, Kali Tal, Maria Root, Donnick LaCapra, Dori Laub and Shoshan Felman among others who used Sigmund Freud's theory as foundation to build their own different ideas on trauma, these theorists identify that the basic knowledge of trauma is essentially held as the shattering of the victim's crucial belief of himself/herself and the world. Caruth (1996, p. 4) posits that "the wound of the mind is not like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor." Balaev (2014, p. 1) contends that "trauma as a recurring sense of absence that sunders knowledge of the extreme experience, thus preventing linguistic value other than a referential expression" Moreover, Akingbe (2023, p. 4) notes that "as such, literary trauma theory emphasizes the possibilities of using language to contextualize the experiences, responses and narratives of grief as experienced by an individual." The foregoing thoughts on trauma reveal what Forter (2014, p. 71) aptly summarizes, that:

(...) in these works, some combination of the following: a profound psychic disorientation; the deformation or eclipse of memory; an exile from chronological sequence and into the compulsive repetition of past injuries; and a form of writing that must, if it is to keep faith with this experience, mime and transmit to readers a break in linear, conventionally narrative representation.

The trauma theory of liminality, through which Kali Tal examines the post-traumatic condition of war veterans, offers a guiding philosophy for the interrogation of the status contradiction entrenched in the personalities of war victims. In her application of liminality, Tal (1996, p.119), inspired by Eric J. Leed's work on World War 1, extends the notion of liminality to the condition of returned war veterans that "Trauma is a transformative experience, and those who

are transformed can never entirely return to a state of previous innocence". The transformation here reflects the paradoxical nature of dual personalities who are in states of transitions. Van, who originally adopted liminality as a scholastic theoretical framework, employs the term "liminal or threshold" to explain the personality of transition period within the life crisis. He further adopts the word "limen" to highlight the in-between position of the ceremonial person during the transition time. Limen, a Latin word, simply means boundary. Metaphorically, it means "a temporary, in-between situation or area, which is distinguished by indeterminacy, uncertainty, hybridity, possible for subversion and alteration.

Van's anthropological usage of liminality in his book, *The Rites of Passage*, to understand the background of ethnic ceremonies influenced other theorists, including Victor Turner, Eric J. Leed and Kali Tal. Turner, in his quest for cultural institutionalizing of liminality, further expands the concept that:

The attributes of liminality or liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessary ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here or there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by the law, custom, convention, and ceremonial (Van, 1960, p. 25).

Moreover, Van contends that rites of passage are in three phases: rites of separation, which detached an individual or a group of individuals from his or their familiarized place; liminal rites, which representatively attach the character of the "passenger" as one who is between states, places, transitions, or conditions; and finally rites of incorporation (post liminal rites), which welcome the individual back to the group. However, if Van and Turner are fundamentally apprehensive about the cultural ambiguous personality of their subjects; Leed and Tal extend their notion of ambiguity to the experiences of war veterans. Tal (1996, p.15) postulates that "Trauma is enacted in a liminal state, outside the bounds of 'normal' human experience, and the subject is radically ungrouped. Accurate representation of trauma can never be achieved without recreating the event since, by its very definition trauma lies beyond the bounds of 'normal' conception".

Tal engages this theory to describe the condition of the war veterans upon return. According to her, instead of the veterans passing into the post liminal state after their war experiences, they continued to be in a liminal space. In other words, they are in a confused state unable to move forward or even go back to their original state. This underscores Langer's postulation that "The survivor does not travel a road from the normal to the bizarre back to the normal, but from the normal to the bizarre back to a normalcy so permeated by the bizarre encounter with atrocity that it can never be purified again" (cited in Tal, 1996, pp. 119-120). Ostensibly, it naturally follows that this article which explores the distressed psyche of a character specially affected by such extraordinary and overwhelming encounters in war situations, should adopt the theoretical strategy of liminality advanced by Tal. This is so because it captures the post traumatic experiences of

the protagonist as being “liminal type” in the article *understudy*. This liminal type is trapped in his past excruciating experiences which obstruct his advancement in life.

Heroism, Defection, Liminality of Freedom and the Nigerian-Biafran War

Delving into the post traumatic encounters as well as the subject of liminality in the novel, *The Siren in the Night*, Iroh (1982, p. 100) consciously positions the character of Udaja whose temperament has been described as “paranoiac personality” in the novel. This disposition, however, foregrounds Udaja’s susceptibility to his subsequent sufferings as well as the height of trauma he endures after the catastrophic period of the civil war. Like Ehrhart quoted by Tal (1996, p. 79), the novel represents Udaja’s “immediate postwar response to his combat experience, and to the difficulties of adjustment to civilian life”. As a liminal character, Udaja’s moment of initiation begins when he joined the Biafra Army shortly after his return from Ghana. This experience marks his separation from the civilian world. His full participation in the war underscores his “liminal” stage of the rite, where he encounters so much traumatic actions that distinguish him as a clever soldier whose primary purpose was to destabilize the intelligence might of the federal side. However, after the war he is expected to ascend into post liminality by being incorporated into the society and resuming his normal life. But, as it turns out, he finds it difficult to return to his normal life, notwithstanding the appointment given to him by the federal government which could have facilitated his integration back into the society.

Udaja has survived the Nigerian civil war but his inability to remain psychologically stable during the post war period delineates him as a liminal character. He is neither neglected nor abandoned like other war survivors, like Benjamin in *Harvest of Thorns* and Sibaso in *The Stone Virgins*, but has been fully employed and empowered as a Director in the Nigeria Federal Service. Udaja’s condition reverberates Achebe’s (2012, p. 195) findings that “There was another epidemic that was not talked about much, a silent scourge-the explosion of mental illness: major depression, psychosis, schizophrenia, maniac-depression, personality disorders, grief response, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, etc-on a scale none of us had ever witnessed. However, like all liminal characters the war has not ended in his life. A different war is on his life:

Thus, rather than lower his guard, relax and glow in the success he had achieved for his people, which seemed a clear vindication of his decision to defect, Ben Udaja’s private, *intense fear drove him deeper into the fortress prison of a lonely, friendless existence*. He remained scrupulously inaccessible to all but his most trusted assistants who were in all cases either recruits from Lagos or earlier returnees like himself (Iroh, 1982, p. 71).

That “intense fear drove him deeper into the fortress prison of a lonely, friendless existence” evokes the depth of his psychological incarceration. Laub (1995, p. 64) calls it “self-inflicted emotional imprisonment.” Associating his situation with “prison” reveals that his freedom is limited even though he is not confined to the physical walls of a prison. Udaja’s insecurity is not farfetched. As a defector to the Federal Side and a former high ranking officer of the Biafra army, he considers his defection an act of sabotage and betrayal:

He had lived and worked with them and knew very well their obstinate prejudices, their intense feeling of betrayal whenever one of their numbers, however lowly, crossed the green carpet of jungle to join the federal side. Even in the midst of war, defectors had been hunted down on ‘safe’ Federal territory by BOFF’ers armed with deadly G-Salt. It was a sacred duty to kill those who defected from the cause, let alone go to work for the Federal side, the enemy side. (Iroh, 1982, p. 71).

These insidious revelations are what have kept Udaja traumatized after the war. Given his current status in the post war Nigeria, he has the privileged magnanimity accorded to a very few persons to move on with life and enjoyed it to the fullest. But, that is improbable. Ironically, he becomes a “lonely prisoner” outside the iron bars of a prison. Considering the above circumstances that started destabilizing Udaja gradually, it becomes pertinent to understand the motivations behind Udaja’s decision to defect since he is fully aware of the consequences of such an act. Granted his socialist orientation, fuelled by his active participation in Pan Africanism in Britain as well as his privileged position of working under Kwame Nkurumah of Ghana, Udaja readily avails his services to the Biafran cause. Within a short period of time, he distinguishes himself as an intellectual asset to the Biafran side and is subsequently appointed the Associate Director of Military Intelligence in the Biafran hierarchy. This position, moreover, enables him to spearhead most of the deadly attacks carried out on the Federal side which Achebe (2012, p. 160) corroborates that “After I left the BOFF outfit I heard that it was engaged in the more militaristic and controversial aspects of war, such as enemy infiltration, guerrilla warfare, and propaganda.” These vicious activities seriously undermine the might and the intelligent capability of the Nigerian Army. However, his ideals concerning the Biafran cause begin to wane as a result of corruption within the top echelons of the Biafran army:

His personal crisis began like an anthill, slowly, but relentlessly, building up to a grotesque obelisk of doubt, uncertainty and, finally disillusionment. Over the bleak months before his last post, Umuahia was overrun by Federal Forces on 22 April, Ben Udaja had watched, helplessly, with pain in his heart, as once high hopes, noble ideals and lofty visions died their slow, excruciating death; one by one, like fated triplets destined not to reach maturity, even adolescence... Ben Udaja had watched with stubborn disbelief his new nation’s fireman pursuing rats while the country burned furiously (Iroh, 1982, p. 27).

More worrisome is the fact that his defection is widely broadcast given his status in the Biafran army. “A top rebel official, Mister Benedict Udaja, last night deserted the crumbling rebel enclave and returned to Enugu, the capital of Federal-liberated territories, where he was warmly received by Federal military and civilian authorities (...)” (Iroh, 1982, p. 31). The implication of this broadcast simply publicizes his defection as authentic information and not a rumor per se thereby, heightening his fear of reprisals from his Biafran colleagues. However, Udaja’s defection runs contrary to the thoughts of Philip Efiog, the Biafran second in command, as captured in his memoir. Citing Efiog, Diala (2008, p. 119) underscores that “It is difficult to believe that in the midst of this, I should have defected to the Nigerian side, be given a red carpet treatment, and hailed as hero as some people later suggested I should have done”. Ironically, when Ojukwu, the Biafran leader, fled and abandoned the war he was considered a coward. Achebe (2012, pp. 223-224) notes that “There have been several debates over the decades since about why Ojukwu, the resistance leader of a people so wronged, left (some say fled) Biafra at this critical juncture, declaring in his classic style: “whilst I live, Biafra lives” His detractors, many of whom are still alive, still believe that this particular act was one of great cowardice, and that true heroes go down with the cause”.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that his defection to the Federal side begins his journey of liminality of peace. His fear of reprisals from his Biafran colleagues is quite understandable. But, his fate in the federal territory where he is given a prominent position becomes a matter of urgent concern. This is so because a few months after his defection, the Biafran side is defeated and the head of state made a victory broadcast laced with contradictions and ambiguities regarding the fate of the rebels:

(...) Now, my dear countrymen, we must recommence at once in greater earnest, the task of healing the nation’s wounds. We have at various times repeated our desire for reconciliation in full equality, once the secessionist regime abandoned secession. *I solemnly repeat our guarantees of general amnesty for those misled into rebellion* (Iroh, 1982, p. 32).

Udaja’s understanding of the italicized statement merely underlines a new kind of fear facing him. Was he actually misled into the war or did he willingly join the war? If the former is the case, he is qualified for amnesty. But, he knows that he was not misled into the war; he joined the war willingly. Therefore, he finds himself unable to identify with the general euphoria sweeping across the land. Even though he has been given a prominent job by the Federal government, he could not still allay his fears. He sees himself caught in anxiety. This echoes Steven’s (2009, p.165) definition of trauma as an event that is “...anxiety-provoking, psychologically overwhelming, physically trying and life threatening”. His nightmare has become a double-edged sword: fear of reprisals from his former colleagues and fear of uncertainty from the Federal side. His contemplation of the ensuing uneasiness, however, results in his hope hanging in

the balance. “For even though he had, at a decisive stage, been more of a follower in terms of his inability to influence the course of events he had certainly been a leader too... But for now, the matter of whether he was a leader or a misled was out of his hands. There was nothing he could do but wait” (Iroh, 1982, p.33). Udaja’s confusion hinges on the above circumstances that delineate his war background. At a point he takes solace in his current activities as Director of the Office of Civilian Co-Ordination. As foreign press underscores his success “He saw foreign press reports of his achievements as the success of the Federal Authorities’ post war policy of rehabilitating the defeated Biafrans. And this he hoped, could earn him a parole from the uncertain future to which the ambiguous amnesty proclamation of 15 January had sentenced him” (Iroh, 1982, p.70).

In every transitory moment there is an expectation that the “passenger or voyager” would come to the end of the journey successfully despite the uncanny experiences the passenger encountered on the way. In the case of Udaja, one sees a “passenger” who is trapped by his past traumatic experiences. In some post war societies, many of the liminal characters are those who are abandoned after the war in spite of their gallant contributions during the war. But in the case of Udaja, his having a job seems to contribute to his fears. In the eyes of the public, Udaja has attained postliminal status because of the way he carried himself by “repressing” his fears evoking Tal’s submission that:

Some managed to be post liminal by repressing or revising their experiences (though this is seldom a completely successful tactic, since the revelatory nature of their experience has shown them the inadequacy of “normal” concepts of meaning in the world) (Tal, 1996, p. 122).

The appointment seems to be politically motivated because, among other things, it seems to project the sincerity and commitment of the Head of State to carry out the responsibilities of rehabilitation, reintegration and reconstruction of post war Nigeria especially on the former Biafran enclave and its inhabitants:

The Office of Civilian Co-Ordination was headed by Ben Udaja, as Director. Whether his appointment was reward for his defection, or recognition of his suitability as the most qualified returnee, it was not clear. But it was obvious that his was to become a decisive responsibility (Iroh, 1982, p. 69).

Personalities like Colonel Mike Kolawole, the head of State-Security and Intelligence Directorate (S-SID), strongly feel that the appointment given to Udaja is a benevolence stretched too far. According to him “amnesty should not be mistaken as amnesia”. Given his position, he deploys the opportunity to run a background check on Udaja. Fully armed with firsthand information, he goes all out to unsettle Udaja in a most traumatic manner. With the above high-powered conspiracy going on against him, Udaja’s life unknown to him seems to be in serious danger. His covert premonition about the safety of his life in the hands of the Biafrans soldiers reinforces his already troubled life:

(...) a new fear was gnawing its way steadily to the forefront of his mind, chipping away at his fragile peace of mind. Not that the fear had not always been there. It was only more relentlessly crawling to the fore, as concern for his Federal fate receded. It began soon after he decamped. A federal intelligence source had hinted to him that he had been under the Biafran surveillance for his outspoken criticism of the war effort; he decided to remove himself from the scene (Iroh, 1982, p.71).

Udaja,'s condition, incidentally, synchronizes with Des Pres's assertion quoted by Tal (1996, p. 44), that "some level of trauma is always present in the life of the survivor, the form in which it is 'not over' is still influenced by the interaction of a variety of personal, social and political forces that combine to create responses (...)." Incidentally, his premeditated fear becomes an available platform which enables Kolawole and his boss to launch their psychological onslaught against him. In his bid to execute his plans successfully against Udaja, Kolawole engages the services of a psychologist, Dr. Timi Bimbose whose sole mission is to perfect plans to destabilize Udaja psychologically. This is so because, since the option of eliminating him seemed not feasible and will raise dusts, the best thing to do is to unsettle him psychologically into paranoid condition. This will definitely drive him crazy and subsequently lead to his downfall. Having done a background check on him, Dr Bimbose discovers that Udaja has already started showing signs of paranoiac disorder:

(...) Dr Bimbose was armed with a complete psychological profile of Ben Udaja. After a close study of the subject and his antecedent Dr Bimbose had little problem in concluding, as he was to tell Colonel Kolawole, that the psychodynamics of paranoia already existed in Udaja's psyche. In his opinion, Ben Udaja was in fact the classic paranoiac personality. The man deserted his fellow rebels when the going got tough, or at least so they would think. Among these rebels were people he had trained to kill deserters. When the war ended he found himself surrounded by them. The seeds were sown when he returned to the Federal side in 1969. He became an obsessional loner. His secret telephone lines and bodyguards were clear evidence of his feeling of insecurity (Iroh, 1982, p. 100).

These revelations by Dr. Bimbose become instrumental in their plan of destabilizing Udaja. The Psychologist has assured Kolawole that "this could be a long process but given the subjects latent paranoid potential, it should be quite possible to induce instability by selectively reinforcing his most pressing fears" (Iroh, 1982, p. 101). The psychological battle waging against Udaja takes another dimension. Unknown to him, his assailants have gotten information about his forthcoming wedding and decide to destabilize him the more. Udaja's psychological war reaches a climatic proportion as he comes back to Enugu with his wife after their wedding at Kaduna. His inability to locate his driver becomes the first shock he experiences. He has already arranged with the driver before now to pick them on the said date. In his disappointment and helplessness, a car that has been planted by his assailants, arrives and offers them a lift to their destination.

On reaching his house, his earlier disappointment seems trivial compared to the situation at home. All his armed guards have gone; none is on duty as well as his driver. The door is ajar! The entire house is in darkness; the light system totally gone off. It seems to be a robbery act, but nothing is missing. The car is parked safely in the garage. He strikes a match, and he lights the lamp to see what the invaders have taken out of his room but he only sees what they left:

The huge ornamental coffin lay open on one half of the double bed. Its cover had been removed and placed alongside it on the other half of the bed. The mournful black linen that lined the interior of the coffin disagreed gruesomely with the white bedspread, as with Ben's cream silk sleeping robe which the invaders had carefully laid at the bottom of the coffin. As he gaped, struck dumb by the fetish ritual, he was no longer aware of his young wife... innocently she walked up beside Ben, her hand reaching out to grab his. Her night-shattering scream, punctuated by sharp gasps, filled the silent room. Udaja turned in on time to see her tottering to the floor. He reached out with both hands and took hold of her. (Iroh, 1982, p. 165).

Udaja's confusion at this point is quite explicable. He could not comprehend the placement of a coffin on his bed! He has been experiencing strange happenings since his return from Kaduna. In fact, he becomes stupefied. "He was surprised by his own calm at this morbid climax of nightmarish evening. He knew his calmness was false. It was not calmness...it was numbness. It was impossible to be calm; just numb; anaesthetized by the pace of events. The quick succession of shocks had rapidly, mercilessly peeled back the thin layers that camouflaged his insecurity" (Iroh, 1982, p. 165). It is important to note that "Numbness" is a symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Unable to bear the ensuing melee in his house, he enters his car and drives to the Government House. On his way to the government house, he feels that he is being pursued by the police but a closer contact shows otherwise:

Udaja spared the quickest of glances at the driver of the Peugeot. His face, like the vaguer figure beside him, was bleak and indiscernible beneath a peaked cloth cap of the type favoured by Biafran troops. But something was less vague, quite unmistakable. The arm gripping the wheel of the salon showed the driver was wearing the leopard-skin camouflage uniform of the former Biafran army, complete with the Rising Sun emblem at the top of his arm (Iroh, 1982, p. 170).

He becomes terribly fearful on seeing the insignia of Biafran Army and was convinced that he is being pursued by his enemies. Afterwards, he gets involved in an accident and passes out. Against the foregoing, it is obvious that his assailants want him to be convinced beyond doubts that he is being threatened by the Biafran soldiers he abandoned during the war. The mission, as earlier revealed is geared towards devastating him psychologically. Typical of a traumatized mind, he becomes hallucinated. "The coffin floated before his eyes...it brought with it visions of Miata, driving him through fresh waves of grotesque hallucination. The big house was now filled with coffins. Coffins

floating around him, around Miata...Miata in a coffin... Miata dead... in a coffin... *Miata in a coffin?* (Iroh, 1982, p.171). Seeing his wife lying soundly on the bed as he returned to his house, momentarily allayed his fear. On a closer look, he sees something strange:

A live hand grenade had been placed at the foot of her bed, beneath it a folded note. He put down the lamp quickly and picked up the grenade gingerly. The pin was in place. He sighed. The note read: ‘We could have simply blown her up three times over.’ Beside an imperfect sketch of the Biafran Rising Sun were the words: The Bomb Squad’ (Iroh, 1982, p. 172).

At this point, Udaja needs no soothsayer to be convinced that his assailants were the former soldiers of Biafra whom he had deserted. He knows quite well that they will strike but what he does not know is when, where and how they will strike!

What seems to be the height of his disorientation came when he narrated his ordeal to the Sole Administrator of Enugu. To his amazement and utter disbelief, he listens helplessly as the Sole Administrator reduces his encounters as nothing but mere coincidences. Even when he details his encounters one after the other, registering the gravity of their nature especially the “Biafran Theory”, the Sole Administrator dismissed the credibility of such. Laub (1995, p. 63) calls such attitude from the Sole Administrator as coming from “unempathic strangers” because of the “otherness” the victim senses in others. He could not associate the Biafran soldiers with such sophisticated delivery that characterized the thriller nature of the episodes. Udaja could not stem his anxiety as he recounts:

Quite frankly, sir, I don’t know what I think any more. Perhaps I have tended in the past to dismiss these things too readily. Really, how can I explain my disconnected telephone, the fuses that were clearly removed? And the coffin? The staged accident? He sounded agitated *as the visions began to float slowly, agonizingly through his mind* (Iroh, 1982, p. 180).

Once a mind witnesses debilitating sights, the memory will continue to be haunted occasionally. The above italicized words reflect Caruth’s (1995, p. 151) submission that “perhaps the most striking feature of traumatic recollection is the fact that it is not a simple memory”. Udaja’s language at this point indicates a man who is at war with himself. The only person who should be sympathetic to his predicament seems to be nonchalant. And, this drives him to the margins of the society. The only time the Sole Administrator happens to take him seriously is when he mentions the planting of a hand grenade. Even though, he later dismisses it as not having enough evidence to deploy the state apparatus to pursue a threat that cannot be sufficiently established. He hopelessly asks the Sole Administrator, “Are you saying then, Sir, that the Bomb Squad does not exist? Udaja is pained that the highest authority in the state, who also happened to be his friend, tacitly doubts his evidence, indeed his sanity. He feels defenseless” (Iroh, 1982, p. 181). Representing the society, the Sole Administrator response to Udaja’s plight is

quite unfortunate. This further takes him to the margins of insanity! Udaja's case suffers another defeat as the inquiry set up to investigate the murder of his guards came up with claims that even though the murder was suspected to have been carried out by ex-rebels of Biafra, it has nothing to do with the Udaja. During his trip to Kaduna, his guards are "tricked" out by his assailants and are subsequently shot with a known Biafran gun.

(...) Ben Udaja still felt little security in the world outside his home. The special branch's negative report did not relax his anxiety over Miata's safety, let alone his. He suffered increasing long moments of depression, camouflaged by a book in his hand. Inwardly consumed by anxiety, he sought for a rationalization, vaguely hoping for some miraculous resolution (Iroh, 1982, p. 188).

The reference to "long moments of depression" is in tandem with withdrawal syndrome - a feature of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Krystal (1995, p. 77) describes it as survivors living in "withdrawn depression." Searching for a clue to his problem has become a mirage he has to accept bitterly. Unable to answer the many questions raging his mind and the sudden suspicion he has towards Ulo Amadi, his former Biafran follower, he decides to confront him. Lately, Ulo Amadi has been looking for him to disclose his true identity and his conspiracy against him. However, according to Udaja, the only person capable of knowing his daughter's whereabouts is Ulo Amadi since he (Ulo) could have intercepted any of her letters in the office. With this unfounded suspicion, Udaja goes out for Ulo Amadi. He becomes paranoid suspecting every move around him. While climbing the steps to his office, he sees a man whom he had seen downstairs and nearly strangled the man to death. He accused the man of shadowing when he caught him. He fears the man may be one of his persecutors. This echoes Kai's (1995, p.184) revelation that "Traumatized people often scan the surrounding world anxiously for signs of dangers, breaking into explosive rages and reacting with a start to ordinary sights and sounds". While in this temper, he confronts Ulo Amadi. 'You want to see me, Amadi...? The voice Amadi heard was not familiar. There was strangeness in it' (Iroh, 1982, p. 195). After a series of questioning and confrontation, Udaja unable to listen fully to Amadi's confession does the unthinkable:

'Listen, Sir,' Amadi gestured desperately. 'I think we should sit down before we misunderstood each other. Please sit down!'

'I am not sitting down!...

'I think, sir,' Amadi said slowly. 'I think that your life is in danger...'

Don't explain to me... you only want to *explain* to save your own neck, because you know now that I know. It is too late to find a scapegoat. It is too late now to throw off the scent...! (Iroh, 1982, p. 196).

As Amadi pleads frantically and fruitlessly, Udaja pulls out the pin of the grenade with his teeth and blows off Ulo Amadi in a most harrowing manner. Udaja clearly manifests traces of disorientation given the circumstances he found

himself. As a war survivor, he is unable to transcend his liminal condition. He is still tied to the traumatic encounters of his past experiences.

Conclusion

From the submissions of these trauma theorists like Krystal (1995), Laub (1995), Tal (1996), Caruth (1996), Stevens (2009) in the foregoing analysis, a trauma victim undergoes momentous changes especially during war situations; and that such experiences ultimately transform the victim into a new entity. This aptly encapsulates the experiences of Udaja as he progressively transforms into a paranoid personality given his exposure to traumatic encounters as a result of his defection to the federal side during the war. In conclusion, therefore, Udaja's experiences depict Tal (1996, p. 119) definition of trauma that "Trauma is a transformative experience, and those who are transformed can never entirely return to a state of previous innocence". Obviously, he could not return or become incorporated back into the society in spite of his appointment as a Director of The Office of Civilian Co-Ordination next to the Sole Administrator. The appointment could not guarantee his integration fully into the society. Udaja's ultimate submission to disorientation is as a result of the gradual but consistent collapse of his defensive mechanism thereby thrusting him into liminality in spite of his heroism. Tal (1996, p.135) identifies that "...trauma places extraordinary stress upon an individual's ordinary coping mechanisms. While life is full of minor stresses that initiate defensive processes, major stresses (such as brutalization and threat to life) overcome an individual's normal defensive mechanisms." The above assertion precisely defines the failure or collapse of Udaja's defensive mechanism which leads to his liminal condition.

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