

## CONTEXTUALISING THE TRAUMA OF TERRORISM, MEMORY AND GRIEF IN RAZAQ GBOLAHAN'S *THE OTHER NAMES OF GRIEF*

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### ABSTRACT

*Over the years, Nigeria has had a running battle with curbing insecurity, wanton killings and maiming of citizens spearheaded by the fundamentalist religious sects known as Boko Haram and other breakaways extremist groups. The multilateral nature of terrorism which combines violence, devastation, destruction of properties, death, among other injurious and grievous memories has generated a body of creative enterprise by Nigeria writers. These writers succinctly reconstruct the tempo of terrorism, the societal ferment caused by terror, the devastating effects and its indelible repercussions on the citizens. This work therefore examines the intersecting lines of terrorism, memory and grief in Razaq Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief*. The work investigates the creative representations of terrorism and the psychological implications on human psyche by adopting Cathy Caruth's Trauma theory. The analysis of the poems reveals that terrorism and violence are merchandises of religious extremism and fundamentalism which breeds agony of pains, displacement and devastation. Characters are consistently on the edge as they involuntarily respond to unending dimensions of grief. It concludes that though victims of violence are doubly traumatized as they strive to contend with recurrent memories of attacks, writers continue to seek ways of bring creative works to expose the anguish of terror and to mediate the grief and anguish that victims go through.*

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Fundamentalism, Trauma, Memory, Boko Haram, Razaq Gbolahan.

### Introduction

The phenomenon of terrorism has been a major threat to humanity and its occurrence creates unpleasant memories and perpetual grief in the minds of those affected. The dehumanizing effects of terrorism have given writers ample inspiration to contextualize the parlous situation of fear and uncertainties that is characteristic of postcolonial Africa and depicted in literary works emanating from this socio-historical and depict what David Udoinwang and Chinenye Amonyeye describe as "The metaphoric diagnosis...of post-independent Nigerian state from which vantage point a continental vision of Africa's parlous state is magnified..." (159). Terrorism can be equated to an act that generates pain, grief and suffering to the people targeted. According to Alfred Vincent, terrorism, "...often involves the wanton destruction of lives and property and inflicting immense suffering on victims who in most cases are not directly responsible for the political problem the terrorists claim to be fighting" (57). This position highlights the fact that the aim of terrorism is often to end the lives of many people and victims are more or less innocent. It may be apt to submit that, "terrorism is the deliberate

creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence..." (45) as Bruce Hoffman puts it.

Similarly, The United Kingdom Terrorism Act 2000 explains that, "terrorism is the use of threat of action designed to influence the government or an international governmental organization so as to intimidate the public or a section of the public made for the purpose of advancing political, religious, racial or ideological cause" (43). This explanation reveals the aim of terrorism as an intentional strategy to draw the attention of the government and, possibly, external bodies that might be directly or indirectly affected by the menace. This situation is very familiar in Nigeria because of the series of attack leveled against the country and its citizens by Boko Haram terrorist group. Looking through these dehumanizing activities Elimma Ezeani reports that:

The activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria have brought to the fore challenges faced by law and governments in tackling an ideology whose purpose is so far largely misunderstood and whose means of gaining public attention remain as variant and as indiscriminate as their attacks of terror (2).

Ezeani's assertion above holds up the vulnerability of the Nigerian law and government because the Boko Haram sect seems not have a defined agenda or ideology which the government can come to agreement with, and because of this the law becomes somewhat ineffective. This goes further to attest to the role of literary works in which Udoinwang and Akpan put it that "... writers serve as chroniclers of the state of the world, sensitizers of humanity, and as advocates for the vulnerable" (185).

Terrorism in Nigeria took a worse turn in 2014 when terrorists' sect kidnapped about 276 secondary school girls in Chibok, Borno State. This aroused global pandemonium which gave rise to the "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign. In contrast, Christian Religious scholars like Asukwo Edet Oko have advocated for the use of religion as a panacea for peace as against the negative usage by Islamic fundamentalist in his article, titled, "The Place of the Church towards Peace Process for Sustainable National Development". On their part, Nigerian writers like Helon Habila, Obinna Udenwe among others creatively satirize this spectacle of bloodletting in their works in order to call attention to the ferment in the Nigerian sociopolitical scene. In fact, Oluwatoyin Badejogbin insists that when terrorists act unchecked, it creates uncertainty, reduces confidence and increases risk perceptions and risk premium (17). More so, Nigeria's diplomatic relations with other countries was seriously dented such that the country was tagged one of the "world's most unsafe places to be" by the *Global Watch Magazine* in December, 2014. These challenges prompted the Federal Government of Nigeria to seek international security aids through bilateral relationship; a move that cost the federal government a lot of funds and resources. On the other hand, insecurity and terrorism has been identified as major drivers of migration. According to Kufre Akpan and Monica Udoette, "Inequality, wars, insurgency, lack of job opportunities and other ugly socio-political decimals ravaging nations of African state, have been the major push factors that have seen many Africans denouncing their origin and identifying with countries in Europe, America and other Asian countries" (64-65). Some scholars attribute these socio-political inanities to poor leadership in the continent. Kufre Akpan argues that: "In Nigeria a today, a host of ugly indexes ranging from insurgency, banditry, militancy, bribery, corruption, skewed electoral

system and other sundry issues are convenient grounds that could explain leadership deficit in the country" (2). This goes to show the all-encompassing consequences of terrorism.

Although, Nigeria is battling the deafening effect of terrorism, terrorism has been identified as a global predicament, one that spreads its grim net of woes across cities, towns and countries. This is aptly captured in the introductory pages of Razaq Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief*, thus, "The terrain is grim, and it's all ours. From Gwoza to Kaduna, Damascus to Tripoli, and all other troubled tributaries, screams of pain have found their ways into the stream that feeds our souls. How do we, today, go through the day without contact with some news item that breaks the spirit?" (vii). KufreAkpan views this ugly development as "...an agonising index of deformities that characterise the socio-political space of the postcolonial African nation states" (28).

Basically, terrorism unleashes pain, highlights the absurdity of human existence and blurs the vision of a progressive future. For instance, Helon Habila's *Chibok Girls* shows the helpless state of the children whose fathers were killed by Boko Haram, thus, "... The children...were orphans...wandering after the terrorists had killed their parents. For them the future held little promise; the boys will end up begging on the streets and the girls would most likely become prostitutes" (65). It is this deafening trend of agony, grief and the memories that breed trauma that justifies the need for an assessment the creative representation of terrorism, its traumatizing memories and grief in Razaq Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief*.

### **Theoretical Framework: Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory**

This work adopts Cathy Caruth's Trauma theory to examine the psychological repercussions of terrorism on humans in regard to memory and grief. Trauma theory emerged in the 1990s to examine the efficacy of dehumanizing occurrences like war, terrorism, plague, pandemic and others on humans. Proponents of the theory include Cathy Caruth, Anne Whitehead, Shoshana Felman, Ann Kaplan, Geoffrey Hartman among others. Trauma theory began with Sigmund Freud's publication of *Studies in Hysteria* in collaboration with Josef Breuer. Freud later engaged in the studies on the post-traumatic effects of the World War I and the Holocaust on the survivors as captured on his *Beyond Pleasure Principle* (1920). Freud's complete discussion on trauma is captured in his later works and mostly what would later be known as *Moses and Monotheism* (Vantriglio Antonio and Dinesh Bhurgra, 67). Ann Kaplan supports the position that "Trauma studies originated in the context of research about the Holocaust and its repercussion on the human psyche" (1). As such, the theory is often applied in reviewing a person's mental state, actions and reactions to disastrous experiences.

As a literary approach, Morrell Marcus opines that trauma theory is "used to approach and analyze the behaviour of a character in regard to his mental state in order to decipher the reasons behind their behaviours or actions" (8). Marcus maintains that to understand a character in work of art, the mental state must be understood. Furthermore, Cathy Caruth in her publication, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), takes a critical investigation into Freud's discussion on trauma and memory, and gives a post-structural analysis of Freud's studies on dreams by saying that "The subconscious part of the mind cannot always be controlled by individuals, and once they recall an incident which is meant to be forgotten, it becomes a problem to the mind" (20). She focuses attention on the severe

suffering and subtly points to the idea that traumatic experiences are an unavoidable damage to mental health. Giving more background of the theory, Caruth asserts:

As a consequence of the increasing occurrence of such perplexing war, experiences and other catastrophic responses during the last twenty years, physicians and psychiatrists have begun to reshape their thinking about physical and mental experiences, including most recently the responses to a wide variety of other experiences, such as terrorism, genocide, pogrom, rape, child abuse, auto and industrial accidents...that are now understood in terms of the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (11).

In the book titled *The Black Hole of Trauma*, Bessel A. Van Kolk and Alexander C. McFarlane advance on the degree of damage on the psyche by traumatic experiences. Kolk explains that “despite the human capacity to survive and adapt, traumatic experiences can alter people’s psychological, biological, and social equilibrium to such a degree that the memory of one particular event comes to taint all other experiences... spoiling appreciation of the present” (Kolk, 488). Deborah Horvitz adjudges traumatic experience to be one that “creates speechless fright, a latent period of disassociation where the meaning and linguistic immediately are fractured” (34). Cathy Caruth’s position equally is that “trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth, 36). Therefore, Caruth sums up that the story of trauma, then, “is the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality - the escape from a death, or from its referential force - rather attests to it send less impact on a life” (7).

According to Monica Udoette, “traumatic experiences can sometimes produce an indelible effect on the human psyche that can change the nature of an individual’s memory, self-recognition and relational life” (2). Cathy Caruth puts it succinctly that “literature like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing; and it is at the specific point at which knowing and not intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet” (3). The above perspective justifies and launches the discourse of trauma as a valid unit of interaction in literature especially in areas of characterization. While Caruth avers that “the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind”(3), trauma is not traceable in “simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature ... returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4). Anne Whitehead also believes trauma to be “an emotional response to a terrible event”(16). However, all these assertions, point to the lunge that “fundamental to traumatic experience is that the past lingers unresolved, not remembered in a conventional sense because it is not processed like non traumatic information, either cognitively or emotionally” (Udoette, 3).

Hence, the evolution of trauma theory in literary criticism might best be understood in terms of the changing psychological definitions of trauma as well as the semiotic, rhetorical, and social concerns that are part of the study of trauma in literature and society (Amzi Mohd, 6). It may be apt to assert that humans (recreated characters) are prone to traumatic syndrome on account of their experience of unpleasant incidents and aftermath behaviours and as a consequence, warrant a pivotal review within the tenets of trauma theory. Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief* presents dehumanizing occurrences like terrorism, war, genocide and

pogrom, among others, the experience of these occurrences causes traumatic disorders in the minds of the personas. Thus, this work prioritizes aspects of trauma theory in the analysis and the vivid projection of the tempo, temperament and reactions of the personas.

### **Violence, Terrorism and Trauma in Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief***

Elsewhere, Monica Udoette avers that “Black women writers are in the vanguard of a crusade to foster heightened awareness of the challenges facing African American women in the United States” (15), Nigerian writers, especially those drawing attention to insecurity and terrorism, are likewise in the forefront of the crusade to raise keen consciousness of the citizenry on debilitating nature of the violence of terrorism that feeds the Nigerian dystopian society. Violence is a major threat to humanity; a reality that cannot be ignored as it involves human destruction and vulnerability. The violent connotation that is dominant in post-independence Nigerian writings result from what Udoinwang describes as: “Nigeria’s disintegrative tendencies” (143) which affect its nationhood. Undoubtedly, the Nigerian political class has little or nothing to offer in this fight against the violence of terrorism. Instead, they have been imbibed with a culture of greed that promotes violence. Jacinta Nkiruka Akaenyi’s article, “Beyond Sheer Entertainment: A Voyage Around Emeka Nwabueze’s *A Parliament of Vultures* and Osita Ezenwanebe’s *Giddy Festival*” describes the corrupt political class as the progenitors of violence in their bid to hold on to power indefinitely.

However, victims of violence are often traumatized from sad experiences as evident in Gbolahan’s collection of poems. Through the viewpoint of poet personas, the poet provides ample insights into the volatile terrain of Northern Nigerian and other parts of the world as their daily lives resonates with spectacles of bloodletting. For instance, in the poem titled “Waiting”, the persona reiterates the depth of havoc plaguing his homeland and his desperate yearnings for normalcy. Thus,

.... Waiting for my homeland to become a source  
of bliss, for the walls of bombed houses to resurrect,  
for laughter to ring like a bell in houses smoldered by machine  
guns. Waiting for rain to erase blood that stains the streets  
of my homeland, for children to gather again to hear folktale,  
for my grandmother to cradle me in her arms as night arrives  
with a river of stories. Waiting for my brothers to return home  
from war... (Lines 1-10)

The persona poignantly selects words that recreate a devastating and ferment society with deliberate emphasis on the indelible dent terrorism has caused people in the northern part of Nigeria. Noticeably, the bombing and other violent activities are traceable to Boko Haram insurgents. The killings are so grievous that the persona decries “...waiting ... for people to sleep without racing to where their beloveds dissolve in the smoke, for another dawn to come without the stereo announcing there are people dying, dead.” (2). These pictures of terror illicit a conscious response stirring the need for a reversal of a world of doom and death to what life used to be before the woes of violence resurfaced.

In successive projections, Rasaan Malik Gbolahan enunciates dimensions of the social realities of grief in a terror-turn state. This task of the artist as a social watchman agrees with Rebecca

Usoro and Monica Udoette standpoint that “all creative imaginations ... articulate dimensions of social experience” (61). For instance, the poem, "Another Morning" exposes the recurring theme of violence and trauma. Thus, the poem begins with the graphic lines of dehumanization,

A boy walks to where a casket sits, waiting for a corpse.  
A woman who resembles my mother watches as clouds  
gather, announcing another rain of bullets. People gather  
like bees, humming a dirge, sniffing the stench that leaves  
a burnt body. A woman folds her hands as they exhume  
her husband's remains, as they burden the earth with swollen  
corpses; with corpses unclaimed by their families.  
A man stretches his hands  
to seek peace ...I watch my country dissolve in the sea  
of bombs...in the sea of blood... (Lines 1-11).

The ailing society highlighted above is fraught with frequent deaths, rampant tragedies and dehumanization. In this regard, Udofia, Atakpo and Udoinwang aptly assert that literary works in many ways constitute of “... signs embodying the cultural ideas and the codes” (45) that point at the collective existential traits of every society. It is therefore not strange for "A boy" to wait “for a corpse” (6). The persona affirms an environmental disconnect that “rains of bullets” and one that plunges characters in “the sea of bombs that floods every house”. This depiction is replete with the most grievous form of dehumanization going by Usoro and Udoette’s definition of dehumanization as “a debasement of what informs an individual’s essence of life and addresses acting insensitively towards others” (142). It is clear that the intensity of this violent shootings, attacks and deaths by terrorists leave the victims shattered and disfigured such that identifying the death becomes an impossible task; thus, the people are unjustly denied of peace and stability as a result of violence. James Okpiliya and Kufre Akpan opine that “the author’s commitment in exposing these ugly realities is in tandem with the sacred responsibility of a writer and underscores the all-important role literature plays in the society” (52). This is largely because literature remains a predominant means of investigating the complexities, apprehensions and contradictions that plague humanity (Akpan, 3).

Basically, terrorism has been identified as a major threat to society. Nigeria, for instance has suffered numerous terrorist attacks from the Boko Haram group in the northern part of the country. This trend of attacks informs Helon Habila's preoccupation in *Chibok Girls*, as he captures some of the violent activities of the group. Habila journalizes the reports of the massacre of a group of school boys at Federal Government College, Buni Yadiin Yobe State. The narrator recalls this disastrous incident which left a lot of Nigerians mourning, "Boko Haram insurgents invaded the Federal Government College...and threw explosives into the boy's dorm rooms, then shot and stabbed the boys as they tried to escape"(22). This situation is very similar to that of the society in Gbolahan's poem “Another Morning”, where people are leveled to “the sea of blood that mops everywhere, leaving us with bodies of people butchered on the altar of religion” (6). These remarks show that the persona's society is a typical example of a place not to be lived in. The scenario in the text re-creates intensity of reflections and points at what Affiah, Udoinwang and Amaku rightly note by stating that: “... a creative process, stimulates thought, creates suspense, yields amusement, and compels

participation on the part of the audience (13); and this make the atmosphere deeply captivating.

### **Death, Grief and Devastating Memory in Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief***

The theme of death, grief and devastating memory as projected by the poet in *The Other Names of Grief* is quite pathetic and traumatic. In the title poem, "The Other Names of Grief", the poet through the voice of the persona progresses alternative definitions of what constitutes grief by listing actions, events and circumstances that deeply inspires enduring reflections of pain and grief. Thus, the other ways that grief can be described and named is to:

Say it is the darkness that chokes the life  
of a woman who still longs for the arrival  
of her dead child...say it is a tragedy: bloodshed in Syria,  
slaughter house in Burma, inaccurate number of the dead  
in manifold bom blasts perpetrated by book harams.  
Say it is a boy learning how to forget his mother's face  
After her death, a woman wandering a silent house,  
as every night opens the gash her husband left in  
her eyes. Say it is Hiroshima, Pakistan, France, India and Iraq. (Lines1-14)

From the above lines, the imagery of pain and grief is poignant that one can only imagine the frightening world of trauma the people are living in. Cathy Caruth qualifies humans in such living conditions as the poem above as traumatized especially from the "memories of a violent incident or attack that involves them or their loved ones" (31).

It could be said that the title poem, "The Other Names of Grief" is a perfect representation of characters traumatized by grief. For instance, lines 1-2 vividly outline the plight of "a woman who still longs for the arrival of her dead child". The persona makes it clear that she still battles with the child's memory and her expectation of his return. Her actions are indicative of one with an inflicted wound upon the mind and correspond with Caruth tenet of trauma being "the narrative of belated experience". Similarly, the young boy who is struggling with the devastating memory of his dead mother and "a woman wandering a silent house, as every night opens the gash her husband left in her eyes" are all creative projections of trauma victims battling the 'very unassimilated nature' of pain that returns to haunt survivors. Vantriglio Antonio and Dinesh Bhurgra postulate that devastating memory could lead to depression and that "depression is....caused by the mental image the mind holds about an incident experienced by an individual. The intensity of the incident keeps the image away from fading across time" (70).

However, the persona adopts an extended portrayal of the menace of terror transcending the borders of nations to a more global space:

...Say it is Hiroshima, Pakistan, France, India  
andIraq.Say it is your brother towed to an unknown  
cemetery, your sister's body writhed into ash,...say it is the  
fragrance of blood in the air, the stench of tears on  
the breeze, the sound of fear that clangs in our hearts,  
the agony of a mother that rolls in bed as the voice  
of her son echoes in a burning house.(Lines14-22)

From the grim terrain in Garissa, Burma, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq etc, screams of pain elicit involuntary responses to the shared terror of our global predicament. Victims the world over are susceptible to different forms of terrorist attacks and in the process many lives are lost. Elimma Ezeani rightly says that “the world belongs to one human race and what affects a particular people affects the world” (12). The poet, therefore transfers concrete images of these devastating experiences into his poetry updating his role as a social critic. In the words of David Udoinwang and Kufre Akpan, “This indeed, has made the Nigerian literary landscape a fountain of flourishing poetic streams” (343).

Nigeria for instance has fallen prey to many terrorist attacks from Boko Haram insurgents, making Oluwatoyin Badejogbin to say that “the insurgents cause most Nigerians injury and pains. It has brought Nigerians untold hardship, and the economy is bleeding. The terrorists act unchecked creates uncertainty, reduces confidence and increase risk perceptions and risk premium, leading to slow economic growth”(17). What is extremely shocking is that the massacre, insecurity, pain, death and grief spirals continuously with no end in sight until perhaps when terrorism is wholly and unabashedly defeated.

### **Social Crises and Grief in Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief***

Obviously, insecurity is a recurring social crisis in Gbolahan's poems. The poet carefully unveils this thematic concern through the situation of people in the society and their expressions of fear and uncertainty. Gbolahan is deliberate in his choice of words as he aptly evokes the woes of insecurity through the trauma of terror and the trail of dastard inhuman acts. Thus, in the poem titled “After the Bomb Blast”, the poet persona echoes,

*The color of terror is dark,  
A woman says, as she opens  
the eyes of her dead husband.  
... My love for my nation wanes, a boy says  
to his mother. Another boy, whose left hand  
is severed, watches as they whisk his father's body  
with a wheelbarrow. (Line 1-12).*

The above lines reveal the frightening darkness that breeds insecurity; a society where lives are not secured; where wanton destruction and death is more guaranteed than the promise of sanity. Citizens are disillusioned as there is no guarantee of seeing the next day and the right to protection and sustainability is infringed. This heightened level of insecurity ultimately translates to lack of socio-economic development in the country. Asukwo Edet Oko agrees that, “... the low socio-economic development of the country persists even with abundant material and human resources that” the country “is blessed with” (187). Thus, patriotism and “my love for my nation wanes” (Line 9). Generally, the poems in the collection offer a rhapsodic undertone of the impact of insecurity in the society. It is pitiable to discover that after the bomb blasts, victims are conditioned to suspend grief and reintegrate into the society by taking up such responsibilities as conducting of mass burials, searching for missing persons among others.

Another social crises presented by the poet in the collection is child abuse. In the wake of the spike in terrorist acts, children are the most vulnerable. Throughout all the poems, children are profiled as grieving beings, maimed orphans and more often than not, dead memories of



grieving parents. In the poem, "After the Bomb Blast", the fate of the child is that of an amputated survivor witnessing the debasement of his father's corpse. Thus, he "watches as they whisk his father's body with a wheelbarrow" (Line 11-12). The tone of the poem is bleak and scary. Apart from other growth ordeals of childhood, the child in a terror-prone setting is left with the arduous task of being his own provider, breadwinner, mentor and protector in a society that breeds deeper insecurity.

It becomes clear through the persona's temperament that children do not have opportunities to grow long enough to become parents. In cases where they survive, they are conditioned to suspend future expectations and be pessimistic about life. For instance, the poem titled "What My Father Says Every Night" is an encapsulation of a child poet persona chronicling the words of his father as a coping mechanism to the reign of terror. Thus, "If we wake up tomorrow, he says, we will pray to Allah until our knees bleed, until our foreheads darken ... if we wake up tomorrow without having to search for our beloveds at the scenes of explosions, in the wreckage of burnt cars ... we will recite the Qur'an until our voices tickle the heart of God(7). This early orientation to the existential dynamics of life is both pathetic and condemnable.

Also in the poem, "Grief Speaks To Us", the persona equally beams the spotlight on the plight of children in the most chilling expression that "Grief speaks to us in the language of shock that strangles the tongues ... of children who scream as grenades destroy their homes" (22). The persona extends the meaning of grief to the experiences of children caught in the web of this senseless fundamentalists. Equally damning is the fact that insecurity in the society does not accommodate provisions of education for the children neither are their lives guaranteed. The only certainty is grief and in the words of Chimamanda Adichie, "Grief is a cruel kind of education. You learn how ungentle mourning can be, how full of anger" (3). It is therefore right to say that Gbolahan's text questions this insane and utter abuse of children's right to life and safety.

### **Aspects of Style in Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief***

Although Gbolahan's *The Other Names of Grief* has thirty-five (35) poems in its collection, this paper purposively selects six (6) poems – "Waiting", "The Other Names of Grief", "Another Morning", "What My Father Says Every Night", "After the Bomb Blasts" and "Grief Speaks To Us" - in its exploration of the intersecting lines of terrorism, memory, grief and trauma. Interestingly, Rasaq Gbolahan maintains a straightforward language while exposing his subject matter and themes. The major setting of the poem is the northern part of Nigeria, a predominantly Muslim society. This could be seen from Islamic registers like "masjid", "muezzin", "minaret", "adhan", "Allah", in some of the poems. The collection is replete with figurative expressions which enriches the poems especially the use of personification which does not just give human qualities to inanimate objects but also affords the poet unique style of description of the state of affairs in the poem. For instance, the expression "A boy walks to where a casket sits" in the poem "Another Morning" signifies the foreboding presence of a sitting casket and signals the immediacy of death. There is also a deliberate play on the creative device of repetition for emphasis and prominence. An example is the repetition of the phrase "Say it is ..." in the poem, "The Other Names of Grief" in eight (8) different lines as a stylistic variation in the definition of what constitutes grief. The same goes for the repetition of the word "waiting" in six (6) lines of the poem "Waiting". Apart from the sing song quality

of repetition, this style helps the poet to draw the attention of the readers to particular events and experiences in the poem that requires foregrounding.

## Conclusion

Dehumanization occurrences like war, terrorism and other forms of violence cause trauma and grief. This is because the memories of these occurrences do not easily fade in the minds of the victims. From the analysis of the work, it is discovered that violence is caused by insecurity and religious fundamentalism. Poems in *The Other Names of Grief* convey the social realities in a terror-torn Muslim community very similar to northern Nigeria. The poet, being a Muslim himself aptly recreates snapshots of the wanton killings and the destruction of properties by the terrorist Boko Haram insurgents through the lens of his poetry. It is therefore the position of this paper that grief, in its wholesome and varied forms is traumatic and that characters in the worldview of the poem are continually battling its much unassimilated nature that returns to haunt them. Also, characters are consistently on edge as they involuntarily respond to unending dimensions of grief. Therefore, the paper concludes that though victims of violence are doubly traumatized as they contend with repetitive memories of attacks, the overriding quest for survival trumps grief and charts an optimistic trajectory for humanity.

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