

A Socio-psychological Study of the Perpetrator in Yejide Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk This Path*

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Abstract

Sociological factors are consequential in structuring the personality of a person. It is observed that there is a complete erasure of the image of perpetrator in survivor discourse. Contemporary psychoanalytical studies attempt to redress trauma of victims leaving a gap in the body of knowledge to focus on factors leading to deterioration of personality traits in perpetrator. This article argues that it is essential to dynamically address the painful ambiguities related to the life of the perpetrator. The readers are invited to view the offender as a fellow creature. The paper extracts examples from relevant scenes in the novel depicting portrayals of how sociological factors result in adversely affecting the psyche of an orphan. It proposes a counter narrative of trauma, the one that recognizes qualified sympathy for the perpetrator. The findings provide fundamental information that the training of a child does play a significant role in the personality development of a person.

Keywords: behavior; child; mother; perpetrator; trauma;

Daughters Who Walk This Path is based on two parallel stories; one of the protagonist and the other of her aunt who has been walking on the same path where women have been sexually assaulted by their own close relations. They do not have to fear unknown people or men of the community but those on whom their parents cannot even imagine that these men will assault their daughters.

The narrative is told from the perspective of Morayo but Bros T overwhelmingly captures the attention of both the narrator and the reader. Bros T, who is the perpetrator, is minutely discussed by Morayo. The boy, Bros T, is orphaned at a very young age, a fact which contributes in spoiling his character. McLanahan says,

Children who grow up in a household with only one biological parent are worse off, on average, than children who grow up in a household with both of their biological parents, regardless of the parents' race or educational background, regardless of whether the parents are married when the child is born, and regardless of whether the resident parent remarries. (emphasis in original) (1994, 1)

Being a single, his mother requests her sister to keep the growing boy in their home under the vigilance of his uncle so that he may be trained under strict observation of a strong male character. The mother of Morayo wishes to help her sister, who being widow, has come to seek help of her sister. Though Bros T used to get ample money from his mother to spend but still he misses no chance to steal it, knowing that his mother will give him protection. The mother does not bother to inculcate the capability of self-regulation in Bros T which results in producing self-indulgence or impulsivity within him. I believe that little incidents of childhood leave a long-lasting impact on the personality of a growing child. Robbery of little amount of money later on encouraged the same boy to rob the peace of mind of his cousin by forcibly ripping apart her clothing.

Right from his childhood he used to relate stories to his cousins which were highly exaggerated which make him a loveable boy among his age mates. Similarly among adults, in spite of his mischievous behavior like taking the car out of the home without driving license and without bringing in the notice of any elder, he is always successful in escaping whipping by cleverly handling the situation. He bows and bends before the elders and reassures them positively that this will never happen again and if it has happened it is because he has had good intentions as he wants to help aunt Bisoye in the time of emergency when the uncle is not at home. His attractive gestures and charming smiles relax the female members of the house while subside the anger of the father. This behavior of mature people around him led him to become an over-confident person who thought that no matter whatever he will do, he will manipulate the situation in such a way that everything will go in his favour. His tactics will save him from severe consequences.

Evil is not born autonomously. For it to arise, one person must commit an act which affects the other. It is observed that multiple sociological factors are responsible in spoiling the character of Bros T. Once during the visit to the aunt's house in the presence of their grandmother, he steals money of aunt Adunni. When both the aunt and the grandmother say that the money has been stolen by Bros T, the mother defends the son without probing the truth. She insults Adunni by calling her a mad woman and refuses to listen to her mother by saying that her weak eye-sight does not let her see clearly to which the grandmother says, "Tope you are spoiling this child. It will not end well" (22). The grandmother's foresight let her see that the things are going in wrong direction and both the mother and the son will face severe consequences. The grandmother is right in thinking that the mother has failed to discipline the child. She thinks that such incidents affect personality traits of a growing child. On watching all this going on in her home, Morayo thinks her mother has always advised them to run away from a stranger who passes smile at them never realizing that "sometimes evil is found much closer to home, and that those who want to harm us can have the most soothing and familiar of voices" (23).

These undue favours which Bros T gets from his mother have converted him a self-centered man. Gilgun while discussing narcissism uses the term *self-centeredness* to refer to sexual abuse perpetrators in “Self-centeredness and the adult male perpetrator of child sexual abuse” defines self-centeredness as “a focus on the self so intense that it precludes consideration of the feelings and choices of others and which at times causes direct emotional and/or physical harm to others” (1998, 223). The signs of his spoiled character start appearing in Bros T the following two years when he slaps the principal of the school and steals foreign currency of his friend’s father. He shamelessly peeps in the bathroom when aunt Adunni is taking bath. Instead of feeling guilty on his shameless act, he accuses his aunt for looking at him. This makes his aunt so angry that she slaps on his face. The mother, instead of scolding the boy, insists that there must be some misunderstanding. The mother has failed to inculcate sophistication, humility and modesty in the boy, fundamental qualities within a responsible individual. Nyarko thinks that, “parents, significant others, and caregivers should be careful about their interactions with children. They need to use empirically-driven behavioural modification techniques that are proven to positively shape behavior (2014, 111). The atmosphere of the house has grown so tense during the stay of Bros T and his mother at Morayo’s place that everyone in the house feels relief when they leave their place.

The bad reports concerning the character of Bros T have started reaching the mother from everywhere. This made the mother of Bros T cry and request Morayo’s mother to take her son in the custody as she has come to conclusion that “he needs the firm hand of a man to guide him” (29). Due to the past behavior of Bros T, the father of Morayo does not want him to stay in his house but the pleas and requests of his wife for continuous three months makes him change his mind. Morayo while explaining the entry of Bros T to their home explains, “Bros T’s six-foot frame swaggered into our house ... his handsome cocky smile” (33). The word swaggered suggests over-confidence, arrogance and aggressive manner which goes along with his cocky smile. The word “cocky” suggests his over-confidence as he is so certain about himself that he becomes a source of annoyance to others. His body language clearly suggests that he is going to cast an evil shadow on others.

After establishing a firm footing in the house of her aunt, he starts taking advances like pulling Morayo into his lap, or hugging her tightly posing as if he is playing the game, the rules of which Morayo does not know. Sometimes he goes to the extent of “stretch[ing] his arms across [her] back, brushing his hands against the sides of [her] chest” (47). But probably Morayo is too young to protest against her cousin’s advances. These advances are quite irritating but she does not know what to do. She thinks about his advances, but then ignores them considering he is always “physically affectionate” (47) even with her aunt and other members of the family. Once the father saw these cousins playing affectionately with each other, he snubs them severely making them realize that now they are no more children so they should maintain distance among themselves.

The trauma of Morayo due to Bros T’s presence starts long before he rapes Morayo by looking at her very closely and moving his eyes wherever she goes. It appears as if he has grown up into an extremely selfish man with no empathy for others. He is the man having visible signs of Narcissism. The *DSM-IV* manual identifies a deficiency of empathy as one of the essential features of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. The manual states that individuals with this diagnosis “generally have a lack of empathy and have difficulty recognizing the desires, subjective experiences, and feelings of others When recognized, the needs, desires, or feelings of others are likely to be viewed disparagingly as signs of weakness or vulnerability” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, 659). He never misses a chance to touch Morayo which is very embarrassing for her. He has started bringing girls and beer to their house in the absence of aunt and uncle, but at the same time misses no chance in keeping strict vigilance on Morayo. On finding that Morayo has developed liking for one of her class-fellows whom she meets after school, Bros T immediately

reports it to her aunt who severely scolds her and strongly prohibits her from indulging in such activities which might spoil their good reputation in the community. She clearly tells her that such shamelessness is a terrible flaw in a girl as no man will like to have such a woman to be his wife. The interesting thing related to this episode is that the mother strongly believes that Bros T is their brother, so he is there to protect and take care of the girls. She instills this idea within the minds of the girls too. On this report of Bros T to her mother, Morayo gets angry with the cousin and starts avoiding him, because now she has become under strict vigilance of her mother.

One night, Bros T enters in the bedroom of Morayo without taking permission from her. He intentionally traumatizes her by looking at her body which she tries to hide by immediately pulling her nightgown from her head to her body. He forces her to sit on the bed, pulls her down in his lap and touches her which she finds very embarrassing. She is still embarrassed by the way he looks at her before she wore her nightgown and now he touches her body with “his rough palm” (57). She cannot believe that Bros T is doing these obnoxious acts intentionally. She is astonished at his actions and could not decide what to do. She is in a fix and is not sure whether he touches her accidentally or intentionally. She is afraid to talk to her mother as she might think that she is accusing him because he has reported Morayo’s friendship with Kachi to her; so she decides to remain quiet. Besides, she convinces herself by saying, “Bros T was like my older brother” (58). This concept is embedded within her with so certainty that is why when she was being physically assaulted by him; her first thought was that it must be some robber who has attacked her. It was very shocking to find that he is the very person whom she has always thought and told by her mother to be their brother.

It is when he passed the final examination and got good grades then he enjoyed the liberty of frequently drinking beer with his friends at home in the absence of uncle and aunt. One day when the mother and sister have gone to attend a family wedding while the father is on a routine tour to another city. Morayo has to stay home in the custody of Bros T because she is having malaria fever. Though the mother was reluctant to leave the daughter alone in the company of her cousin, yet she left her thinking that it is a matter of just one night and in addition to that it is a family wedding in which Eniayo wants to be a flower girl. On that evening his friends come to their home and start discussing Morayo. They want to have a pleasant time with her which makes Bros T angry. He fights with them saying she is not a *Havana prostitute* and they should keep their mouths shut. Amid drunken laughter, they say that Morayo is no longer a virgin as they have seen her many times meeting with her class mate, so they can easily spend time with her. They say that Bros T might have saved her for himself; this infuriates him and he reacts violently turning them out of the house. On hearing the crashing sounds of bottles and their horrifying discussion about her, Morayo goes to her bed and tries to think about her mother and sister to relax herself. Discussing the behavioral characteristics of the perpetrator, Santhosh says that the perpetrator finds him the powerful and the advantaged who can exploit the powerless. Thus on recognizing their weakness of the powerlessness and helplessness of the victim (2016, 48) disrespects the child. Similarly at this point of life, Bros T finds him stronger and powerful, while Morayo weak, helpless and alone at home. Therefore he avails himself of the opportunity to assault her.

Morayo, on the other hand feels extremely terrified. She tries to comfort herself by thinking that her family members will be back by tomorrow. As she was asleep, she felt a firm and heavy pressure on herself. She could not believe herself and thought her apprehensions have come true. Some armed robbers have broken the house. Though she is living amid a protective father and a caring mother but due the presence of six-foot tall Bros T who lives amid them, she has been seeing nightmares. Now those nightmares have come true as she is being violently assaulted not by a stranger but by the one on whom they have been very kind and loving. The father is paying full attention to make him a responsible citizen while the mother looks after

him like her own daughters. It is no less than a severe shock that it is her own cousin Bros T, whom the mother has always considered the brother of her daughters. Morayo is not only feeling angry but betrayed too for she is being molested by a close relative. Her resistance is in vain as man against whom she is resisting is stronger and more powerful as compared to her. He threatens her to stop resisting otherwise he will call his friends to do the same to her. She wants to scream but could hardly breathe. She is not only in physical pain but going through intense emotional trauma. While she is being torn, she visualizes an image of a child with a familiar face below the bed. The image which she is seeing is her own mirror-image. Her eyes are filled with terror while the mouth is wide open but she is so terrified that she cannot scream. Her screams are “silent” while she is staring like a mad person into “nothingness”. Like a typical victim of child sexual abuse, she is feeling rejected, used, trapped, confused, humiliated, betrayed, and disgraced (Putnam 2003). The girl can see no bright future ahead of herself just a vacuum with no bright light which might show her any way out of this traumatic experience. Her screams are silent because it is her own brother who has threatened her that if she tells to anyone about what he has done to her, he will do the same to her younger sister.

After he leaves her bedroom, she finds her body trembling with anger and fear with “eyes filled with tears that refused to flow” (69). She finds her throat burning like coals while her bruised lips called loudly for no one else but for her mother. She feels extreme loneliness enveloped by the darkness of the room. After the first tear falls, then a flow of tears drenched her face. Fears related to Bros T overwhelmed her. She is afraid that it might not happen again. He might have gone out to call his friends. These thoughts horrified her to such an extent that though she wants to drag herself out of the bed to lock the door but her “legs have refused to move” (69). She feels “a pain deep, deep inside [her]” (69). The pain is as deep as the depth of the ocean filled with tears whose depth is unfathomable. In her extreme loneliness, she finds a gecko, the only living creature in the room. She looks very closely at it. She feels it transfixed to a spot but it is consoling the young girl by nodding its head, as if to tell her that everything would be fine.

Conclusion:

From the instances and discussion forwarded, the causes are studied which led Bros T to grow into an evil character. It is indeed an invaluable contribution to the improvement of the critique of the *trauma novels* which are seen only from the perspective of trauma victims. Trauma is presented as an unbearable emotional pain adversely affecting the psyche of those people who went through dreadful events in their lives resulting in disgrace and humiliation. Resultantly these people dissociate themselves and repress these emotions. This dissociation and repression lead them to have unresolved conflicts within themselves. But this study aims to investigate how a boy of an educated family whose mother is a successful business-woman has turned into such an evil man that he sexually assaults that girl who has always considered him to be her brother. The research also has potential to prompt the researchers to do in-depth analysis of sociological factors which become cause of serious and painful actions beyond literary texts. Much work is being aimed at to highlight the issue of domestic abuse but now there is a need of paradigm shift to focus and analyze perpetrators than victims. We should “acknowledge their status as people rather than monsters” (Mohamed, 2015, 1208). Special attention can be paid to study the sociological factors which contribute in heading perpetrators to behave violently and to initiate the potential to develop moral values among developing children to reduce the frequency of violence.

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