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AFRICAN FEMALE TRAUMA FICTION: A STUDY OF SELECTED WORKS OF BESSIE HEAD AND BUCHI EMECHETA

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DEDICATION

To my son, Taminang Joel Eneigho, who left this world on the 19th of April 2023.

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ABSTRACT

This study entitled, "African Female Trauma Fiction: A Study of Selected Works of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta," examines the intersection between literature and trauma with a focus on what the African woman lives. It seeks to portray the view that the traumatic experiences in the lives of individuals can be transformed into creative or artistic works as seen in the lives of the selected writers. Trauma as seen from the lives of the characters, who are mirror images of the writers, is a catalyst that can propel trauma victims to success and liberty if they develop inner survival instincts to enable them fight for their liberty and success. The evolution of African female trauma is highlighted to show its impact on society and mankind. The experience of the African woman in trauma history is therefore traced to provide context of this study. That is the broader research area in which the African woman has lived traumatic pain, re-enforcing the need this research endeavour intends to examine. The Trauma Theory and Trauma related tenets borrowed from other theories have been employed to unravel the mystery of trauma as expressed in the selected works as well as to show how women have overcome their trauma in order to move into realms of victory and liberty. In this light, the cause of trauma has been traced to show the different ways through which the characters have been traumatised. It goes a long way to helping us understand and appreciate the measures taken by the characters to fight to overcome trauma, thus making them models to be emulated. The analyses of this study confirmed the assumption that the novelists have made good use of their painful lives to produce beautiful healing art works. By not allowing their traumatic experiences to crush them, the characters uphold the ideological visions of the novelists of using one's pain as a springboard to success. The postcolonial African woman is prepared to overcome the odds in order to move to freedom. It was found out that the traumatic experiences of women help in shaping their coherent selves that are in turn exploited to put an end to trauma or to sensitise society more on the ills of trauma and how to overcome it. It was also found out that endurance is not just about bearing the things in life but more about turning them to glory. The take home message is that pain pushes individuals through smoke screens to embrace love that makes them advocates of the universal brotherhood of Mankind. With all of these, it stands that this research endeavour has established an intersection between literature and trauma thereby making it possible for readers to emulate the examples of the characters to turn their trauma stories to success stories.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude intitulée *“African Female Trauma Fiction : A Study of Selected Works of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta”* examine l’intersection entre la littérature et le traumatisme en mettant l’accent sur le vécu de la femme africaine. Elle cherche à présenter l’idée selon laquelle les expériences traumatisantes dans la vie des individus peuvent être transformées en œuvres créatives ou artistiques telles qu’elles sont vues dans la vie des écrivaines sélectionnées pour ce travail. Le traumatisme tel que vu dans la vie des personnages – qui sont des images miroir des écrivaines – est un catalyseur qui peut propulser les victimes du traumatisme vers le succès et la liberté si celles-ci développent des instincts de survie intérieurs pouvant leur permettre de se battre pour leur liberté et leur succès. L’évolution du traumatisme féminin africain est mise en évidence pour montrer son impact sur la société et l’humanité. L’expérience de la femme africaine dans l’histoire du traumatisme est donc une trace pour fournir un contexte à cette étude. Il s’agit du domaine de recherche plus vaste dans lequel la femme africaine a vécu la douleur traumatisante, ce qui renforce l’objectif veut examiner. La Théorie du traumatisme et les principes liés au traumatisme empruntés à d’autres théories ont été utilisés pour percer le mystère du traumatisme tel qu’exprimé dans les œuvres sélectionnées ainsi que pour montrer comment les femmes ont surmonté leur traumatisme afin d’entrer dans les royaumes de la victoire et de la liberté. Dans cette optique, la cause du traumatisme est retracée pour montrer les différentes manières par lesquelles les personnages ont été traumatisés. Cela nous permet suffisamment de comprendre et d’apprécier les mesures prises par les personnages en vue de lutter contre les traumatismes, faisant ainsi d’eux des modèles à suivre. Les analyses ont confirmé l’hypothèse selon laquelle les romanciers ont fait bon usage de leurs vies douloureuses pour produire de belles œuvres d’art curatives. En ne permettant pas à leurs expériences traumatisantes de les écraser, les personnages soutiennent la vision idéologique des romanciers consistant à utiliser leurs douleurs comme des tremplins vers le succès. La femme africaine postcoloniale est prête à surmonter tout obstacle sur son chemin dans la lutte pour sa liberté. Il s’est avéré que les expériences traumatisantes des femmes aident à façonner leur moi qui, à son tour est exploité pour mettre fin au traumatisme ou pour sensibiliser la société davantage aux maux du traumatisme. Le point souligné était que l’endurance ne consiste pas seulement à surmonter les obstacles de la vie mais plutôt à les transformer en gloire. Ce qu’il faut retenir c’est que la douleur pousse l’individu à voir à travers des écrans de fumée afin d’embrasser l’amour qui fait de lui le défenseur de la fraternité universelle de l’humanité. Avec tout cela, il est évident que cette recherche a établi une intersection entre la littérature et le traumatisme,

permettant ainsi aux lecteurs d'imiter les exemples des personnages pour transformer leurs histoires de traumatisme en histoires de la réussite.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is widely accepted as a reflection of society. Writers are inspired by society to write and society in turn draws critical perspectives from their works to build and develop. In this light, literature reflects both the positive and negative values of life. It plays a corrective function by mirroring the ills of society with a view to making it realise the said ills or mistakes so as to move towards amending them. At other times, it also projects the virtues or good values of society for people to emulate. This is because literature is seen as an imitation of human actions; it is a picture of what people think, say and do in society. The characters of literary works are, therefore, crafted to mimic human life; that is, their actions and reactions. This is always guided by a didactic element or message which the author is anxious to pass across. In her article “The relationship between literature and society” (2015), Duhan Roshni logically and convincingly captures this when she says:

It is impossible to find a work of literature that excludes the attitudes, morale and values of society, since no writer has been brought up completely unexposed to the world around him. What writers of literature do is to transport the real-life events in their society into fiction and present it to society as a mirror with which people can look at themselves and make amends where necessary? (P. 67).

From the above premise, we see that the selected works of Bessie Head, *A Question of Power* and *Maru* and those of Buchi Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* reflect the societies of both authors. Because these novels are fiction inspired by the happenings in society, they are both based largely on information on society as well as guided by the imagination of the writers. A society is a group of people related to one another through their continuous and uninterrupted relations. Even though they are a group of people largely governed by set norms and values, they still have their differences. These differences are accountable for the friction or disputes that inevitably occur. The intensity of such friction is what ends up in trauma. Human beings interact at different levels and trauma, therefore, stems from eventual conflicts in their lifestyles specifically at the level of faith, beliefs and cultures. Since society keeps evolving, conflicts have never remained constant; they keep changing and evolving as well.

Trauma as a societal concept, therefore, is reflected in the works of the selected authors. Not only have they observed it in their respective societies but, also, they have lived it and are inspired by it. It is, however, not limited only to their respective societies. It is a universal human experience. We draw from the experiences of the characters in Head's *A Question of power* and Maru and Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In The Ditch* in order to affirm that trauma remains a universal and timeless theme. However, everyone who has lived or encountered it responds differently to it. In the words of Monica Casper, "It marks a continual thread through human history and prehistory." Trauma is a discipline that transcends intellectual boundaries. Here, the major concern is how the traumatic experiences of survivors shape their personalities and the impact it leaves on society. Be it acute trauma – which stems from a single incident – or chronic trauma – which is the result of repeated and prolonged experiences – or complex trauma lived through exposure to varied and multi traumatic events – victims thereof often impact society in one way or another.

Consequently, literature does not exist in a vacuum. It reflects the lives of human beings who live together with conflicting activities or situations. Such conflicts produce pain that sometimes results in trauma. The victims of such trauma have contributed in shaping the world through their actions and reactions. Talking about victims of trauma, one cannot put aside the African Woman in Head's *A Question of Power* and Maru and Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In The Ditch*. From the works of these authors, one affirms the view that great pain lived by people can be the source of great works of art. The autobiographical element that permeates the works evinces the experiences of the writers. The pain they have lived is mirrored in the characters in their novels. They do not allow their painful experiences to crush them. When they cannot endure pain anymore because their backs are already to the wall, they fight back with their last energy because they have only one path to walk: the path to success. The applause is then loud as these characters bounce back with such energy that propels them to commendable heights of success. They become models for others in similar circumstances. Some become advocates of justice against agents of trauma. Others network with suffering people and act as vents for them to release their hurt emotions. Furthermore, some become agents of empowerment and development.

From the above selected works of Head and Emecheta, one can conclude that their traumatic experiences have gone a long way towards enabling them to transform selves and society. They confirm the view that the African female writer has equally felt pain and lived excruciating traumatic events. However, she has not – unlike the weak and ignorant – allowed

it to crush her. She is very brave and courageous and, as such, she sees it as obstacles she must surmount in order to forge ahead. Through their characters and heroines, Head and Emecheta prove the point that trauma can be a stepping stone for its victims to move to success. In order to achieve this, they – like their characters – are meticulous in the way they handle pain and trauma; never giving up on their pain and hurt but always mustering courage and the right will-power to say, “Enough is enough”. When these victims succeed to overcome trauma and move to success, they become models leading or inspiring their kind to liberation. When this eventually happens, they do not only shine but they also illuminate, break or penetrate the darkness around them. Like Elizabeth in Head’s *A Question of Power*, they carry everyone along with them to the Universal Brotherhood of Man where mankind is not judged by the colour of his skin but by the deepness and richness of his heart.

In this light, fiction therefore becomes the medium or channel through which traumatised victims are catapulted to success. From their experiences, both Head and Emecheta directly or indirectly portray their societies for what they really are. They act as social critics as they skilfully and critically question, ridicule and satirise non-conforming behaviour and the status quo. As objective critics, they do not only condemn but they equally suggest, redefine and rebuild the world around them. They strive to improve the standards of living in their respective societies and in the world at large.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This work aims at portraying the view that the traumatic experiences in the lives of individuals could be transformed into creative or artistic works as can be seen in the works of African writers and postcolonial writers in general. In specific terms, this work analyses the selected narratives of Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power* and *Maru*, and Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* and *In The Ditch* in order to show the relationship between the characters and their respective socio-cultural and political contexts. This is done with the goal of showing how these relationships have generated trauma, especially in the minds of the female characters. The fate of these traumatised female characters is further analysed and appreciated with a view to showing how they turn their traumatic experiences into success stories. Trauma to them is a catalyst that pushes them up the ladder of success. This work further demonstrates how faithful these victims – who are mostly women – are to their African values of communal life. Their success is not limited to themselves as we see them moving along with other characters, thereby transforming not only selves but all of society as well.

This work, therefore, also seeks to investigate and show how women who have overcome trauma have risen above social, cultural, historical, environmental, political and psychological challenges, thereby forging ahead not only to the liberation of the self but also to success. Consequently, this research project intends to show how the lives lived by the selected authors, Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta, have enriched their works of art which are a reflection of what they have gone through in real life. Their heroines are a demonstration of what pain or trauma has effected in their lives. This work, therefore, aims at showing the link between literature and trauma where it affirms that when trauma is dealt with positively, it builds rather than destroys. Emphasis is laid on how from the pages of works of art these authors have contributed to the evolution, enrichment and growth of our cultures and societies.

DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

In order to render this topic more understandable and more focused, it would be necessary to define the key words and concepts that capture the essence of this research and put this work into perspective. This will go a long way towards forestalling any confusion that might otherwise crop up regarding the meanings of words. According to Renan (1990, P.8), this will put the concepts in context so as to have a clear vision of the issues discussed herein. This ties in with Bernard Fonlon's laid down principle in "The ideas of Literature" wherein he says that, "the first principle of any scientific discourse" is the definition of one's terms or concepts so as to "know clearly and precisely from the start what these terms or concepts mean". (Fonlon, 1979, P.179). In this light, the definition of the following keywords and concepts: fiction, trauma, trauma fiction, female trauma fiction and psychological novel will go a long way towards improving our understanding and focusing our attention on the analysis in this work.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica "Fiction is literature created from the imagination, not presented as fact, though it may be based on a true story or situation". It is from this angle that this work will view the selected works of Head: *A Question of Power* and *Maru* and Emecheta: *Second Class Citizen* and *In The Ditch*. The stories of the above novels are not facts but are largely based on the true life experiences of the authors. The word fiction is from the Latin "fiction" which according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* "is the act of making, fashioning, or molding". These writers have, therefore, succeeded to "make art from their experiences." Thus, they fashion characters that reflect the people they have come across in real life and consequently "mold" their stories to act as teaching lessons or tools for revealing what they have gone through. They do not masquerade these as facts; rather, they imaginatively and

creatively reflect what is true. This research project focuses on fiction, and more particularly the novel, because telling fictional stories and engaging in the fictional stories of others is an important and universal part of human culture. The study will reflect on the content of these fictional stories, the way they are told, the themes they represent and the didactic elements they use. As such, one would not only be enthralled by elements of plot but would also be affected by what befalls characters.

Another key word that needs to be defined for a better understanding of this work is “trauma” The Center for the Treatment of Anxiety and Mood Disorders sees trauma as a “psychological, emotional response to an event or experience that is deeply distressing. It refers to something upsetting such as being involved in an accident, having an illness or injury, losing a loved one or going through a divorce”. It further adds that “it can also encompass the far extreme and include experiences that are severely damaging such as rape or torture.” In this light, psychologists have developed categories of trauma as a way of differentiating between types of trauma. Among them are: complex trauma – which happens repetitively and often results in direct harm to the individual or victim. Its results are cumulative, and the traumatic experience frequently occurs within a particular time frame or within a specific relationship, and often in a specific setting. Next is “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)” which develops when a traumatised person has been exposed to a terrifying event or has been through an ordeal in which intense physical harm occurred or was threatened. Victims of this type often have persistent and frightening thoughts and memories of their ordeal. The last type, “Development Trauma Disorder”, is a recent term in the study of psychology. It often forms during a child’s first three years of life, and is often the result of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment. When this happens, it interferes with the infant or child’s neurological, cognitive and psychological development. It can end up disturbing the victim’s ability to attach to an adult caregiver. Those who inflict development trauma usually do not do it intentionally, it simply happens because they are not aware of the social and emotional needs of children. Short term reactions to the above traumatic experiences are often shock and denial. With time, they may fade away but the survivor may experience long term reactions such as anger, persistent feelings of sadness and despair, flashbacks, unpredictable emotions, physical symptoms such as nausea and headaches. Sometimes they even go through intense feelings of guilt, as if they are somehow responsible for the event. Some even go through an altered sense of shame and feelings of isolation and hopelessness.

In another light, *The Corsini Encyclopaedia of Psychology and Behavioural Science* defines trauma as both an effect and a reaction. It posits that trauma is when one experiences actual or threatened events that cause injury or death. Examples of such trauma include childhood torture, military combats, sexual assaults, interpersonal assaults, natural or manmade disasters, terrorist attacks and accidents. In addition to being an event, trauma can also be conceptualised as a reaction. In this light, an individual's response to a traumatic event often involves intense emotions such as fear, helplessness or horror. The individual's emotional response and subjective appraisal of the situation are often an integral part of the definition of trauma. With this in mind, it is considered that witnessing an event in which another individual is seriously injured or killed, or learning about the violent death or injury of a loved one is traumatic.

According to the *Hutchison Encyclopaedia*, trauma may have lasting effects during which an insignificant event triggers the original distress. A person may then have difficulties in normal daily activities such as establishing relationships or sleeping. In the study of traumas, this is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As earlier mentioned, this holds that symptoms develop in an individual after he/she has experienced a psychologically traumatic event like torture, incarceration and rape just to name a few. The marked emotional symptoms may persist long after the actual occurrence of the traumatic event. Some persons are more liable than others to develop the disorder depending on their personal traits, previous psychological disturbances, age and genetic disposition. This confirms the Freudian strand of trauma which ties childhood to the breeding ground of neurotic conflicts. It holds that children are more dependent on their parents for love, care, security and support and also because their psycho-sexual aggressive impulses are not yet integrated into a stable personality framework. Children are, therefore, often subjected to emotional traumas, deprivations and frustrations, especially as they lack the resources to cope with. When these are not resolved, they can become ground for intra-psychic conflicts, especially when they are sustained through repression. When this happens, they feel insecure, ill at ease or guilty. It ends up influencing the individual's personality, interests, attitude and ability to cope with later cases of stress.

After defining "trauma" and "fiction" as independent words, the concept of "trauma fiction" also needs to be defined for better contextual understanding. The term "trauma fiction/trauma novel" refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound fear, pain or loss. Rachel Goldsmith and Michelle Satterjee see "fictional trauma" as the approach that examines the impact of trauma through works of art, especially the novel, by allowing readers to grasp the

complex interplay between characters' individual experiences and environments, as well as the diverse phenomenology of traumatic responses and defenses. They stress that fiction enhances clinical conceptualisations of traumatic emotion and memory by providing unique access into psychological states. It includes the effects of trauma on the individual's sense of self and reaction to the world. Fictional representations also facilitate the cultural understanding of the meaning of trauma and offer additional pathways to recovery. Trauma fiction, therefore, communicates the quality of human experiences and elicits emotion from readers. Thus fictional depictions have the potential of illuminating psychological conceptualisations of trauma.

In addition to the above, Geoffrey Hartman says that:

Trauma study in the arts explores the relation between psychic wounds and signification. Everyone believes in expressiveness either as the value of articulating clear and distinct ideas that alleviate mental confusion or as the value of unburdening the heart with the aid of innovative signs. (P. 15).

Sadiya Abubakar Isa is more profound in her definition of trauma fiction when she says that:

It is no doubt that trauma exists as part of human challenges since the start of human history... It surfaces as the shady part of all narratives that tell of a history, memoir, agonies and sorrows of the writer or about the subjects (characters) created. It allows for an appreciative comprehension of trauma's flexible representations which include the idea of trauma as neurotic, appalling, terrifying and the pleasure of telling and witnessing a traumatic event which is, of course, literature. (P. 15).

Michael Rothberg argues that trauma fiction articulates a "different" form of reality and thus enacts a new mode of realism. He has even devised the term "traumatic realism" to suggest the range of devices used in trauma narratives to try to reconcile how the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of traumatic experiences intersect and co-exist. According to him, readers need to interpret the texts in ways that are both stereotype-consistent and stereotype-inconsistent. They share the perspectives of the traumatised characters when the text is focalized from the characters' point of view.

From the above, it can therefore be said that fictional trauma is concerned with how the traumatic experiences of authors have affected their literary works or the representation of traumatic experiences of others.

Another fundamental concept tied to this work that needs to be defined is “psychological novel”. Given that the psychological novel has a strong link to trauma fiction, its definition will help show its validity in the analysis that will be done in this work. A psychological novel also called psychological realism refers to a work of prose fiction which places more than the usual amount of emphasis on interior characterisation and on the motives, circumstances, and internal action which springs from and develops external action. It is a narrative genre that emphasises interior characterisation and motivation to explore the spiritual, emotional, and mental lives of the characters. It examines the reasons – especially as concerns the behaviours of the characters – that propel the plot and explain the story. According to the *Micropaedia of TheNew Encyclopaedia Britannica*, The Psychological novel is:

[A]work of fiction in which events are registered subjectively in the mind of one or more characters and in which the processes of consciousness are of equal or greater interest than external events.

.....A work in which the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters are of equal or greater interest than is the external action of the narrative. The emotional reactions and internal states of the characters are influenced by and in turn trigger external events in a meaningful symbiosis. (P.204).

In the psychological novel, the plot is subordinate to and dependent upon the probing delineation of the character. Events may not be presented in a chronological order but rather as they occur in the character’s thought associations, memories, fantasies, reveries, contemplations and dreams.

From the above, “Trauma fiction” is a sub-set of “the psychological novel” given that representations of trauma fiction offer significant insights regarding consciousness and psychopathology that can enhance available approaches in clinical psychology.

There are elements of consonance and dissonance in the psychological and literary approaches to trauma in the areas of individual experiences, emotions, dissociation, communication, meaning, and healing and recovery. Some of the ways in which psychological and fictional traumas converge include examining the impact of disclosing traumatic events, common post-traumatic reactions, processes of dissociation and pathways to recovery.

However, they differ in their attention to individual experience, range of emotional responses to traumatic events, description of cultural and historical context, use of language and classification, and approaches to the meaning of trauma.

Consequently, trauma fiction enhances clinical conceptualisations of traumatic emotion and memory by providing a unique access into psychological states. This includes the effects of trauma on the individual's sense of self and relation to the world. In this light, portrayals of dissociation in fiction depict the difficulty of integrating traumatic experience into memory and identity. Fictional representation also facilitates the cultural understanding of the meaning of trauma and offers additional pathways to recovery.

The "Sociological novel, also known as the social problem novel is a work of fiction in which a prevailing social problem such as gender, race or class prejudice is dramatised through its effects on the characters of the novel. It places emphasis on the idea of social change. In her write-ups, Ashleigh Watson holds that the world is real and so are some of the major events. As such, talking about the "sociological novel", she holds that settings, characters and plot have been developed from extensive auto ethnography, a relatively "new" but recognised scholarly method.

The above definitions of key words and concepts confirm the validity of the focus on female trauma concerns in this work. It portrays female trauma fiction as the production of works of art based on or inspired by the personal life experiences of the writers and what other African Women have experienced. These constitute the richness of the works of Head: *A Question of Power* and *Maru*, and those of Emecheta: *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* that have been selected for this research endeavour. Head draws from her painful experiences in apartheid South Africa, where, from birth, she had lived nothing but a painful and traumatic life that turned out to be the leaven for creating powerful fictional characters. For example, Elizabeth, like Head the novelists, moves her readers to tears as she is not only disowned as a child because of the colour of her skin but is also tortured and rejected by the same society that should have acted as a cradle of comfort for her. Male oppression that almost chokes her out of breath leaves her readers wondering whether she was simply born to suffer. All of this because she is coloured and a woman in a racist and male dominated society. Her works, therefore, are fiction created from events or experiences that are deeply disturbing. They are a psychological and emotional response to the pain and trauma that affected the life of the novelist.

In the same light, Emecheta is richly inspired by the painful and traumatic experiences of her childhood in a typically male dominated Nigerian society to create a vivid, moving and emotional story. She exploits not only the Nigerian setting or background but also the British or London setting where pain is even lived at a worse degree through racial segregation; a situation that shows the universality of the themes she has exploited. For example, Ada, her mouthpiece in *Second class Citizen*, joyfully moves from Nigeria to London with the wrong hope of escaping from her painful oppressive male dominated society to a free world of comfort. No sooner has she arrived London than it dawns on her that she has just exchanged one lot with another. The stories of these two novelists are not limited only to their personal experiences. Through the rich display of what the other female characters in the novels have gone through, one goes away with the conclusion that both Head and Emecheta were equally sensitive and sympathetic to what the other female characters lived in their respective societies.

It is, therefore, the standpoint of this work – as confirmed from the definition of the above key words and concepts – that female trauma fiction stems from the experiences of the writers. They do not just recount their stories in a historical documentation of facts but richly transform them to great emotional works of art. Through these works of art, they have contributed, despite themselves, to the evolution, enrichment and the growth of their different cultures and societies.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Establishing the relationship between what the African woman has gone through and her works of art constitutes the problem to be addressed in this work. As such, the principal problem is based on the response or attitude of the female characters in the selected works under study towards their traumatic experiences. An analysis of the female characters and their trails in the selected works portray the idea that these characters turn their traumatic experiences into hard work and success. In other words, these characters do not allow the negative experiences they have gone through to destroy them. Based on the information of the background of the above novelists, one clearly sees that there is a profound relationship between the cry for the emancipation of the African Woman and what she has lived. Addressing this problem would yield practical benefits as those who have read the selected works would be reassured that trauma is not an end to itself. Thus a liberated African Woman would be an asset in the development of the continent and should not be abandoned to the forces that seek to crush her on a daily basis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the above research problem, the following research questions have been formulated. What is the historical context of the texts under study? What is the relationship between the female characters and their societies? What is the effect of this relationship? How is trauma manifested in these texts? What are the characters doing not to allow themselves to be destroyed by their traumatic experiences? How does the structure of the texts reflect the traumatic minds of the characters? What are the ideological visions of the characters/writers?

HYPOTHESIS

This work is based on the premise that in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* and *Maru*, and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*, the traumatising situations of the characters have propelled them to success and liberty instead of destroying them. This is because the characters developed inner survival instincts that enabled them to fight for their liberty and success. This idea has revealed the ideological perceptions of the writers as seen through their aesthetic verity.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This work will focus principally on Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* and *Maru*, and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*. It is noteworthy that Bessie Head has written three novels, *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1968) *Maru* (1971) and *A Question of Power* (1973) which fall amongst her most important works and have as a common setting Serowe. She also published a number of short stories, including *The Collector of Treasures* (1977), *Serowe: Village of the Rainwind*, her last novel *A Bewitched Crossroad* (1984). She has also written a story of two prophets, one wealthy and one who lived poorly called "Jacob: The Faith-Healing Priest". A synopsis of the above cited works will confirm the validity of limiting the choice of her works selected for this study to *A Question of Power* and *Maru*.

First and foremost, the choice of Head's works for this study lies in the fact that her novels are greatly inspired by her painful and traumatic origins and life. She was born of an illegal union between her White mother, who was placed in a mental asylum during pregnancy, and her Black father who mysteriously disappeared and little or nothing is known of him. It is the painful story of a child who suffered rejection and alienation at an early age. She did not only move from her foster parents to an orphanage but, also, she abandoned her homeland, her

teaching job, and her husband for asylum in a foreign land with her son. Her novels, therefore, evolved from an objective affirmative narrative of an exile finding new meaning in her adopted village.

In a greater detail, *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969) tells the story of a poverty stricken village in the heart of a rural Botswana town that acts as a haven to exiles who are gathered there. The focus here is on highlighting how a political refugee from South Africa joins forces with an English agricultural expert to change the old ways of life. *Maru* (1971) focuses on an introspective account of the acceptance won by a light-coloured San (Bushman) woman in a Black-dominated African Society. In a nutshell, it tells the story of the liberation of the San people from ethnic and racial oppression and that of the liberation of the Tswana people of Dilepe from their prejudices and hatred. It tells the story of a flawed world. *Maru*, to a greater extent, incorporates Head's experience of being considered racially inferior. *A Question of Power* intensifies the autobiographical element as it draws on her understanding of what it was like to experience acute psychological distress. The painful story of her rejection at birth by her biological family, the numerous victimisations because of her colour in a racist South Africa and the eventual immigration to Botswana for liberation are beautifully captured in this novel. *A Question of Power* is, therefore, a frank autobiographical account of her disorientation and paranoia in which the heroine survives by sheer force of will. Head also wrote a collection of short stories: *The Collector of Treasures* (1977) which is a volume of her short fiction and includes brief vignettes of traditional Botswana village life. It recounts macabre tales of witchcraft and passionate attacks on African male chauvinism. From the above synopsis, one can comfortably conclude that Head's works in general are a reflection of daily encounters with undistinguished people. They empathise with children, with women treated as "dead things" in apartheid South Africa and with planners who meet with indifference and great greed at the marketplace.

Taking into consideration the title of this work and the concerns raised therein, one would conclude that *A Question of Power* and *Maru* were not haphazardly selected amongst Head's works. In line with African female trauma, we see from the synopsis of these two novels that Bessie Head, through them, has richly exposed aspects of the psychological violence meted out to non-Whites in South Africa. While her other works drift largely towards general concerns of society, these two are largely focused on the woman.

These two works satisfy our expectations of “trauma fiction” as they convey the profound fears, pain and loss of the main characters who act as the mouthpiece of the novelist. They succinctly grasp the complex interplay between characters’ individual experiences and environmental or societal occurrences. The autobiographical element in these two works is very heavy and reflects the element of fiction that validates literature as a creative work based on imagination or on a true story. The way the stories are told in *A Question of Power* and *Maru* together with the themes represented in them and the didactic elements they carry make them very appropriate for the analysis in this work. Moreover, the plot and what befalls the characters will make room for very rich critical analysis.

In the same light, the choice of Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* was also the result of some profound intellectual and critical considerations. Like Head, Emecheta has also written a number of works. These include *In the Ditch* (1972), *Second Class Citizen* (1971), *Adah’s Story* (1983), *The Rape of Shavi* (1977) *Gwendolen* (1989) *Kehinde* (1994), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) *Destination Biafra* (1982), *Double Yoke* (1982) and *The New Tribe* (2000). She also wrote an autobiography, *Head Above Water* (1986) and several children’s books and juvenile fiction.

More specifically, in *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*, which were later published in a single volume, Adah’s story introduces her three major themes – the quests for equal treatment, self-confidence, and dignity as a woman. *Gwendolen*, *Kehinde* and *The New Tribe* address more the issues of immigrant life in Great Britain. Her other works, *The Bride Price*, *The Slave Girl*, *The Joys of Motherhood*, *Destination Biafra* and *Double Yoke* are realistic works set in Nigeria.

In conformity with the setting of these works, the themes revolve mostly around men and masculinity, mortality, wealth, duty, education, tradition and customs, slavery. *The Rape of Shavi* stands out in its category as it is set in an imaginary idyllic African Kingdom. It explores the dislocations that occur with a plane carrying Europeans seeking to escape from imminent nuclear disaster crashes. What makes *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* more appropriate to the analysis in this work is the thematic concerns raised in these two works. In both novels the author focuses on the educated working-class African woman without sidelining the other African women and what they go through. The painful and traumatic experiences of these women constitute the subject matter of these stories. The reflections in them depict her own life and the lives of those close to her. She mirrors in the works the events that found her

“in a ditch” and submerged her humiliatingly as a “second class citizen”. The novels are largely autobiographical in nature. Through the events in her personal life, Emecheta articulates the oppression, predicament and precariousness of the African Woman, whom she characteristically refers to as “peasant women”. In them, the themes of liberation, feminism, and African womanhood which are our main concerns are dominant and pre-occupying.

An added advantage that accounts for the choice of the above two novels is the fact that, unlike the other genres, the novel depicts society in its entirety. Thus, this work would enable us to do a holistic appraisal of society through the novels that reflect it.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This research work will be beneficial to different groups of persons or fields of life for varied reasons. The fact that writers draw from life or society to create art means that art in turn could be exploited for the enrichment or development of society. As such, this research work will be of benefit to the scholarly world, society and inter-related disciplines. As concerns the scholarly or academic world, this work will further contribute to possibilities of the liberation, growth and emancipation of the African Woman. The combination and critical analysis of Head’s *A Question of Power* and Maru and Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* could act as a source of inspiration for readers or researchers in this field. They could then draw from it to impact society through their own write-ups or direct influence. It could also inspire researchers on further fields of research through the arguments or concerns raised. Students of research would find in it useful material or resources for their literature review by either disagreeing with or extrapolating some of the arguments raised. This research endeavour can also be beneficial to society. It can inform policies by enabling policy makers to be inspired by its findings in order to come up with policy. It could then help them to craft policy that can help Africans to get rid of that which is negative in their culture or modify that which is good in order to render it positive. This draws strength from MacDonald’s views which say that:

One prominent context encompasses public policy and decision-making where grey-literature is often present but typically unnoticed. Policy and decision-making are complex processes...Drawing from findings from research conducted on Environmental information: use and influence program, which involves governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental organizations, we outline roles for literature in policy and decision making context. (P.68)

Such benefit at societal level would not be limited only to policy, even those who would read this work would be influenced. The African Woman, who is the custodian of our culture, could be motivated to be at the forefront of positive change while still conserving the positive values of our cultures. This research endeavour would, therefore, inform action to prove a theory or inform policy which in turn would contribute to the development of knowledge that can impact society. It would build knowledge and facilitate learning in society.

In addition to advancing the ongoing body of work in the scholarly or academic worlds, influencing policy and impacting society, this work could also be of benefit to other disciplines. The interdisciplinary nature of trauma concerns raised in this work would make it a source of benefit to other related disciplines. The medical corps stands to benefit from some of the arguments raised and some of the revelations made in this work. Clinical governance is concerned with the application and enforcement of good clinical practice; all of which is directed to the improvement and comfort of human life and existence. To this end, a framework of governance is often implemented to facilitate best practices and ensure that people who are sick should receive appropriate medical care. The analysis made about the sick of society as seen from the creative perspective of Head and Emecheta can further enrich this good practice of medical governance. The medical world could be motivated by the appreciations lavished on them on how patients are sometimes handled in hospitals or stand to correct their errors or mistakes made, or assumptions made when treating patients. Such was the case of Elizabeth and the medical staff when she was sick. Such positive resolutions made can go a long way to improving the services of the medical corps. Thus, we could applaud the writer who writes to expose and correct societal ills.

Apart from the medical corps, social psychology stands to benefit from this work. In other words, the social psychologist who is involved in the branch of psychology that deals with social interactions, their origins and effects on the individual, will also find this work to be very useful. Thus, this work could also act as a micro-world or society through which members can observe group behaviour, thanks to the mirrored behaviour of individual characters. They could then study from it how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by actual, imagined or implied presence of others as are mirrored by the characters of our texts. This could be done by analysing the social thinking, social influence and social behaviour of characters. These specialists could exploit the findings or resolutions of this work so as to better address societal concerns that have a powerful influence on individual wellbeing as well as the health of society. This would include addressing problems such as violence on women, domestic

abuse, substance abuse, crime, prejudice, bullying and aggression, just to name a few. The end result could be an improvement on the way people think, the relationships they build and a general improvement on the physical and mental health of society as a whole.

Furthermore, this work could be of great benefit to those involved in “talking cure”. This is a method of treating psychological disorders or emotional difficulties that involve talking. This is in line with Berth Pappen-heim’s method where she applied the “talking cure” to chimney sweeping for healing. As seen in some of the characters, such specialists would emulate healing processes whereby therapists enable patients to dig into the destructive, hurtful issues in their unconscious minds. This would enable them to deal with such issues positively, leading to healing as is the case with most of the main characters in the selected works. Such processes are also called psychotherapy, like the kind applied to Elizabeth in *A Question of Power*. Like the characters, these specialists would be motivated to treat their patients by involving them in discussions pertaining to mental or emotional issues affecting them. They could be motivated to focus on problematic behaviours, feelings and thoughts by discovering the unconscious meaning and motivations of their patients.

Last but not the least, this work would be very useful to those involved in the area of counselling. In this wise, counsellors would be able to draw from it inspiration on how people behave and how they can be assisted in their problems as is the case of the characters in the selected works. With the help of this work, counsellors would be able to recognise and emphasise understanding of how the traumatic experiences of victims can impact a child’s mental, behavioural, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. As seen from the texts, it cannot be stressed enough that one of the most important parts of trauma recovery program is the availability of a safe environment for healing to occur. Counsellors would draw from this and help victims to reduce shame and painful memories and perceptions as they explore and learn how to cope with their traumatic issues. From the experiences of the characters, counsellors would be able to guide build trust and collaboration in victims when helping them. This is so because ensuring that the physical and emotional safety of an individual is addressed is the first important step to providing informed traumatic care.

In a nutshell – and besides the above-mentioned benefits – this study will animate and enrich debates on the literary productions of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta.

THE WRITERS AND THEIR WORKS

In order to better understand and properly analyse the works of an author, it is important to have a firm grasp of the author's biography. This is so because the work of an author largely stems from the society that has inspired him or her or from the one wherein he or she would love to live and operate. An author, therefore, is often influenced by his/her past, gender, race and socio-economic status. His or her religious beliefs and personal ethics cannot be overlooked. When it comes to the importance of the role of authorial biography in the interpretation of the works in question, we draw on the views of the British critic and scholar F.R. Leavis who argues that:

You can't be interested in literature and forget that the creative individual is indispensable. Without individual talent there is no creation. While you are in intimate touch with literature, no amount of dialectic, or of materialistic interpretation, will obscure for the truth that human life lives only in individuals: I might say, the truth is only in individuals that society lives (P.53).

What this means or implies is that, from certain aspects of the writer's biography, the critic understands the politics surrounding the content of the work under examination. Thomas Stearns Eliot corroborates Leavis' arguments in his Minnesota in 1956 titled "The Frontiers of Criticism", when he says "[...] any critic seriously concerned with a man's work should be expected to know something about the man's life" (Eliot, 1964, P.218). From the above statement, it is imperative that we stop and delve into the lives of Head and Emecheta, with a view to arming ourselves for a thorough in-depth analysis of their works.

BESSIE HEAD AND HER WORKS

In conformity with what has been said in the introduction, Bessie Head's life cannot be separated from her works. Talking about her and Emecheta, Nancy Topping Bazin, in her article "Feminist Perspective in African Fiction: Bessie Head and Emecheta", says that: "Bessie Head has probably received more acclaim than any other black woman novelist writing in English;" and that Buchi Emecheta, "is rivalled only by Flora Nwapa, another Nigerian, for second place". Head's popularity, like Emecheta's, is not unconnected to her life which acts as a spring-board to her success. Gillian Eilersen (1995), in her article, "Thunder behind her ear" beautifully captures the life of Head on which this study will be drawing to enrich its analysis. It holds that

Bessie Amelia Head started off from very pathetic origins. She never knew her parents. It is said that her mother was an unstable white woman and her father an unknown black man – a stable boy. One cannot but pity Head for her unfortunate origins that were bound to shape her life. It is no secret that a child who has a secure relationship with parents learns to regulate emotions when under stress or in difficulties. Such relationship promotes the child's mental, linguistic and emotional development. It even enables a child to gain strong problem-solving skills that are mostly developed in a positive relationship with parents. This, unfortunately, is what Head missed out on as a woman who lived a traumatic start at birth in apartheid South Africa.

Head was born on the 6th of July 1937 in Pietermaritzburg, Natal. Her mother Bessie Amelia Emery (nicknamed "Toby") was a patient at the Fort Napier Mental Hospital in that city. She insisted that her daughter should be given the same full name as hers. So the baby became Bessie Amelia Emery. Curiously, literature and literary critics have always been interested in the month in which major events occur in life. Some schools of thought hold that the month in which one is born may either dictate their lives' future path or help shape dominant personality traits in them or even influence their health prospects. In this light, they further hold that children born in July are geniuses but are also sensitive and prone to depression. With this, one is tempted to conclude that Head's birth in July was providential given what she lived. Worse is when this school of thought holds that it is sometimes difficult to understand children born in this month as they are often emotionally temperamental? In addition to the poor health of her mother and the prevailing political atmosphere, one wonders aloud if July has an influence on her as is the case with Elizabeth, her mouthpiece, in *A Question of Power*. Not only is she a genius but she is prone to depression and temperamental emotions.

The time, place and psychological setting of her birth cannot be minimised in relationship to her works. The depressive apartheid atmosphere at the time of Head's birth had a great influence on her destiny. The Mixed Marriages Act prohibiting marriages between Whites and other races accounts for the traumatic separation of Head and her family at birth. Head's maternal family could not stand the "shame" of their white daughter conceiving a child with a black stable boy. It was not only about the "shame" but also about the consequences of breaking the law. This accounts for their act of sending their pregnant daughter to a mental hospital and giving her child up for adoption the moment she was born. This portrays or x-rays a wicked and heartless system that prioritises the colour of one's skin to the life of a child. These are things that can surely break even the strong as it did to Head's mother. She finally

died and Head started life during a political storm about which she knew nothing as an innocent child.

Head's life's hurdles started at birth when she bore her mother's names. This is to tell us that names are very important in the African culture. It is believed that names tell the story of who we are, what we shall be and become. In this light, it is not a surprise that Head's life is not very different from that of her mother's whose full names she bore at birth. Like her, she lived a life of pain, trauma and depression. Her pathetic story begins at birth with her being given up for adoption to a white family. When the family soon realised that she was not "white" they immediately returned her. She was finally put under the care of Nellie and George Heathcoat, a coloured couple who were devout Catholics. It is ironical to note that the whites who brought Christianity and the Catholic faith to Africa could not put into practice their Christian love for a child but rather sat to watch their converts in the person of Nellie and Georges do so. This forms one of the ground motivations in Head's satire on the religion of the white colonisers and oppressors. Head grew up believing that Nellie was her real mother. No matter how much we want to satisfy societal laws, there is an extent to which human and moral laws must come into play or interfere. This is the case of Alice Birch, Toby's mother and Head's grandmother. She could not just sever ties with Bessie, her great granddaughter and blood. Out of concern for Bessie following these blood ties, she constantly sent cheques to the Heathcotes for Bessie's upbringing. However, Toby died in Fort Napier when Bessie was only 6. After Toby's death, Alice stopped sending money and ended her connection with her granddaughter. Human cruelty could not be better expressed through this heartless character trait of hers when she turned her back on a granddaughter who could have been leaning only on her in such a cruel apartheid world. Little Bessie would never learn anything about Toby except her name which was also hers. It is likely that only Toby and Alice, and possibly Toby's brother, knew the identity of Bessie's father. Unfortunately, they made of it a guarded secret and Alice died in 1964 at the age of 93, taking her family's secret with her. This narrative was not limited to Head alone. This was the fate of the thousand coloureds in South Africa who were victimised by the oppressive apartheid system.

Such horrible childhood experiences did not crush Head as they did to a thousand other children. This could only prove the point that she was made of stronger inner character as is mirrored by most of her heroines. She continued her stressful and painful journey and after finishing standard 4 at the age of 12, she was taken from Nellie's home and sent to St Monica's home near Durban. This was the fate of coloured orphan children like her, entrusted to the care

of care takers. This Anglican boarding school was for “coloured girls”. Racism and segregation could not have been better expressed than this. It effected an enormous change in her life. First, she did not like it either because of the strict discipline or the new religion preached there. However, she soon loved her new school, especially the library. She spent a lot of time here and grew in intellect and in spirit. It only goes a long way towards confirming the view that there is always a silver lining to every dark cloud. Survival instincts are when you look for the light through the window of your dark cell. When she was 14, a dreadful thing happened. St Monica’s refused to allow her to visit Nellie for Christmas. One wonders aloud how far a heartless system can go to crush an already hurt or traumatised victim. Instead of Nellie’s, they took her to the magistrate’s court. There, she was told that Nellie was not her mother. It just did not end with this informative statement. They had to rub it in to a lonely, stranded 14-year girl by telling her that, “your mother was a white woman and your father a native”. It beats one’s imagination what was the logic or validity of telling her this if it was not just to satisfy some sadistic urge. It was not like helping her to locate her parents with this piece of information. The author is not inventing but simply transforming the pain narrative she had lived into works of fiction. Bessie cried and cried to go home to Nellie to no avail. This is very pathetic and accounts for the novelist’s effective application of pathos in transmitting information in her fictional works. For the rest of her life, Bessie never forgot the shock and cruelty of that day.

To escape from such shocking revelations, Bessie took refuge in reading. She behaved like a stoic character because the hurt of not going home to Nellie at Christmas did not just disappear. Everything was bottled up and drowned in books. No doubt, she was like a time bomb waiting for the appropriate moment to explode. This finally happened at the age of 16. Just after writing her junior certificate examination, she ran away from school and went home to Pietermaritzburg. Fortunately, she agreed to return to school and, fortunately too, she passed her exams. She did not run away from school because of hatred of school but because of the pain and pressure that was coming from within and shaping her actions.

It was only by sheer will-power and determination that she moved on. She started a seven year course for primary school teachers. She qualified well except in physical education. In January 1956, at age 18, Bessie left St Monica’s. She had enjoyed protected life of a girl’s boarding school for 6 years. Real life was about to begin, for 18 is an age of maturity.

The first test of maturity was living an independent life with a life-supporting job. She got a teaching job and taught for 2 years in a coloured school in Durban. As a coloured person

in a racist and segregationist system, she could only teach in a coloured school. In spite of this, she enjoyed an intense intellectual growth. This simply meant that, no matter what one is going through one can achieve happiness if there is internal determination and zeal. For the first time, she became aware of the political turmoil in South Africa.

It dawned on her that her personal problems were just a microcosm of the macro problems lived by coloured people in South Africa. Her Christian faith could no longer satisfy her. Hinduism fascinated her and for a time she became a Hindu. She never went back to a Christian church.

To further worsen matters, Bessie resigned from her teaching job in June 1958. This was a clear indicator of low job satisfaction for the Coloureds in South Africa during the apartheid system. She decided to become a journalist in the Cape. It was during this period that, together with Nellie Heathcote, Bessie celebrated her 20th birthday in July. Using most of her savings, she excitedly bought a ticket and said goodbyes. At the end of the month she boarded a train to Cape Town and rode away into a totally new life. Like most young people of her age the big cities were a point of attraction and hope for a better life.

Unfortunately, these big towns were hardly the dream fulfilling destinations for these young people. Bessie was not an exception to this. Upon arrival, she luckily found a job as a journalist, working as a freelance reporter. She was the only woman reporter at the Golden City Post, an important newspaper for “non-white” readers. Even newspapers lived the segregation policy since there were newspapers for “white-readers” quite separate from those for “non-white” readers. This was not only oppressive but also too humiliating for the Africans whose hospitality was grossly abused. The strangers – the colonisers – they welcomed into their land did not only drive them away so as to occupy their homes and all the rich, fertile and beautiful parts of their land but also humiliatingly made them strangers and second class citizens in their own land. In Cape Town, Bessie rented a room in the poor “coloured community” of District six. This is the worst irony from the Whites who came with a religion that preached the love of God for his people. They advocated unity of the faithful and oneness of the human race in preaching God whereas the reality in the field was and is still totally different. God’s “united people” read different newspapers, live in different quarters with different levels of comfort, go to different schools, have different jobs assigned to them and so on and so forth. The hypocrisy was very palpable and only “naïve” loving and welcoming Africans could stomach it for this long. Paradoxically, they were the masters and teachers of their evangelisers when it comes to living out true love. They did not only accommodate these heartless strangers but also laid down

their lives for their comfort. They ended up contaminating some of these loving people with their discriminative attitudes. Most of Bessie's neighbours who spoke Afrikaans and were fair-skinned "Coloureds" acted as if their own lot as "fairer-skinned coloureds" were better than that of dark-skinned Coloureds. They discriminated against Bessie who was dark-skinned. The African narrative of communal life was gradually changing for the worse. At home and at work Bessie was rudely confronted by her own identity. What a bitter story! She had just changed her slot for another. Cape Town was far from being the haven she thought she was moving into.

However, the struggles of a woman that started at birth had to continue. One would say that Bessie was a Spartan who dies but never surrenders. The next year, 1959, she moved to Johannesburg for the weekend magazine home post. Here, she met a well-known group of African journalists and learned certain writing skills from them. This was very reassuring and motivating. No matter how bad life is, there is always something or somebody to brighten it if you search around. It was at this time that she encountered the liberation movement – the Pan-Africanist Congress – which she later joined. Its leader, Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe, remained one of her heroes all her life. Unfortunately, she was a failure at politics. This was not because she was bad at it but because she was not playing the game respecting the "master's rules. And so, in 1960, following the Sharpsville massacre, she was arrested for her PAC activities. She gave the police some unimportant evidence. This was learning the hard way. Daily life with its ups and downs taught her better than all the classrooms she had sat in; her nightmares were far from coming to an end. A well-known artist, whom she greatly admired, assaulted her sexually. There are certain things that break one in life. This was the case for Bessie. In despair, she tried to commit suicide. After spending some time in the hospital, she returned to Cape Town. Johannesburg was not as glorious as she had initially thought. In Cape Town, she began to write again for the Golden City Post but became depressed and quit. For several months she became "invisible". Her system just could not bear the strain for too long. She sank low but did not remain there to be buried. She was crushed but not defeated. This strong-willed character of hers is what we see as a sustaining force in her heroines. When she re-emerged, she started her own little homemade newspaper, *The Citizen*, which expressed her strong pro-Africanist views. She had been taught by life and she had learned the first lesson of success: if you want a job to be well done, do it yourself.

While selling *The Citizen* in 1961, she met Harold Head, a journalist and member of the non-racial Liberal Party – birds of a feather, flock together. They fell in love and got married in September. One heaves a sigh of relief for a love-starved Bessie, hoping that she gets in

marriage what her biological family never offered her, love. Initially, married life seemed happy. Harold calmly accepted Bessie's quick temper and changes of mood. They were blessed with a son Howard, who was born the next year. Unfortunately, happiness is often just an occasional episode in a general life of pain. Bessie began to feel angry and alienated from both her country and marriage. She could not be indifferent to what was happening around her, nor could she neglect it. Apartheid grew crueller every day. This societal system with its harsh repercussions had a significant impact on shaping Bessie's values and defining her. Her interest in politics was gradually fading away. She dabbled in poetry and fiction. Her disappointments were a gateway to a new life-creative art. "A writer was waiting to be born". What she did not know at this stage was that her life of pain was going to be a rich store of raw material for her creative works. Meantime, Harold got a job in Port Elizabeth and she and Howard later joined him. A curious look at the names given to the towns like "Pietermaritzburg", "Pretoria", and "Port Elizabeth" totally confirms the colonialists' assimilation tendencies. Though Bessie moved in with Harold, deep down in her inner being she knew that her marriage had failed. So, towards the end of the year, she moved to her mother-in-law's house near Pretoria taking Howard with her.

Looking back at the paths she had covered, Bessie realised that she had spent almost six years in the turmoil of South Africa's largest city. She felt defeated. All of this time, she had written one short novel, *The Cardinals*. She was not so satisfied with it, especially as she thought that it was childish. This did not, however, discourage her. Rather, it spurred and motivated her into new thinking. She thought that in a free African country, she would find new inspirations for her writing. She then applied for a teaching post in a village called Serowe, in The Bechuanaland Protectorate. She was overjoyed when she was accepted. True to its stifling policy, the South African government refused to give her a passport. Bessie had already crossed the line of no return in her fight for liberation. She sought the aid of a writer friend, Patrick Cullian, who helped her to obtain a one-way exit permit. This meant that she would never return to South Africa. At this stage in her life she was a "no name" and her society and land of birth easily gave her up. The same society that was indifferent to her at that time was to claim, recognise and "own" her when she would come to fame. Though fearful of what was ahead of her in a new land, Bessie left the curse of South Africa behind her for a new beginning in unfamiliar surroundings. The adage that home is home or the best place to be no longer held true for her. The stranger had succeeded to send the owner out of her house. This was the pathetic fate of most Africans under the apartheid regime.

True to her spirit of determination and forward looking, Bessie went to work in Tshekedi Khuma Memorial primary school in April 1964. One day, she and Howard were surprised with a visit from Harold Head on his way to exile in Canada. Two bitter truths pop out here with their disturbing reality. A surprised visit from a father can only be a perfect indicator of the failed African communal life. The narrative has totally changed. The father is no longer the shepherd of the flock, watching and providing for them. This is a bitter reality of the disintegration of the African family. The disturbing conclusions of Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, “They put a knife amongst us and things fall apart” is a practical reality. The destruction of society stems from the destruction of the family. The once united and loving African family is now a disintegrated shadow of itself. Head will later lament over this by making it a theme in most of her works. The second bitter truth is the irony of the occupant being the cause of Harold moving to the coloniser’s own homeland on exile. Colonisers have made life so uncomfortable for the rightful owners of the land that they now move to the coloniser’s land for comfort. It is even most horrifying when the reason for his eviction is that he evaded South African Police by crossing illegally into Bechuanaland at night. Jean Jacques Rousseau’s words that “Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains” holds true in this situation. The supposed “modernity” of the Whiteman has paradoxically repressed the physical freedom that was the birthright of the Africans. Like Rousseau holds, the African man in the state of nature was innocent and at their best. Ironically they were corrupted by the unnaturalness of civilization. The consequences are that fathers like Harold Head whose visit to their sons have become a surprise are on the increase. A visit that is not even intentionally embarked on but rather occurs as an aside, a coincidence as he moves on exile to Canada.

During the first five years of Bessie in the primary school, she was enthusiastic about village life. She even wrote a number of stories about it. Unfortunately, things gradually turned sour once more. She had a nasty encounter with her school principal. Thinking that he had made advances at her, she hit him. This was inadmissible in a male dominated society. Consequently, Bessie was ordered to take a sanity test. She felt humiliated and out of anger abandoned her teaching job. One would say that her life was a vicious cycle of repetitive ups and downs. Once more she began writing. This was in late 1968 and this time around she took it seriously. She would often write at night by candlelight. Luckily, she had some moral and financial support which came in by post from Patrick Cullian in Cape Town and Randolph Vigne in London. Despite this, she remained desperately poor. In February 1968, she left for Radisele, South of the Bamang Wato Development Association. She enjoyed the agricultural work at the BDA

farm and gained a lasting interest in farming and gardening methods. It was at this moment that she also had her first vision of God, an Omen of the future. Regrettably, such joyful episodes in her life were often short-lived. In just under five months, Bessie and Howard had to leave the farm because of a dispute over accommodation. Luckily, she found a job in Palapye, working as a typist. Her story, "The Woman from America" was written here. Just after two months, she once more quarrelled with her Palapye boss and was fired. After this, she and Howard moved to the refugee settlement of Francis-town. This was where refugees waited for educational opportunities outside Southern Africa. Here, Bessie and Howard settled into a two room cottage that was said to be haunted. This setting of a haunted house best captures the level of frustration and helplessness of Bessie at this stage of her life. Ghosts, witches and wizards are very dreaded and avoided in Africa. As such, haunted houses are often abandoned for it is assumed that you might not only be molested while living in one but you could also harvest curses from there for yourself and your children or generations. Choosing one for her son and herself captures the traumatic atmosphere of Bessie's life. No wonder this constitutes a rich and moving atmosphere in her works, especially in *A Question of Power*. She was definitely not happy with this. She even applied to several countries in vain for resettlement. To make matters worse, she had no passport and her finances were down. All she had was her burning desire to write. At Randolph Vigne's request, she wrote short articles about Botswana's Buipuso celebrations on September 30, 1996, "Chibuku Beer and Independence". She also made plans for a full-length novel based on her experiences at Radisele. Her experience formed the source of her artistic works. It set her mind on a problem-solving approach to writing. Fortunately, in New York, the Simon Schuster publishers had read her "The Woman from America" and had asked her for 80 cent as advanced payment for the book. This motivated her and she wrote *When Rain Clouds Gather* in just under a year. The will to do something is just part of the success story. It must go with the means for a total success story. It must go with the means for total success to be achieved. After finishing the book, she once more encountered problems in Francistown. She once more had religious visions that seemed to place her in a special relationship with God. Howard was also having trouble at school because he was "coloured". By now, Bessie was torn apart whether to concentrate on her own problems or abandon them for Howard's. As a mother and a single parent, she was bound to deal with both and it was not only painful and challenging but traumatising as well. By the end of 1968, they were ready to move back to Serowe.

Despite all of this, when Bessie returned to Serowe in January 1969, she was very optimistic. Unfortunately, she soon became the subject of gossip. Her poor finances made matters worse. She refused to move out when her landlord asked her out and was taken to court. Fortunately, she received timely assistance from Lengetetse Seretse, the council secretary and future Vice-President. She again felt victimised and this had a toll on her health. A mental breakdown ensued and she was briefly hospitalised. There is always an element of something good even in something bad. The villagers who had resented Bessie now accepted her as crazy and left her alone. Her physical and psychological breakdown takes us to the threshold of pain which is the minimum intensity at which a person begins to perceive or sense a stimulus as being painful. Bessie at this stage has reached her “pain tolerance” stage, which is the maximum amount or level of pain a person can tolerate or bear. With all what she has gone through, it would not be an exaggeration to say that she reached the worst form of emotional agency, which is Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) which is believed to be the one psychiatric disorder that produces the most intense emotional pain, agony and distress in those who suffer from this condition.

Once left alone, her anger against the villagers also disappeared. She then became calm and creative once more. The product was *When Rain Clouds Gather* which was published in New York and London and received excellent reviews. With encouragement from new friends, and in a wave of creativity, she began a new novel – *Maru*. With money from *When Rain Clouds Gather*, she began to build her own house. Hardwork ends up paying off. Consistency and commitment in moving towards one’s dream can only lead to success. The need to be in her own home and not constantly being molested and humiliated by landlords makes the house project her priority. *Maru* was finished in September 1969 and the house was completed in November. She called the house “Rain Clouds” and it was her home for the next 16 years. She continued writing by candle light because there was no electricity and she had neither gas nor telephone.

In addition to the house achievement and the success of her creative writing, the Boiteko project brought a new impetus to her life. This was a self-help scheme started by Patrick Van Ransburg. It brought life – through new activities – into Bessie’s life in 1970. She became an instructor of the gardening group. This was to be a priceless element in her novels as they acted as a source of transformation and growth. In the garden she established a long and unique friendship with Bosele Sianana. He was her confidant, interpreter and friend and taught her many Tswana traditions. Too bad Bessie again became involved in personal disputes and after

nine months she was asked to leave the garden. It was almost becoming a pattern for her. One cannot, however, undermine the impact of the garden at this stage. Gardens have often been used in works of arts as a device for character and plot development. In literature, gardens represent spaces of great potential which promote healing and learning, and create romantic bonds. They even have the potential to send characters to magical realms. The fact that Bessie moves into one is an indicator of the great pain and emptiness found deep inside her. She, however, succeeds in developing it in her works to function as a curative centre. This might only mean that she must have discovered that her limitations in real life were not letting the garden heal her inner wounds. Her failure to let the garden heal her led to a great period of depression in her life. She even became overweight during this period. Her spiritual visions and hallucinations became more frequent and more extreme. They were so bad that she spent Christmas in bed. Nonetheless, throughout 1970, she was able to write and make final corrections on *Maru*.

When *Maru* was published in February 1971, Bessie was seriously ill with depression and delusions. In the end she slapped and punched a woman, her neighbour, in the face. She went as far as drafting a hysterical letter to Vigne and wrote a wild denunciation of the President. The next day she posted up her accusations at the post office. The authorities, including the President, were gentle with her. This definitely makes a difference in an African system where presidents are not only Lords but heartless oppressors who would not stand anybody lifting a finger against them. To every rule there is an exception. This justifies Bessie's choice of this country for herself exile. After a court hearing, she was rather sent to a mental hospital in Lobatse. Howard had no choice but to stay with neighbours. Towards the end of June, she was well enough to leave the hospital and return home. On the road to recovery she started her most difficult book, *A Question of Power*, which is an autobiographical novel.

Through this autobiography, we get a glimpse of the moving, pathetic and life changing struggles that took place in her life. In it, Bessie uses incidents from her early life as well as her recent nightmares. She wrote rapidly, finishing the book in 1972. It appeared in October 1973 with immediate praise and acclaim. None of her works received so much attention like it. This is an indicator of how enriching our life stories can be. It surely enables her to leave a legacy given that her story is drawn from real life experiences. Through this work Bessie speaks directly across time to her descendants. In this way she helps in protecting the history of her people by off-rooting that which is negative in it. It does not only open the door to reconciliation over issues of the past but could also inspire someone else to undertake great legendary writing.

Thus, this great autobiographical novel – *A Question of Power* – does not only share events that occurred in Bessie’s lifetime but would also help future generations to relate with those events by explaining their effect on the lives of those who lived through them. It definitely is a great way of personalising historical events.

This boils down to the fact that everyone has a story and an audience eager to read it. One enjoys and remembers the details of each narrative and is sometimes moved by it to reach across the boundaries of time and space in order to set records straight, honour the ones you love and celebrate the journey you have taken. We create our own time capsules and take an opportunity to leave our hand-prints on the walls of human existence and to shout to the world, “I was here and I mattered”. Through this novel of Bessie, we share her skin or colour challenges, understand the forces that were at work in her life as if we were experiencing the same tensions ourselves. It only goes a long way to add to the numerous benefits of writing one’s story which are therapeutic, informative, reconciliatory or inspirational. Bessie, through this work, was soon known to readers and writers in many countries. *Village of the Rain Wind* was her next novel and was published in 1974. *Collector of Treasures* and other village Tales came up in 1976. She was invited to attend the first writer’s workshop organised by the completely new university of Botswana in Gaborone. Here, she presented her first academic paper. It was also her first attempt at public speaking. She was terrified and spoke in a tiny voice that few people could hear. But it was an excellent paper. Her hardwork and success story was gradually but surely procuring for her visibility in the academic world. Encouraged by this, she applied for and was refused a Botswana citizenship which was ironically granted to her without any further application in 1979. She was very popular at the time. This only confirms the view that the world hardly recognises you when you are at your lowest or at the bottom of your life’s pit. Nobody extends a hand of assistance during these trying moments. When one is extended, it is often to push you further down or to drag you to court like it was done to Bessie. Your upward journey largely depends on you and your inner convictions but once you are up, the same people who trampled on you will hail you. She published one more book in her lifetime: *A Bewitched Crossroad*, An African Saga. Although it is the least known work of hers, it is her greatest celebration of African history and tradition.

Even though Bessie recorded a number of successes in life, the huge painful encounter she had gradually but finally took their toll on her health. She was almost worn out in the mid-1980. She endured a painful rupture with her son, Howard. She was heavily overweight and began to drink heavily. This resulted in an inflamed liver which could not keep her going on

anymore. Her last great piece of writing was a brief personal article in March 1985, “Why do I write?” It ends with her most famous words, “I am building a stairway to the stars. I have the authority to take the whole of mankind up there with me. That is why I write”. Bessie Head died on the 17th of April 1986 in Serowe and was buried in the old cemetery on the hillside behind Botaloate ward, amidst trees and flowers. Her last prophetic words have indeed immortalised her because though dead she lives on through her philosophy and her works.

Consequently, the richness of Bessie’s works which stems from the “richness” of her life accounts for the choice of her works for this study. They richly address sensitive and contemporary issues. Head, while alive, always emphasised that her outlook was a universal one. She refused to be called an African writer, a black writer, a feminist writer, or a revolutionary writer. She writes for all people everywhere. Even though she suffered from frequent nightmares, she was at the same time inspired by visionary dreams. She was famous for her quarrels as well as for her writings. She had a combative spirit, and she was sometimes rude, even hateful towards other people. She knew that she had an unstable mind and even called it her “curse”. One of her distinctive attitudes, in both life and writing, was to take sides with ordinary people against powerful people. She wrote this in her final statement, “I have built a kind of people religion that is rooted in the African Soil”. She was very adamant that her world opposes the world of politicians. This is so because politicians oppress and dictate to the people. She concludes that, “My world opposes the world of politicians. They plan for and dictate to the people. In my world people plan for themselves ... It is a world full of love, tenderness, happiness and laughter.”

BUCHI EMECHETA AND HER WORKS

Despite the many contradictory views about the relevance of an author’s biography and background to the reading of his/her works, this study holds the view that a work of fiction ends up being illuminated by the shining light on the author’s life. Such is the case of Buchi Emecheta and her works. Some schools of thought still forswear that using a writer’s biography as a key to his work/works seems more beneficial and relevant to comprehension. At its best, therefore, a critical interpretation informed by biographical facts about Emecheta can deepen our emotional pleasure in reading her works as well as our intellectual grasp of them. It sometimes reveals all the ways in which her fine fiction stems from the artful refraction of her real-life experiences. It would be impossible to read *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* without developing a vivid sense of the kind of person Buchi Emecheta has been. It would be

difficult to separate “the woman who suffers and the mind which creates” when it comes to Emecheta and her works. And since the biographical author is the only common denominator between the books, one cannot help developing at least a rudimentary idea about her. The self that matters to readers and critics is that of a one on one encounter, otherwise the reader hypothesises from the novelist’s pages. However, the goal of literature is not to provide a subject matter for gossip nor is it to help us issue an easy moral verdict. Rather, it is to use the life of an author to clarify the factors that shape that author’s works – i.e to show how life and work were both shaped by the same set of problems and drives.

To illustrate the above, we will draw from Alphonse Baraza’s article “Biography of Buchi Emecheta” 2017 which beautifully captures the salient highlights of Emecheta’s life and her writings. Thus, Florence Onyebuchi – Buchi Emecheta – was born on July 21st 1944 in Yaba, near Lagos, Nigeria. It is worthwhile to note that the date of her birth falls between the period of “indirect rule” instituted by Lugard. Under this system, local government was to be left in the hands of the traditional chiefs, subject to the guidance of European Officers. Native institutions were utilised and interference with local customs kept to minimum, although the British did not always understand the local customs. Her life was to be affected by the inbuilt contradictions of this system. Over the years, the Nigerian system developed into a sophisticated form of local government, especially in the emirates and under the banner of “native administration”, which became the hallmark of British colonial rule in Africa. Her life was to be affected by Western education, the English language and Christianity as promoted by the British colonisers. Her upbringing was bound to be different from that of other Nigerian children during the pre-colonial period. The new forms of money, transportation, communication and the Nigerian economy based on export cash crops was also bound to impact her life.

Her parents were Jeremy Nwabunduke and Alice Okuekwu Emecheta. Unfortunately, her parents were already influenced by chauvinism and marginalisation which affected women’s participation in politics. They were not fully integrated into the social, cultural and religious circles as was the case in pre-colonial Nigeria. They influenced Buchi’s destiny with their convictions about this system. Due to gender bias under which they were operating, Emecheta was kept at home as a girl child while her younger brother went to school. Although not having gone to school immediately like her brother, Emecheta’s childhood was filled with the stories of her people and culture told to her by her grandmother. This was in conformity with the African informal system of education.

Knowledge, values and history were handed down to one's progeny through the "fireside stories" often told by the elderly. These stories instilled into Emecheta a desire to write her own stories as well as the ones that her grandmother told her. A sleeping giant was waiting to be awakened by the Whiteman's school. Motivated by her brother's formal education, Emecheta could no longer resist the urge to go to school. She persuaded her parents to consider the benefits of education. His resolute character yielded positive fruits. Emecheta was granted her wish; she began schooling at Ladilak School and later on at Reagan Memorial Baptist, an all-girls school.

From another perspective, children's schooling during this period largely depended on the support of parents and other members of the household. The learners depended on them for educational and residential support. The income of the head of the household determined whether some or all of the children were to go to school. It was then a heavy blow to Emecheta when her father died when she was only nine years old. The worse was that the family was separated after his death. Emecheta was sent to live with her mother's cousin in Lagos while her younger brother went to live with her father's brother. This was in line with the African belief that your extended circle can also provide emotional and physical support if need be. It is believed that this fosters one's cultural identity and improves on one's healthy self-esteem. This extended family system is peculiar to African societies and was more dominant in the days of Emecheta's growing up than today. Her going to her maternal family when her father died was in fulfillment of this family spirit. Members of the same family have a common identity and group feelings. They look up to one another for help in times of disaster or misfortune like that of the death of Emecheta's father. This dependence on extended family was smoothly lived in the pre-colonial period. During the colonial period, it was another ball game as would be seen with what Emecheta went through.

Despite her father's death and her subsequent moving to her maternal family, Emecheta won a scholarship a year later into the Methodist Girl's High School which she attended until she was 16. She was full of dreams of what her future would look like. She hoped to go to the University of Ibadan. Unfortunately, this dream was thwarted when she was married off to Sylvester Onwordi to whom she had been betrothed at the age of 11. This is very telling of one of those African customs that have been highly criticised. The incident of child marriage was still very high in the era of Emecheta growing up. It was very common at this time for the girl child in Nigeria to be betrothed at or even before puberty. Such marriages had lasting consequences on the victim from the health, educational and social development perspectives.

Girls in child marriages were more likely to suffer from domestic violence, child sexual abuse and marital rape as was the case of Emecheta. These, plus the fact that young wives were often deprived of the home support system; not only that, they had severe mental health implications including depression.

Emecheta lived all of the above-mentioned disadvantages. She had four children with her husband before he left for university studies in London. Emecheta stayed in Nigeria and worked at the American Embassy for two years to support her children while her husband was away. She finally moved to London in 1962 to join her husband and father of her children. They had their fifth child in London. Her family-in-law believed that “A working woman is the key to a husband’s happiness”. They exacted this from Emecheta. She, therefore, worked as a librarian in a British Museum in order to meet this expectation. While working there, she was inspired to write by the books that surrounded her. Unfortunately, her marriage went on the rocks when her husband burnt her first manuscript upon completion. This was just a drop of water more than the too-full-cup of her marital woes could bear. Her determination to overcome her challenges also motivated her to attend university. She went through successfully and obtained a degree in sociology in 1974. She also devoted more of her time to writing and her novels attracted global attention. She began lecturing in universities. Her visibility in the academic world reaped other benefits. She was also a senior resident fellow and visiting Professor of English at the University of Calabar, Nigeria. This led to more aspirations. From 1982 to 1983, she and her son, Sylvester, started and ran their own publishing company – Ugwugwu Afor. They published her works under the company’s name. Unfortunately, she suffered a stroke in 2010 and passed on in her home in London on January 25th 2017.

However, she did not die without leaving her handprints on the walls of human existence. Her life’s experiences as reflected in her writings are a platform for voicing her desire to achieve human rights for African women. She portrays herself through several identities that coincide with one another. Some of her concerns include the single African Woman, sociology, pulling down urban African ways of life, Narrator of African myths that clash with modern society, and the remembrance of enslaved Africans. These are beautifully mirrored in her works as would be seen below. These works reflect the attitude of the Igbo society towards motherhood as well as the double standards for men and women. Emecheta, however, does not consider herself a feminist when she says, “I work towards the liberation of the woman.” She rather considers herself as a story teller. This is beautifully captured in her own words when she says, “Apart from telling stories, I don’t have a particular mission. I like to tell the world our

part of the story while using a woman's voice." To this end, she champions the rights of girls and women in her novels that often draw on her own extraordinary life.

Be it in her early vivid documentary novels – *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second Class Citizen* (1974), focused on a black single mother living in the slums of north London, or in the ironically titled *Joys of Motherhood* (1979) set in a traditionally male-oriented society in colonial Nigeria, or in her autobiography *Head Above Water* (1984) or even in *Gwendolen* (1989) – Emecheta's writings epitomise female independence. They highlight the need for the African woman to grow stronger in the face of any setback. In conformity with this, though she was often sick as a child and often undernourished, she had a ravenous desire to survive against all odds. Her life was always overshadowed by the poverty and deprivations of her early years. Her son Sylvester recounts a family legend about her when he says, "a benefactor spotted the intelligence in the young girl with large forever watchful eyes and gave her the necessary support and encouragement to continue her schooling, rather than selling oranges in the market as her mother wanted". Emecheta's autobiography, therefore, chronicles the unhappiness of her marriage. In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah – Emecheta's alter ego – challenged by atrocious living conditions and a violent husband, finds refuge in her dream of becoming a writer. In *In the Ditch*, her feisty protagonist, Adah, remains fiercely resistant to the attempts of a welfare system to relegate her and her children to the ranks of a "problem family".

True to her philosophy, the dedications of her key books are very telling. *In the Ditch* was, "To the memory of my father, Jeremy Nwabudike Emecheta, a railwayman and 14th Army soldier in Burma". *Second Class Citizen* (1974) referenced "my dear children – Florence, Sylvester, Jake, Christy and Alice – without whose sweet background noises this book would not have been written". *The Bride Price* (1976) was "for my mother, Alice Ogbanje Emecheta" with *The Slave Girl* (1977), which won the New Statesman's Jock Campbell award, she felt moved and humbled when she insisted on, "To Margaret Bushy for believing in me." *The Joys of Motherhood* (1980) was dedicated to "all mothers", while she prefaced *Destination Biafra* (1982) with, "I dedicate this work to the memory of many relatives and friends who died in this war, especially my eight-year old niece, Buchi Emecheta, who died of starvation, and her four-year old sister Ndidi Emecheta, who died two days afterwards of the same Biafran disease...". Her purpose of writing is to inform her audience about the African lifestyle, and gender discrimination faced not only by her but also by all African women to this day.

Consequently, her books are highly acclaimed for their sparkling intelligence, a certain kind of honesty lived and intimate insights into working class colonial women. Without seeking to be so, she became an outstanding role model for how black women from other countries could achieve a respected place in British society through sheer determination and ability. She debunked the African myth that women were viewed as the property of their husbands. Most often, they do not have a say and after experiencing this herself, she took upon herself to speak against it. Despite the obstacles, writing provided a way for her to rise above gender injustices in order to expose the truth to the world. She speaks out in her works against the subjugation of women in the quest for social change. She wrote sixteen novels in all which translated her real life experiences into narrative novels. Through them the hardship which African women faced in their everyday lives was exposed. She equally advocated for the rights of these women through her works. In the novels, she laments as well as protests against oppression, powerlessness, and the voiceless aspects of life that manifest and dictate the lives of women. The goal was not to render women superior to men but to improve the quality of life between men and women and their communities. She also writes to proclaim hope for growth and the realisation of equality between African women and men. Through her works, she, therefore, inspires women and men to respect and understand the role of women in society. She encourages women to fight for their freedom using her life story as an example.

Although Emecheta has so effectively transformed dreams into reality, adversity into success, in 2010 a stroke put an end to her mobility and writing. She became progressively ill. She died on January 25th 2017. Two of her children, Florence and Christy predeceased her while she is survived by Sylvester, Jake and Alice. In a nutshell, in telling her own story through fiction, Emecheta got healed from her rejection and trauma and helped in the healing process of many who took her as a model. Like every other person on earth, she succumbed to death when it came knocking. She, however, went with a string of successes tied to her name and is immortalised in her works. For, though dead, she lives on in the beautiful pages of her works.

STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

This study comprises an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. The introduction gives highlights of the work, states the aim, defines key concepts, states the research problem, advances research questions, presents the hypothesis and the scope of work, states the significance of the study, highlights the writers and their works and presents the structure of this work. Chapter one is titled, “Theoretical framework and literature review”. Here, the

theories that will be used in reading the selected works will be identified and the tenets or lenses through which the different critical aspects of the research will be anchored. Under literature review, the previous selected works of the chosen writers will be acknowledged with highlights given on how this research endeavour differs from or improves on what has already been done. Chapter two dwells on “How the African Woman has lived Trauma”. Here, attention will be paid to historical perspectives and the changes effected in its evolution. It will be subdivided into: The Pre-colonial African Woman, the Colonial African Woman and the African Woman of the Post-Colonial Period. Chapter Three is titled, “Towards Constructing the African Woman.” This chapter will capture the stage at which the African Woman is becoming conscious of trauma as well as beginning to make a conscious effort to identify the sources of trauma. This will be seen under “Gender/Sexual Politics and the Demon of Patriarchy”, and “The Nightmare of Colonial Incursion and Racial Politics”. Chapter four titled, “Resisting the Marginal/Domestic space”. It will, therefore, capture the effects of trauma on the individual, the community and mankind. Chapter five, titled, “Authorial Ideological Consciousness” will end with a conclusion which will wrap up salient issues raised with emphasis laid on how this work would be beneficial to mankind, society and the world. It will, therefore, give highlights of the study, the arguments raised, the findings and its contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories are formulated to explain, understand and predict phenomena. They are also meant to challenge and broaden existing knowledge within the limits of a critical bounding assumption. It is for this reason that this chapter is focused on the theoretical framework or structure that supports this study. More correctly, this chapter will describe the theory that explains why attention is being or should be paid to the research problem under scrutiny. It will, therefore, demonstrate an understanding of the theory and the related tenets that are relevant to this study. Effort will also be made to show how it enables this work to relate to the broader fields of knowledge. The analytic models that are relevant to this research problem being investigated will be highlighted. It would then enable one to use the knowledge and understanding gotten from this work to act in more informed and effective ways. In other words, it will focus on specific variables and define the specific viewpoint that this research work will take in analysing and interpreting the works under study, understanding concepts and building knowledge by validating or challenging theoretical assumptions.

In addition, this chapter will focus on the critical works that have been written on the chosen authors and their selected works. This will go a long way towards placing this work within the context of existing literature. To this end, it will justify why this further study in a field that others have already worked on was needed. Thus, it will enable the researcher to identify the relationship of this work in context of its contribution to the topic and to other works. It will also go a long way towards justifying the proposed methodology for this work. Consequently, it will give a comprehensive summary of previous research on this topic and also survey scholarly articles, books, and other sources relevant to this research. It is not all about how this work differs from previous works on this topic; emphasis will also be laid on some of the valid things said that would contribute to consolidating the views promoted in this work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literary theory is the body of ideas and methods a critic uses in the practical reading of a literary text. On the whole, it is the lens through which the text or texts in question are viewed. As pointed out earlier, it orientates or focuses on a particular way of looking at the text. A good reader would be one who actually applies multiple lenses or different tenets of a theory to exploit a text so as to better resolve the concerns raised in the work. Consequently, the theory

will help the critic to formulate the relationship between the author and the work. However, it is not meant to explain the meaning of the literary work but rather to explain the ideas and theories which could result in the literary work. That is moving beyond the author into studying the situations, circumstances and the overall culture in which the work was written. Far from what some people think, the views of others as expressed in these theories rather help in developing one's interpretations and supporting one's view instead of weakening or substituting them. Nonetheless, it does not make one a slave to the views of other critics, especially as one still has the room and liberty to challenge the said views. In this way, it provides the means of developing and explaining your own views. For this reason, it is often good to first develop your views on the original text before falling back on the views of others to throw more light on the points made. A strong theoretical framework, therefore, gives the researcher a sound scientific basis to demonstrate his understanding of existing knowledge on the topic and also to evaluate his guiding assumptions. It gives direction to research, allowing the researcher to convincingly interpret, explain and generalise from his or her findings. The above points on the relevance of literary theory are buttressed by the views of Charles E. Bressler on literary criticism when he says that an introduction to theory and practice lays claim to the fact that it is a framework used by critics in interpreting, analysing and evaluating a work of literature. That consciously or unconsciously, we develop a mind-set or framework concerning our expectations when reading a novel, a short story, a poem or any other type of literature. In addition, that what we choose to value or uphold as good or bad, moral or immoral, beautiful or ugly within a given text actually depends on this ever evolving framework. To articulate this framework and piece together, the various elements of our practical criticism in a coherent, unified body of knowledge is to formulate our literary theory.

Even though this work supports the view that literary theory offers varying approaches for understanding, the role of historical context in interpretation as well as the relevance of linguistic and unconscious elements of the text, it recognises that others argue against the interpretation of literature through the lens of a theory. This group of critics holds that when this is done, the text is seen in isolation, ignoring the context of the work. As such, it cannot account for the allusions, and tends to reduce literature to a collection of literary devices, ignoring the impact on readers. For instance, Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels hold that reading a text through the lens of a theory tantamounts to turning away from literature and its central concerns. This group of critics advocates the study of literature for its sake. In their essay "Against Theory" they argue that:

... A text means what its author intends it to mean. We argued further that all attempts to found a method of interpretation on a general account of language involve imagining that a text can mean something other than what its author intends ... In fact, the denial that meaning is determined by intention is central to project (P. 2461).

Interestingly, this view of Knapp and Walter has been debunked by Homi K. Bhabha, who in his “The location of Culture” counterargues their views. He convincingly and critically defends the validity of theory in reading a text when he says that:

Critical theory often engages with texts within the familiar traditions and conditions of colonial anthropology either to universalize their meaning within its own cultural and academic discourse, or sharpen its internal critique of the Western logo centric sign, the idealist subject, or indeed the illusions and delusions of civil society (1994, P. 31).

In this light and with this conviction that theory is essential to the reading of a literary text, we will focus on the trauma theory. This will be the main theory that will be used in reading the selected texts. However, given the far-reaching nature of this theory, highlights will be given on Trauma Theory and Psychoanalysis, The Trauma Theory and Sociocriticism, The Trauma Theory and Post Colonialism and The Trauma Theory and Feminism. This will be in a bid to exploit relevant tenets of related theories to enrich this work. Consequently, Trauma Theory which anchors this work emerged in the 1990s when a group of critics began to study the cultural effects of trauma. The relationship between trauma and mental illness was first investigated by the neurologist, Jean Martin Charcot, a French physician who was working with traumatised women in the Salpetriere hospital. He was very much concerned with hysteria, a disorder commonly diagnosed in women. In this light, the concept of trauma can be seen from two perspectives: the medical perspective and the psychological perspective. To begin with, the concept of trauma comes from the Greek word “traumatōs” which means wound. At this stage, the definition of Peter Straton and Nicky Hayes in *A Student’s Dictionary of Psychology*, goes a long way towards throwing more light on the understanding of Trauma Theory when it says that trauma is:

An experience which, because of its intensity and unexpectedness, is damaging. The initial reaction is shock, which may or may not be followed by recovery. Freud came to believe that all neuroses were caused by childhood traumas which remained unresolved in the adult. In medicine, the term means bodily injury caused by an external object (P. 30).

However, in the context of this work the psychological perspective will be adopted. In this perspective, the concept transcends the physical “wound” or damage on the human body and alludes to the psychological effect that embodies stress and the psychotic disorder that a person goes through. Very often, this is after witnessing or being part of an event of severe shock and distress. Zuhmboshi in “Narrative Fiction on state Terrorism and Trauma...” defines trauma theory as:

... a reading paradigm that analyses literary and cultural texts taking into consideration how external events in the texts affect or influence the psychology of characters and their subsequent behaviours in relation to other characters.
(P. 146)

This will constitute the main consideration from which Trauma theory will be used in critically analysing the texts under study. Proponents of this practice include Cathy Caruth, Kati Tal, Michelle Balaev and E Ann Kaplan. Its origin cannot be detached from psychoanalysis and would be seen in our analysis under Trauma and Psychoanalysis. Freud built much of his psychoanalysis on his reinterpretation of his patient’s trauma. For further insight, it is good to note that trauma theory seeks to analyse the functionality of literature in a violent and repressive world. The component of language and trauma cannot be overruled. In this light, Balaev argues that:

Trauma as the ultimate unrepresentable in the classic model maintains a tropological hegemony in literary criticism in part due to the theoretically appealing quality of this model to raise larger questions about the relationship between violence experienced by individuals and cultural groups or the relationships between victims, perpetrators and witness (P. 146).

Lenore Terr moves this view further when he says that “psychic trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assault the person from outside. This falls in line with Zuhmboshi’s definition of “trauma theory” and confirms the argument that this theory will form an excellent lens through which the selected works of Head and Emecheta will be analysed in this work. Even though these traumatic events are external they quickly become incorporated into the minds of the victims. Their inability or difficulties in coping with the blows received transform the experiences into trauma. Van Der Kolk makes a similar point about the complicated nature of trauma when he says:

“Traumatization occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat” (P. 393).

In this instance, it is not the trauma itself that does the damage. Both Lenore Terr and Van Der Kolk agree that it is rather how the individual’s mind and body react in their own unique way to the traumatic experience in combination with the unique response of the individual’s social group that determines the level of damage. Consequently, children are traumatised whenever they fear for their lives or for the lives of their loved ones.

With this in mind, this work buys the conclusion that a traumatic experience impacts the entire person as promoted by the propounder of this theory. The way a person thinks, learns, remembers things, feels about self and about others and makes sense of the world are all profoundly altered by traumatic experiences.

In addition to the above, trauma theory pays attention to the way one’s evolution affects him or her. In this wise, it is noted that man is born with a number of innate emotions that are also part of our mammalian heritage. These emotions produce patterned and predictable responses in all of our organs, including our brains. What it means is that overwhelming emotions can do damage to our bodies as well as our psyches. Supporters of this theory validate the view that as a species, human beings survive largely because they develop as social animals for mutual protection. For this purpose, this social nature of human beings is grounded in our need to attach to other human beings from cradle to the grave. Unfortunately, therefore, children who suffer disrupted attachments may consequently suffer damage to all their developmental systems. This will include their brains. It is more frustrating and far more damaging when the people causing the damage are equally those they are attached to. Even though man is rated as the most intelligent of all animals, according to this theory, it is this very intelligence that leaves man vulnerable to the effects of trauma such as flashback, body memories, post-traumatic nightmares and behaviourable reenactments. For instance, the social nature of species is guaranteed by an innate sense of reciprocity that can be observed even among primates. This borders on “fair-play” which leads not only to the evolution of justice systems but also to the need for revenge. This revenge syndrome is sometimes very powerful and central in trauma theory. For example, you cannot hurt anyone, most importantly children, without setting the stage for revenge. They will exact this revenge either upon themselves, upon others or both. This puts to jeopardy the design for man to act as an integrated whole. Propounders of this theory hold that such fragmentation that often accompanies traumatic experiences often

degrades the integration of the species and impedes maximum performance in a variety of ways. Traumatic experiences, according to this theory, prevent the human brain from functioning at its best, given that this often occurs only when it is protected from stress.

Another tenet of this theory is the “fight-or-flight response.” It holds that man, like any other animal, is biologically equipped to protect self from harm as best as possible. This protective mechanism is called the “fight or flight response”. When man senses that he is in danger, his body makes a massive response that affects all his organ systems. This accounts for the differences in attitude when man is terrified or calm. It is fundamental and capital to realise that each episode of danger to a trauma victim connects to every other episode of danger in the victim’s mind. Under such circumstances, the more danger the victim is exposed to, the more sensitive he or she is to danger. With this experience of fight-or-flight, the victim’s mind forms a network of connections that triggers off a new threatening experience. It follows that if children are exposed to danger repeatedly, their bodies become unusually sensitive so that even minor threats can trigger off a sequence of physical, emotional and cognitive responses. Psychiatrists hold that they can do nothing to control this reaction which is an inbuilt biological response. It is a protective device that only goes wrong when a victim is exposed to too much danger and too little protection in childhood or as adults. The conclusion to this is that if one hopes to help traumatised people, then one must create safe environments to help counteract the long-term effects of chronic stress cases.

The next relevant tenet of this trauma theory likely to enhance the analysis of this work is that of “learned helplessness” which stipulates that “if a person is able to master the situation of danger by successfully running away, winning the fight or getting help, the risk of long-term physical changes are lessened. That notwithstanding, helplessness remains a big problem and challenge as humans find it very difficult to tolerate helplessness – it goes against man’s survival instinct. When a victim becomes accustomed to trauma, he/she runs the risk of not trying to escape from danger. This is when “learned helplessness” sets in. There is, however, a possibility for the victim to self-motivate out of dangerous situations. The theory holds that when this motivation is lacking the victim can be pulled out of this situation by outside assistance. If care is not taken, the victim still remains vulnerable to stress. In this wise, interventions designed to help victims to overcome traumatising experiences must focus on mastery and empowerment while avoiding further experiences of helplessness.

In addition to the foregoing, loss of “volume control” is yet another tenet that is relevant to this work. Here, it is noticed that man responds to a stimulus based on the level of threat that the stimulus represents. Unfortunately, people who have been traumatised lose this capacity to “modulate arousal.” Most stay irritable, jumpy and on-edge. Pain and trauma often reduce these persons to only an “on-or-off” switch. They often end up losing all control over the amount of arousal they experience to any stimulus even one as unthreatening as a baby crying or an object falling on the floor. Children or victims who have been exposed to repeated experiences of overwhelming arousal do not have the kind of safety and protection that they need for normal brain development. These groups, as can be seen in the texts under study, are chronically irritable, angry, unable to manage aggression, impulsive and anxious. When they are adults or have come to self-realisation, they endeavour to do anything they can to establish some level of self-soothing and self-control. Those who cannot handle it turn to substances like drugs or alcohol. Some undergo behavior change like involving in sex, excessive eating or violence in a bid to calm down. The bad thing is that this is often a temporary solution. If this group were to be offered any form of help, it should be a better substitute which should be healthy and sustainable. Blaming and punishment often make a bad situation worse.

The next tenet is “Thinking-under stress-action not thought.” Many of us have the tendency to act and not think when faced with threatening danger. This theory advocates that decisive action is better than any complicated mental processing when an action is needed to save life. It holds that when trauma victims are stressed and under pain, they find it difficult to weigh all the possible options in front of them before taking decisions. This is because at that moment there is little or no time to entertain all the necessary information that goes into making good decisions. Most decisions at this level are based on impulse and experience in the need to protect self. Consequently, the decisions are inflexible, oversimplified, directed towards action and, very often, poorly informed. There is a high degree of poor judgment exercised here as the mind is geared towards action which in most cases is violent. Other problematic thought patterns that have been identified include intolerance of mistakes, denial of personal difficulties, and anger as a problem solving strategy, hyper vigilance and absolutistic thinking. If intervention strategies have to be formulated, effort should be made to reduce stress even when good decisions are sought. This means that buffers should be put in place to help attenuate the effects of the stressors.

‘Remembering under stress’ is another vital tenet of trauma theory that is needed to elucidate analyses in this work. It is also true that one’s capacity to remember things, process

new memories and access old memories is also dramatically changed when under stress. Man's two kinds of memory system, that is the normal learning memory which is nonverbal and the verbal are intertwined and complexly interrelated. Under normal circumstances we talk with words and think with words. When we need information, we go into the right category and retrieve it. Under extreme stress, especially when we are overwhelmed with fear, we lose the capacity to put words into our experiences. Without words, the mind shifts to a mode of thinking that is characterised by visual, auditory and kinesthetic images, physical sensations and strong feelings. They are often imprinted in the mind and hardly ever go away. Joseph LeDoux, the neuroscientist, calls this "emotional memory" and goes ahead to show that this memory is often difficult or impossible to erase. Many researchers have noticed this "engraving" memory with trauma victims. They explain this as the ability for the memory of things that happened under stress to remain "frozen in time" in the form of images, body sensations like smell, touch, taste, pain and strong emotions. Flashback is then a sudden intrusive re-experiencing of a fragment of one of those traumatic, non-verbalised memories. During these moments, victims are once more overwhelmed with the same emotions that they felt at the time of the traumatic event. Thus, flash backs are likely to occur when people are upset, stressed, frightened, aroused or triggered by any association to the traumatic event. Though their minds can be flooded with the images, emotions and physical sensations associated with the trauma, their verbal memory system may be turned off because of the arousal of fear. In this case, they cannot articulate their experience and it gets worse because the nonverbal memory may be the only memory the victim has of the traumatic event. The victim in these circumstances is trapped in "speechless terror". At such moments, their capacity for speech and memory are separated. As a result, they develop what has become known as "amnesia" for the traumatic event. It is not like the memory has disappeared; it is still there but there are no words attached to it. Thus, it cannot be talked about, nor even thought about. It might rather present itself as some form of nonverbal behaviour or, sometimes, as a reenactment of a previous event. Thus, in a flash back, the victim relives the event. At this stage, the victim might become progressively numb to all emotions, feels depressed, alienated, empty and even dead. At this point, it takes greater and greater stimulation to feel a sense of being alive. Victims often engage in all kinds of risk-taking behaviour at this moment. If the victim cannot remember, he/she cannot learn from the experience, and it becomes life-threatening. Some victims, like the selected writers, put these experiences into narratives which they share with themselves and others. They simply succeed to put things into a time sequence of past, present, future. In order to assist such victims, society should provide abundance of opportunities for them to talk about their experiences, their past lives, conflicts

and feelings. Activities such as art, music, movement and theatre programs or even sports can help as community healing efforts.

When it comes to “Emotions and trauma,” we cannot keep aside “Dissociation.” Although it is possible to die of fright or a broken heart, trauma theory has established that people rarely die from emotional upsets. This is because of a built-in “safety-valve” called “Dissociation”. It is defined as “a disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory identity or perception of the environment”. Traumatized persons make special use of this capacity. According to this theory, people have different ways of dissociating. Some faint and it is the brain’s way of saying that “I can’t handle this”. Some develop “amnesia” as we have already seen. The most common is “emotional numbing” which is the body’s manner of splitting off experience from our feelings about that experience. It entails the victim cutting off feelings about what happened to him or her while still remembering everything about it. Onlookers might rush to conclusions like, “they are coping well”. They might not necessarily be “coping well”. They may just have been dissociated from their feelings which in turn diminished their capacity for normal emotional interaction. In rare cases of unendurable trauma, all emotions might be cut off. Speaking about the communication of these emotions, this theory holds that they are intimately tied to the expression of emotion through facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures which end up by giving way to what the victim might be consciously trying to hide. However, the emotions never really go away because they are built-in and form part of the human being’s biological heritage and cannot be eliminated; they can only be transmuted. Emotional numbing is very dangerous for human relations. If one cannot feel anger, he or she cannot adequately protect others and self. For example, if we cannot feel sadness, we cannot complete the work of mourning that helps us to recover from loss so as to form new attachments. If we cannot feel joy, life becomes empty and meaningless, thereby leading to an increased potential for detachment, alienation, suicide and homicide.

Avoidance symptoms and intrusive symptoms, like flashback and nightmares, comprise two of the most interacting and escalating aspects of post-traumatic stress syndrome. When these dominate the lives of traumatized persons, they feel more and more alienated from everything that gives meaning to life. Slow self-destruction through addictions or fast self-destruction through suicides is often the outcome. Some people resort to rage and end up becoming significant threats to the wellbeing of others. Goleman beautifully summarises this when he says:

Children who are traumatised do not have developed coping skills, a developed sense of self or self in relation to others. Their schemas for meaning, hope, faith and purpose are not yet fully formed. They are in the process of developing a sense of right and wrong, of mercy balanced against justice. All of their cognitive processes – like their ability to make decisions, their problem solving capacities, and their learning capacities - are still being acquired (P.103).

What Goleman is saying here reflects to a larger extent what our two novelists have gone through. They in turn capture this through the characters they build in their works of art. He continues this line of thought by saying that:

As a consequence, the responses to trauma are amplified because they interfere with the processes of normal development. For many children, traumatic experiences actually become the norm rather than the exception and they fail to develop a concept of what is normal or healthy (P. 103).

This becomes the source of trauma as can be seen in the case of the characters of the text. It becomes very dangerous when they fail to develop a sense of what is normal or healthy. This has a dangerous effect on their health and in most circumstances results in traumatic crises. He further says that:

They do not learn how to think in a constructive, quiet and deliberate way. They do not learn how to create mutual, compassionate and satisfying relationships. They do not learn how to listen carefully to the messages of their bodies and their senses. Their sense of self becomes determined by the experiences they have had with caretaking adults; and the trauma they have experienced teaches them that they are bad, worthless, a nuisance or worse (P.103).

This is not limited to the characters in the text. We, like them, often find ourselves in similar situations.

Living in a system of contradictory and hypocritical values impairs the development of conscience, of faith in justice, of a belief in the pursuit of truth. It should come as no surprise then that these children so often end up as the maladjusted trouble-makers that pose so many problems for teachers, schools, other children, and ultimately all of us. (P.103)

For these reasons, Goleman cautions that many of the maladjusted symptoms that plague our social environment are the result of the individual's attempt to manage overwhelming

emotions that are effective in the short-run but detrimental in the long-run. Consequently, if we fail to protect children from overwhelming stress, then we can rest assured that we are creating life-long adjustment problems that would take a toll on the individual, the family and even society as a whole.

Another major concern of trauma theory is “Endorphins and stress-addiction to Trauma”. Endorphins are used for normal, everyday functioning, but they become very important during times of stress. They calm anxiety, improve on mood, decrease aggression and are great analgesics that can relief pain in times of stress. Some stress addicted victims do not tolerate calm atmospheres. They antagonise others in order to generate high stress levels that would in turn give them some degree of internal equilibrium. Violence is exciting to this group; and fighting, bullying are common activities to them. Assistance should be given to people that are addicted to trauma in order to help them to “detox”.

“Trauma-bonding” is very common to trauma victims. This is about establishing a relationship based on terror and the twisting of normal attachment behavior into something perverse and cruel. People who have been traumatised, therefore, need to learn how to create relationships that are not based on terror and the abuse of power. They need coaching and are better off if they engage in relationships that are not abusive and that do not permit abusive and punitive behavior.

“Traumatic Reenactment” theory – which we already saw earlier – holds that traumatised persons cannot easily heal themselves by themselves. Very often, they repeatedly “tell their story” in very overt, or highly disguised ways in order to get help. They communicate their “call for help” mostly through nonverbal messages and we can only help them if we can give verbal expression and meaning to their nonverbal messages. These victims are trapped in “speechless terror”. Our inability to understand their nonverbal messages lead us to judge, condemn, exclude and alienate the victim.

When it comes to “Trauma and the Body”, it is very clear that stress impacts the body negatively with short- and long-term consequences. This can degenerate into a situation of “victim to victimizer.” What this means is that a victim is both helpless and powerless. To avoid feeling helpless and powerless the victim in turn assumes the role of a victimiser by terrorising and abusing others. Confrontation with the spiritual, philosophical and religious context is often necessary for recovery resulting in “issues of meaning and spirituality” in trauma theory. The “creating of sanctuary” is meant to provide a safe environment that promotes healing and

sustains human growth. The victim's life questions at this stage change from "what's wrong with you?" to "what's happened to you?" What has actually happened to the victim is that he has found peace and safety with self, found safety in groups and with other people. Above all, he maintains a value system that does not contradict itself and is consistent with healthy human development as well as psychological and social safety. Such safety involves not just prohibitions against violence to others but also prohibitions against the short- and long-term forms of self-destruction. The basic tenet here is "nonviolence". It is not negotiable and regardless of whether it is verbal, physical, sexual, social or economic. Any act of violence, therefore, should be the concern of the entire society. Society should look for means to resolve it as soon as possible.

Nevertheless, it is pertinent to pay attention to the idea popularised by the advocate of the Trauma theory that "trauma is an unrepresentable event that is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of language and experience". It is interesting to note that most of them tie trauma to language. This Lacanian approach comes up with a concept of trauma as a recurring sense of absence that sunders knowledge of the extreme experience, thus preventing value other than a referential expression. In a nut shell, from the variety of approaches in studying trauma in literature this work is retaining that "extreme experience cultivates multiple responses and values". Caruth's deconstructive views are finely canalised by Michelle Balaev when he says that, "Trauma causes disruption and the reorientation of consciousness, but the values attached to this experience are influenced by a variety of individual and cultural factors that change over time". He further reiterates that *"trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its much unassimilated nature returns to haunt the survivor later on"*. Like Freud, Caruth's classic trauma model utilises psychoanalytic referents for a literary criticism that establishes claims about the repressive, repetitive and dissociative nature of trauma. Talking about dissociations, Caruth claims that history functions in the same way as trauma insofar as "history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence." Barry Stamp, on the other hand, examines the status of trauma in literary criticism and demonstrates the significance of Peirce's theories on criticism as well as the process of thought in understanding traumatic experience in semiotic terms. This emphasises Forter's non-punctual model of trauma which states that "retro-determination" at work in a traumatic experience compliments the abductive reasoning which allows for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between consciousness, trauma and language. Dostoevsky

lays emphasises on secondary thinking and trauma. He argues that a traumatic experience contains an active vitality that is represented as a “*split discourse*” which affirms a social identity despite mutual contradictions. Irene Visser argues that anthropological and sociological theories emphasise that the cultural-historical specificity of individual and collective trauma are better suited to analyse post-colonial literature.

Laurie Vickroy explores the social contexts of traumatic experiences. He also looks into the narrative strategies writers employ in trauma fiction to engage readers in the ethical dilemmas of trauma. He argues that trauma in fiction produces three significant effects: “the awareness of the multidimensionality of an extreme experience and, particularly, the social influence that shapes the survivor’s personality, the textual modeling of the social aspects of the individual’s mind and the ethics of the reading that compel a compassionate correspondence between reader and survivor. While Paul Arthur focuses on “Memory and commemoration in the Digital present,” he considers the contemporary depictions of trauma that moves from physical sites to emotional sites where suffering is expressed such as grave site, to a modern internet space for feeling and communicating traumatic loss.

From the above facts about trauma theory we, therefore, see that the lens of trauma theory would be most appropriate in analysing the texts chosen for this work. In the first place, it directly matches the concerns of this work which have as one of their key concerns, “trauma fiction”. One would say that within the context of this work, trauma theory is a square peg in a square hole. It lays a firm groundwork for pertinent questions to be asked between victims of trauma and perpetrators of trauma. Caruth captures it so well when he says:

Trauma as a classic model maintains a tropical hegemony in literary criticism in part due to the theoretically appealing quality of this model to raise larger questions about the relationship between victim, perpetrator and witness, (P. 60).

The answers to these questions will pave the path or guide the process leading to the verification and validation of the hypothesis. When Caruth further talks about trauma not being locatable in cases of simple violence or original events in an individual’s past but rather in the way that it’s very unassimilated nature returns to the survivor later on, we find it very relevant to this work. This notion of the past coming back to haunt the survivor would enable us to highlight one of the significant arguments in the chosen texts that trauma is connected to the cultural and historical events that characters have lived. For example, Elizabeth’s trauma cannot be dissociated from the stressful experiences she lived in Apartheid South Africa. This falls in line with Caruth’s claim that innate causality between trauma and dissociation, especially the

fact that an extreme experience directly produces a dissociative consciousness where history functions the same as trauma or a stressor, is recurrent in many trauma events. From this perspective, trauma theory is an excellent tool or lens through which the stressful cultures and histories of the African Society will be analysed to show their effects on women. It will help by enabling a better understanding of what the characters have gone through and a better appreciation of their determination to overcome and excel.

Moreover, trauma theory is usually very appropriate as it underscores the damage done to the victim and also to society. The pluralistic approach highlights the oscillating values and representations of trauma in literature and society. It emphasises not only the harm caused by the traumatic experience but also the many sources that inform the definitions, representations and consequences of traumatic experiences. This lens leads to the validation of the hypothesis as it enables the researcher to analyse actions that prove that trauma victims can overcome their traumatic experiences and excel.

Equally important is the fact that the findings of this work would most likely be confirmed by the lens of Forter's non-punctual model of trauma which, as said earlier, lays emphasize on "retro determination" at work in a traumatic experience. The nuance between consciousness, trauma and language in the texts will be understood better. The long and short of this is that there are possibilities of "recuperation and growth" for the characters. That would already be validating the anticipated results of this work if proven that this is the situation in the selected texts.

Nonetheless, the perspective of Laurie Vickroy which explores the social context of traumatic experiences and the narrative strategies writers employ to engage readers in the ethical dilemmas of trauma is very useful in the analysis of this work. It goes without questioning that the social influences that shape the survivor's personality and the textual modeling of the social aspects of the survivor's personality are central in the analysis, without leaving out the ethical readings that compel a passionate correspondence between reader and survivor.

It is interesting to know that Erickson's view that trauma can also positively affect individuals and communities will go a long way towards enriching this work. It will reinforce and prove the hypothesis that by consolidating a sense of belonging, a kinship and mutual trust success will be guaranteed. From the above truths about trauma theory, a general sense of

cohesion will be achieved in the work given that relevant and valid tenets of the theory have been selected to edify it.

TRAUMA THEORY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Sigmund Freud's tilt and contributions to trauma theory cannot be ignored in this work. As an inter-disciplinary theory, therefore, this work will borrow from the psycho-analytical theory to enrich its analysis. It is worth noting that the origin of trauma theory can be traced to Freud's early hypothesis on the trauma and seduction theory. When Freud noticed that some of the problems of his patients were caused by emotional disturbances, he decided to get assistance from a French neurologist, Jean Martin Charcot, who was treating patients using hypnosis (Gay, 1988). Freud also drew inspiration from Joseph Brewer's "talking cure" therapy. As earlier mentioned, it demanded that patients with emotional problems report whatever came to their minds. Freud merged these views and came up with the theory of the human mind. Through this, he encouraged his patients to talk about their symptoms and what was occurring when the symptoms emerged. In the course of analysing these symptoms, he came up with the idea that the symptoms were psychologically related to the dilemma or trauma they were facing.

In this theory developed by Freud, the mind is likened to an iceberg in which the conscious mind is the small part of the iceberg visible above the water line, and the unconscious mind is that part of the iceberg that is below the surface. What this means is that our conscious mind is the relatively small part of our mind that we are aware of at the moment. On the other hand, the preconscious mind, which is immediately below the surface of the conscious mind consists of those mental processes that are not currently conscious but could become so at any moment. For example, the things discussed the previous day. Below the preconscious mind, according to Freud, is found the unconscious mind. This is likened to the huge section of the iceberg that is hidden in the water's depth. This unconscious mind, according to Freud, is driven by our evolutionary history. It contains thoughts, desires, feelings and memories that are not consciously available to us but nonetheless shape our everyday behaviour. These include painful, forgotten memories from childhood, hidden feelings of hostility towards someone you profess to like or even love and sexual urges that would create intense anxiety if you become aware of them. The link between this theory and trauma theory is the springboard of pain. They are both anchored on the pain the patients or victims of trauma had undergone. Freud's principal objective was to make conscious what had formerly been unconscious. When he was faced with

the challenges of his patients managing these behaviours he modified this theory to the “structural model” which is well reflected in the trauma theory under use.

As a result, Freud proposed three sub-components, or structures, in this model of the mind – the “id” the “ego” and the “super ego”. These were instrumental in explaining how psychological conflicts determine one’s behaviour. This is central to trauma theory as well; it renders this strand of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory relevant to the analysis of this work.

The “id” – which in Latin means “it” – is an entirely unconscious portion of the mind. It contains the basic drives for reproduction, survival and aggression. In a nutshell, it is that portion of our mind that operates on the “pleasure principle”. We all have desires and the “id” seeks to satisfy any active desire as soon as possible. It works on the principles that “if it feels good, do it”. Freud referred to this primitive, irrational and illogical orientation as “primary process thinking.” This surfaces when, like children, we cry to have our every desire satisfied “immediately”. Unfortunately, man’s needs are rarely satisfied immediately. When such is the case, we experience distress and anxiety. As a result, the “id” develops into the “ego” – which in Latin means “I”. The “ego” functions as the decision making part of the personality that satisfies id impulses in socially acceptable ways. In this context, the ego is both partially conscious and partially unconscious. The conscious part is in contact with external reality, while the unconscious part is in contact with the id. Thus, in seeking id satisfaction, the ego seeks to delay gratification of id desires until appropriate outlets and situations can be found. The ego, therefore, is interested in achieving pleasure but learns that this will more likely occur if the constructions of reality are taken into consideration. Freud calls this “secondary process thinking”. These are the thought patterns of some of the victims of trauma, especially those who long to succeed. In as much as they want to overcome their challenges and sail to success, they want or often wish to act in conformity to the laws of society. What this means is that the secondary processthinking is used in analysing actions geared towards success.

Furthermore, Freud talks of the “super-ego” which in Latin means “over the I.” According to Freud, the super-ego develops later in childhood, around the age of 4 or 5. It plays multiple functions. First, it oversees the ego and makes sure it acts morally. In this light, the superego is concerned not just with what is acceptable but also with what is ideal. It provides the conscience that makes one feel guilty when “wrong”. It equally instills pride when one is “right”. Secondly, it represents the internalisation of cultural norms and values into the individual’s mind. It is therefore not surprising that the superego and the id are frequently at

odds about the proper course of action in a given situation. Trauma victims are often at variance with these two – a strong urge to satisfy desires immediately and being torn between wanting to do that which is morally right; thanks to the ego which always comes in to balance the demands of the id and the superego with those of the external reality to generate behaviour that will still bring pleasure. This does not, however, mean that the ego controls our behaviour. On the contrary, throughout our daily activities, we are generally unaware of the unconscious compromises our ego makes to create a certain outcome. Sometimes, our desires are not met and this creates “fixation”. It is a tendency to persist in pleasure-seeking behaviour associated with an earlier psychosexual stage during which conflicts were not resolved. The unresolved conflicts often come back to haunt trauma victims. This constitutes part of our major concern in this work.

Freud also talks of “repression” in line with his theory. Repression banishes anxiety, arousing thoughts from consciousness. Freud believed that it is as a result of repression that some people do not remember their childhood conflicts. It becomes complex when instead of simply relying on repression, the ego uses a variety of more sophisticated techniques known as “defense mechanism” to keep threatening an unacceptable material out of consciousness. This in a way reduces anxiety. This is very true of trauma victims as will be seen in the chosen works. Freud further asserts that people mostly rely on their defensive mechanisms in adapting to life’s challenges. It ends up becoming a distinguishing feature of their personality. He even asserts that sometimes under extreme stress the victim may begin to use more powerful defenses which are also more primitive and associated with psychological disorders.

Apart from repression, Freud also talks of “rationalisation”. He classifies it as the more familiar defense mechanisms. It involves offering seemingly logical self-justifying explanations for one’s attitudes, beliefs or behaviour in place of the real, unconscious reasons. For example, you might exact acts in anger from somebody with the pretext that it was done for their own good. This act may well have been your ego’s attempt to defend you against feelings of worthlessness.

“Reaction formation”, according to Freud, is also another mechanism that allows us to express an unacceptable feeling or idea by consciously expressing its exact opposite. For example, an interest in sex will rather cause you to devote much time and energy to combating pornography. In doing so, you give yourself the liberty of thinking about it, but in an unacceptable way. This simply means that each behaviour has many causes.

“Displacement is another mechanism that diverts our aggressive urges towards objects that are more acceptable than the one actually stimulating our feelings. This, according to Freud, is commonly referred to as “kick-the-dog” defense. For example, it occurs when we vent our aggressive impulses towards a threatening teacher, parent, spouse or boss onto a helpless creature such as a pet.

This takes us to “projection” which is one of the more powerful defense mechanisms that can involve quite serious distortions of other’s motivations. In this light, we perceive our aggressive urges not in ourselves but in others. For example, an insecure person may falsely accuse other people of being insecure while not recognizing this characteristic in his/her own personality. Freud contended that we are more likely to use projection when we are feeling strongly threatened, either by the strength of our feelings or by particularly stressful situations. A good example of this is the case of soldiers in combat who may begin to see everyone around them as potential enemies who could hurt them.

Another powerful defense mechanism is “regression”, which occurs when we cannot function in our current surroundings due to anxiety. When this occurs, the victim psychologically retreats to a more infantile developmental stage where some psychic energy remains fixated. For example, an elder child threatened by the birth of a younger one might lose control of bowel or bladder functions or return to thumb sucking. In an adult, it may be a relatively contained regression, such as talking like a baby when working with an authority figure.

In addition to these views of Freud are the modifications brought in by Adler which are still very valid in the analysis done in this work. Adler holds that children generally feel weak and incompetent compared to adults and older children. Their feelings of inferiority motivate them to acquire new skills and develop untapped potentials. Adler calls this process “compensation”. It is very visible in the lives of the characters as they struggle to liberate themselves from their traumas. Carl Jung, on the other hand, asserted that people are motivated by a desire for psychological growth and wholeness which he called “the need for individualization. This later became the central focus of the humanistic. Jung, however, agreed with Freud that the unconscious mind has a powerful effect on people’s lives. He further holds that the conscious mind is less a reservoir for repressed childhood conflicts and more a reservoir of images from our species’ evolutionary past. In addition to the personal unconscious, Jung also talks of the “collective unconscious” which is that part of the unconscious mind containing

inherited memories shared by all human beings (Jung 1963, 1964). He called these inherited memories “archetypes”. He also laid emphasis on introverts who focus on the inner world and extroverts who focus on the external world. Karen Horney believed that social factors play a much larger role in personality development than sexual influences. To him, problems in interpreting interpersonal relationships during childhood create anxiety which causes later personality problems. She further argues that gender differences in behavior are largely due to social and cultural factors not biological factors. This is a very important issue or concern in the texts under study. According to her, women envy the social power and privileges that men enjoy in the larger society. Freud, however, has received empirical support for the fact that unconscious processes shape human behaviour; childhood experiences shape adult personality; learning to regulate impulses is critical for healthy development and some dreams are associated with wish fulfillment. With the cutting-edge technology applied to test Freud’s theoretical arguments, his perspective on personality still continues to enrich and illuminate our understanding of the human mind.

Consequently, the above identified traits of Freud’s psychoanalytical theory embellish the trauma theory and are also capital to our understanding of the texts under study. The understanding of the “id” motive will help in identifying and highlighting the personality aspects of characters. It will also help to situate what the character’s desire and what they are not getting. Most of our characters and heroines in the texts have needs that are not being met. These generate pain. The knowledge of the ego comes handy when it is considered that even though these characters have needs, the attainment of such needs is controlled by society. The reality principle cannot be ignored at this level. The superego sets the moral code of conduct for the characters. Sometimes, they adopt acceptable codes of conduct and sometimes they do not. Their success depends largely on the valid application of the ego which helps to determine what is realistic about their drives as well as what enables them to remain realistic about the standards they set for themselves. Through this lens of the superego, one analysis the acceptability of the acts of the characters in society, thereby making the psychoanalytic theory of Freud a great reinforcement to the trauma theory used in analysing the findings in this work.

In summary, the central tenet of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory which is the concept of the unconscious from which he derived the other concepts – like hidden meaning and repression – needs to be finely integrated into the analysis of this work. It should be remembered that Freud’s aim of psychoanalysis was to support the expression of the effect associated with a traumatic memory, a process later termed catharsis. Its goal is to bring the repressed trauma

into the conscious memory, a process called abreaction. The validity of the link between this theory and trauma stems from his observation of post-traumatic stress disorders in soldiers returning from World War I which formed the base of his theory. Freud, later on, gave primacy to the experience of trauma, a position that became a central tenet of subsequent psychoanalytical theorising and speculation.

The traumas of war and the constant imminent threat to survival came closest to repeating the feeling of infant helplessness and its associated anxiety. This is true of the texts under study in this work. For it is still true of these texts that helplessness and dependency, which are experienced in infancy, are re-activated in subsequent experiences of threat, anxiety and loss. Thus the richness of trauma theory in this work comes from the incorporation of related tenets found in Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

TRAUMA THEORY AND SOCIOCRITICISM

It is noteworthy that sociocriticism aims at proving that the encounter with “ideological traces” – and with antagonistic tensions between social classes – is central to any reading of texts. Writing on the subject of sociocriticism, Duchet holds that, it is true that there is nothing in a text that does not result from a certain action of society. In addition to this, Edmond Cros holds, that sociocriticism can be defined as the study of the multiple forms of mediation between literature and the order of discourse as well as between social discourse and the artistic, social, economic, political and religious phenomena of any given era. This is very important in the analysis of our texts. The social discourse in the texts is pitted against the artistic, social, economic, political and religious phenomena of the background era or period. Examining these texts through this dynamic triangulation precludes any frontal opposition with the discipline of sociology of literature. This definitely allows for the formation of other connections without creating any confusion. The goal of this theory – which in a way is directly linked to trauma theory – is that, within literary studies, and more generally within the humanities, the social sciences may be exactly the mediation between the social and its representations in all their historicity and textual density. Sociocriticism postulates that the logic underlying mediations – and, more generally, relations between individuals and systems, fields or frameworks of action – may be qualified as light determinism. This theory reinforces the trauma theory in that it does not subscribe to studies of literature that reduce what plays out in texts and in discourses to the mere effects of laws, state of affairs and infrastructural hierarchies of hegemonies. It does not adhere only to conceptions that focus solely on the actor and tend to consider structures and

social mechanisms as emerging from the effects of actors' actions. It rather focuses on the perspective of limited autonomy and of partial constrain between social structures and individual action. It also pays attention to the diverse levels at which literature is deployed and to which it is attached.

In short, there is no "individual" without "society" nor "subject" without "object". Socio critics explore, among others, the interferences between the text, the paratexts (dedications, epigraphs, frontispieces, back covers) and the epistle generated by the media coverage of the literary practice (interviews, photographic portraits, descriptions of writer's houses). The triple game that plays out in art between creators, specialists and the public through which the chain between the production and the reception of the cultural product is established is very important.

When it comes to social practices, this theory holds that apart from the institutional and discursive mediations, other "mediating" channels and other dialectics have an influence on the sociality of the text. Here, it is not only important to focus on the "triangular dialectics" of texts, discourses and social phenomena which are animated by the incessant confrontation between the order of discourse. On the other hand, social practices rather separate, hierarchise and particularise the relation between the social and the intellectual. In this light, the social, as seen in the texts, is not only the avenue of abstract determinations, of anonymous masses, of categories, or of transversal mechanisms. It also includes concrete social interactions, local "communities" that serve as filters between the social and its representations. This is often done through "sociolects". A close look at this reveals that there are often necessary discrepancies between the totalities of what is published in your society and the part of this totality that is the object of discourse in the media. This is also true of books that are circulated and have become the subject of conversation and discussion within any given group. Sociability, therefore, operates as a significant mediation between literature and society.

The notion of "social imaginary" appears to be one of the important mediations of the social. It refers to both what the society dreams of and what has the power to make society dream. As Pierre Popovic puts it, it seeks to summarise the effects of fiction in the social world – that is the feedbacks and the determinations that influence reality. This has an impact on the trauma victim who aspires to move ahead by overcoming his or her challenges. It equally has a way of impacting sensibilities, even commanding actions. According to Anhenot Robin, "the text contributes to the production of a social imaginary of figures of identity/identification for

social groups of representations of the world that are a social function. Like the chosen texts in question, they work in a very particular form of intersexuality, where the object is the “socialization” of the text and literary imaginaries.

These selected strands or tenets of sociocriticism will enable the researcher in this work to specify the nature of the “impact” (Chomsky) that the story of these selected texts has upon the reader. This will be done by pointing out their paradoxical roles and what they have in common with Chomsky’s notion of “resonance”. Consequently, it will enable the researcher to bring out the relations existing between the structures of the literary works chosen and the structures of the societies in which these works are deeply rooted. In this manner, it would be easier to demonstrate that the encounter with ideological traces and with antagonistic tensions between social classes is central to any reading of texts. From this perspective it will reinforce arguments that the historic process is deeply involved in the writing process. For example, it will be practically impossible to separate the apartheid racist history from the unfolding of Head’s *A Question of Power*. This theory, therefore, will help put in place or apply the Marxism which links the discursive formation to the ideological and social formations. Through this lens, the research delves into the texts remembering that though there is a relationship between the infrastructure and the superstructure it is neither direct nor automatic. Between the two levels, one has to distinguish a series of various historic times. The historic gaps found in the texts produce various kinds of effects observed especially in the textual spaces of the contradictions. The texts have their pattern of functioning and if this is taken into consideration when making analysis it makes for rich and beautiful critical analysis. First, the text stands up and begins to set its rules of repetition. It repeats a short series of messages sometimes but never in a monotonous way. This is done through the different levels or categories of the texts. That is time, space, discursive material, myth, topics just to name a few.

This takes us to the notions of genotext and phenotexts as prescribed by some socio-critics. Genotext refers to the ways through which the text incorporates the history on which it is built. This cannot be ignored when dealing with the stories of trauma victims. Most of what they have gone through is tied to the history they have lived. Trauma is embedded in the strong contradictions highlighted by this theory. It holds that the historical elements incorporated in the form of contradictions are the fundamental ones which carry out the future of a given society and constitute its more important stakes.

For this reason, interdisciplinary discourse as proposed by some propounders of the sociocriticism theory will be very handy in the analyses of this work. Colman's notion of transindividual subject would be central here. It postulates that each one of us belongs, at any moment of our life, to a series of collective subjects (generation, family, geographic, origin, profession ...). As we pass through these different collective subjects, they offer us their social values and world vision through their specific discourses. Every transindividual subject inscribes in its discourse the indexes of its spatial, social and historical insertion. Consequently, these generate specific microsemiotics. The totality of the discursive material we use along live is made up with this mosaic of discourses. This will help the researcher to go into the texts knowing that the texts do not select their signs within language but within the totality of semiotic expressions acquired by collective subjects. While these arguments support the view that genotext is the process of generating the signifying system, phenotext refers to the text as a "fact" or an "appearing" in its concrete manifestation or material form. These borrowed tenets from sociocriticism will go a long way towards enriching the analysis of this work. This is because of the interdisciplinary nature of the trauma theory which is the main theory of this work.

TRAUMA THEORY AND POST COLONIALISM

Trauma theory shares very close ties with postcolonialism and it would be unwise to work with this theory without recognising or exploiting this closeness. This complex attends to and accounts for the suffering of minority groups. It is worthwhile to remember at this juncture that trauma theory, as earlier mentioned, emerged in the early 1990s. It was born out of the conflict between deconstructive and psychoanalytic criticism and the study of holocaust literature. From its onset, trauma theory was to bear witness to traumatic histories in such a way as to attend to the other. From this premise one cannot totally apply the trauma theory without drawing from or making reference to the postcolonialism theory which shares a lot with it.

Caruth, one of the key proponents of the trauma theory, even goes as far as to suggesting that "trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures". Thus, while trauma has undoubtedly yielded insights into the relationships between psychic suffering and cultural representation, postcolonial critics have been arguing that trauma theory has not totally fulfilled its promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement. The desire for trauma theory to be broad-based was highlighted by Jill Bennelt and Roseanne Kennedy. They called for a transformation of

trauma studies from a Eurocentric discipline to one capable of engaging “the multicultural and diaspora nature of contemporary culture”. (P.5).

From these arguments, Craps developed a supplementary model of trauma which addresses the normative, quotidian and persistent or racialised trauma. This is what has given strength to the exploitation of this theory in the reading of the texts under study. This criticism – the global context of traumatic events – was recognised in the theory with the help of this postcolonial criticism, the new model seeks to “take account of the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received, and be open and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance that these contexts invite or necessitate” (P.5). The concerns raised in decolonised trauma theory are very relevant to the arguments and analysis in this work. Firstly, it redresses the marginalisation of non-Western and minority traumas. Secondly, it challenges the supposed universal validity of Western definitions of trauma. Thirdly, it provides alternatives to dominant trauma aesthetics and, lastly, it addresses the underexplored relationship between the so-called first and third world traumas.

In this light, the first tenet of joint postcolonial and trauma theory, “chronicling collective trauma” will be very vital in the analysis of the texts. The question asked by Rothberg squarely addresses these concerns in the works: “what happens when different histories of extreme violence confront each other in the public sphere?” The works of Head and Emecheta chosen for this study are essentially based on this. Here, the hierarchical exclusivist approach to chronicling collective traumas where it is “either mine or yours” is tackled. Here, he points out that “collective memories of seemingly distinct histories – such as those of slavery, the holocaust, and colonialism – are not so easily separable” (P. 524).

The following critics involved in rethinking trauma studies from a postcolonial and globalised perspective came up with these views that are very relevant to this study. Irene Visser proposes that if trauma theory is to achieve its goal of inclusiveness, there should be greater openness towards non-western belief systems; and indigenous healing rituals should be allowed to function. It could not have been better put as we see this longing expressed in some of the works of Head and Emecheta in this study.

Dolores Herrero, advocates for a more socially nuanced and culturally-specific approach to trauma. This is embodied in the trauma of the “Stolen generations” Bryan Cheyette even

goes further to challenge the long-standing binary opposition that breeds or gives rise to trauma in the novels of Head and Emecheta. Understandingly, Bryan is joining him through the analysis of this work to call for a reexamination of the overlapping histories of anti-Semitism and colonialism. Stef Craps even argues against the injustice of applying western frameworks to a colonial or postcolonial situation. He also advocates the acceptance of “specialized knowledge of other cultures and languages, of the media and forms of expressions they use and of local beliefs about suffering and healing”. Other critics join him to argue that theory needs to be enriched by the knowledge of the social context, combining the “psychological and the cultural in an interdisciplinary approach that draws on psychoanalysis, sociology, philosophy and history in the study of the aesthetic representation of trauma” (p. IV). This is manifested in the works through a yearning for a shift in power from the Western metropolitan centers of academia to more localised sites of knowledge. From the above, this study benefits from these developments by promoting the view that the theoretical tools developed by trauma studies are capable of expanding our knowledge and understanding of the representation of individual and collective suffering of subjects experiencing heterogeneous kinds of trauma in a variety of post-colonial, non-western and/or minority cultural contexts.

These critics are in favour of the Freudian perspective from which, for purposes of analysis, we have drawn inspiration for this work which stands in favour of indirect referentiality of traumatic secrets. This will definitely enable our understanding of our own catastrophic era that is rife with traumatising events as lived by the characters in the chosen works of Head and Emecheta. Craps’ view of rather making visible the “creative and political” than the ‘pathological and negative” trauma in literature will be very helpful in the resolutions taken in this work. Caruth’s notion of enduring and the ultimately unknowable and expressive nature of traumatic wounding remains undisputed. It reinforces the notion that narrative is curative as it can cause trauma victims to come to terms or even overcome their traumatic experiences. This thrust is very central to the arguments in this work. This is why it is very important to also draw from postcolonialism, given that postcolonial trauma narratives often also demonstrate that resilience and growth are possible in the aftermath of traumatic wounding. Furthermore, postcolonialism edifies the trauma theory through Ralt’s claims that postcolonial literature is powerfully poised to undo the oppositions between secularism and religion. It can represent, imagine and pursue a rich array of possibilities.

In addition to the above, it is very important to take into consideration the postcolonial notion of ‘solidarity’ when analysing traumatic concerns in this work. The twin notions of “recognition” and “solidarity” are essential here. By inviting readers to recognise distant suffering, trauma narratives enable forms of cross cultural solidarity to emerge. The combination of Head’s South African narrative with that of Emecheta’s West African narrative is a clear example of this recognition and solidarity. It pays attention to the experiences of the colonised, the colonisers, the perpetrators and the proletarians. Solidarity often emerges from sympathetic engagement with trauma victims. The key lessons to be learned here are: that trauma offers a productive ground for comparing postcolonial fiction; that comparison uncovers problems for theorists; and that trauma theory needs to be supplemented with systemic material analysis of particular contexts if it is not to obfuscate what makes postcolonial trauma distinct.

On the whole, trauma theory has a strand of or is an embodiment of a bit of other interdisciplinary theories. This is because “memory studies” are a broad convergence field which encompasses rich contributions from cultural history, social psychology, the media, archaeology, political philosophy and comparative literature. Consequently, the postcolonial link lays emphasis on the “remembering” and “forgetting” process which is vital to the analysis in this work. It will enable the researcher to better handle the intertextual perspective as a way of defining cultural heritage, the relation of narrative, memory and identity. Furthermore, it will enable the findings to take into consideration the fact that stories appear, disappear and reappear for a purpose. Therefore, literary works are read, reread and rewritten across decades for ever-new uses. The notion of intertextuality will help to describe the “social life” of texts from a mnemohistorical perspective.

In this light, emphasis will no longer be on nationalism but will shift to forms of remembering across nations and cultures. This will go a long way towards confirming the view that when a trauma victim succeeds in overcoming his/her traumas he/she does not only spring to success but ends up being a model who is most likely to positively impact his society and the world at large. Through this approach, it will be discovered that by coding memory into aesthetic forms such as narrative structures, symbols and metaphors, literature can vividly portray the individual and the collective memory – its contents, its workings, its fragility and its distortions. From the chosen texts it will be discovered that fictional versions of memory are characterised by their dynamic relationship with the memory concepts of other symbol systems such as psychology, religion, history and sociology.

From this narratological viewpoint, it is noteworthy that the distinction between an “experiencing I” and a “narrating I” already rests on a largely implicit concept of memory. That is on the idea that there is a difference between pre-narrative experiences on the one hand, and, on the other, narrative memory which creates meaning retrospectively. Rhetoric memory as seen from the chosen works of Head and Emecheta constitutes the platform on which autobiographical remembering is created. This falls in line with postcolonial philosophy whose poststructuralist notion of trauma as a “crisis of representation” has gained great prominence. Hence, it will be discovered from some of the texts that British trade and colonialism both led to a wealth of sites of shared transnational and transcultural memory despite its traumatising nature. For those interested in transcultural memory, postcolonial studies with its focus on persistence or the working-through of the colonial past, this work will also offer some valuable insights. Sarah Nuttal’s concept of “negotiation” and “entanglement” would help address responses to the divergent and contested memories arising from the different radicalised identity groups in the novels. As a result, the “transcultural” is also a perspective on memory that can, in principle, be chosen with respect to all historical periods and with a view to both the synchronic circulation of representations, for example, the traumatic past. There is, therefore, a link between a culture and its past as would be demonstrated in this work. In a nutshell, any study of the past, when it is being communicated further in the present shapes the future as well.

By incorporating relevant tenets of postcolonialism in the reading of the texts chosen for this work a lot would be revealed about colonialism and decolonised people. This is because the postcolonial theory holds that decolonised people develop a postcolonial identity that is based on cultural interactions between different identities (cultural, national and ethnic) as well as gender and class. These have been assigned varying degrees of social power by the colonial society. It will help in the development of resolutions that can help in reclaiming and rethinking the history and agency of people subordinated under various forms of imperialism. It will further help in describing the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Concerns like “cultural” dominance, racism, quest for identity, inequality will be reflected upon.

In summary, the postcolonial theory has fundamental links with the trauma theory that cannot be ignored when talking of trauma theory. It could be fallacious to think that postcolonial means an end to colonialism. The oppression, pain and traumas that characterised this period

resurfaced in other forms after the “paper independence” of most colonised countries thereby creating different forms of traumas. Bill Ashcroft et al confirms this in *The Empire Writes Back: - Theory and Practice in Post-colonial literatures* when he says:

The semantic basis of the term “post-colonial” might seem to suggest a concern only with that national culture after the departure of the imperial power. It has occasionally been employed in some earlier works in the area to distinguish between the periods before and after independence (“colonial period” and “post-colonial period”) for example, in constructing national literary histories, or in suggesting comparative studies between stages in those histories. (PP. 1-2)

Because of the continuity of preoccupations which generate frustrations and traumas throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression, the term “post-colonial” covers all the cultures affected till date. He who talks colonial talks oppression, suppression and exploitation which are all tools that effect trauma. Bill Ashcroft et al, in “General introduction”, further comment that:

Post-colonial theory involves discussions about experiences of various kinds, migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe, such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being (P. 2).

From the above it is seen that there is an overlapping and interesting relationship between post-colonialism and trauma. They are both anchored on pain, frustration, disappointments and traumatic experiences. There is also a strong shared concern with the notions of marginalisation. For this reason, we realise that there are many issues that link post-colonialism to trauma theory. In the context of this work, therefore, some aspects of post-colonialism will be used in the analysis of the texts under study.

TRAUMA THEORY AND FEMINISM

The title of this research study, viz, “African Female Trauma Fiction” is intricately linked to Feminism which is a response or set of responses to the oppression of women in all its forms. Feminist therapists, researchers, activists and scholars long acknowledged that power differentials can have serious traumatic or even fatal consequences on women. As such, this

research study cannot be fully engaged in African Female Trauma without exploiting related strands or tenets of feminism to enrich the analysis. Arguments or analyses that contribute to female trauma are believed to spring from the beliefs that men and women have a different nature. Deborah L. Rhode in support of this view in “Politics of Paradigms: Gender Difference and Gender Disadvantage”, states that feminism in general emerged against a backdrop of social, economic and political inequalities between the sexes. These inequalities sometimes resulted in the prevalence of problems such as rape, wife battering, and childhood sexual abuse. This gave rise to the feminist view that began to dismantle social beliefs about gender as will be seen in the texts under study. Class and race are also close components that too often protect perpetrators of violence and blame victims for their own suffering. The analyses from this study will borrow from feminism with a view to helping to address the needs of the abused as well as helping to develop social approaches to preventing violence.

Thus, borrowing from feminism will reinforce an overruling idea that gives a marginalised position to the woman in relation to her male counterpart. Although women are biologically different from men, it should not be mistaken or misinterpreted to mean that they are inferior to men and deserve a peripheral or marginalised position. Karen Offen in “Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach” states that:

Feminism is necessarily pro-woman. However, it does not follow that it must be anti-man; indeed, in times past, some of the most important advocates of women's cause have been men. Feminism makes a claim for a rebalancing between women and men of the social, economic and political power within a given society, on behalf of both sexes in the name of their common humanity, but with respect for their [biological] differences. (P. 82).

Emphasis is rather laid on what women, especially traumatised women, have in common. They have a commitment to shared feminist values that implicitly or explicitly frame the questions they ask in their pain and the implications they draw from the answers. These women, as seen from the texts, recognize the power differentials between men and women cross-culturally and internationally, and the need to acknowledge the social and political contexts in which violence against women occurs. In fact, the voices of those that would be held accountable remain those who perpetrate violence or refuse to provide safety for all of society's citizens. In fact, the voices of those who would be silent, those who would cooperate and collaborate, and those who would act in diversity would be valued. It is only by so doing

that answers would come from an understanding of the differences as well as from working together to create the changes that must occur at all levels. Kleinman, Eisenburg, and Good hold that:

Explanatory frameworks generally reflect social and socialized understanding of phenomena... what they are called, how they come to be and what should be done about them. These frameworks also define how serious specific problems are, what maintains the problems, and who should be concerned about them... these belief systems can also be oppressive to those who do not have the power to communicate their own definitions or modify socially accepted explanations that do not reflect their own experience. (P. 100)

Even though this study is largely on female trauma, the balanced view of feminism cannot be ignored. This stems from the premise that in society, there are women who are anti-feminist and some men who are feminist. The views of Charles and Helen – which are upheld in the analysis of this work – state that:

The fundamental purpose of feminist agenda is to unite men and women so that they can work together as partners in the sociopolitical and economic development and power relations in society and not as antagonists (P. 20).

According to Zuhmboshi, all this is to confirm the view that the world could develop faster if there is greater unity, agreement and collaboration among men and women in their different societies with each acknowledging that the other has intrinsic potentials that could be harnessed for the betterment of society and the world at large.

This development can be better achieved if the causes of female trauma are well addressed. Here, there is a call to afford trauma victims direct services for physical and emotional traumas. It is also proposed that female victims of trauma should be accompanied to court if they want to prosecute.

In another dimension, feminists argue that violence against women is endemic to society; and that it is not an individual problem but rather a community problem with a burden shared by all. Harvey's work on her ecological framework of victimisation placed the relationship among the person, the event and the environment at the focal point of discussion. The internal traits of the victim plus the components of the victimisation such as the nature,

severity, frequency and duration of victimisation together with environmental characteristics such as degree of safety and protection provided the post-trauma attitudes the victim needs for recovery. The resources available to the victim from her individual's unique ecology also formed the foundation from which recovery could occur. Borrowing from feminism, this study promotes the view that women who are from communities that support a valued role for women and view violence against women as a form of patriarchy and oppression would likely fare better than women who are from communities which uphold patriarchal views. The inability of having support systems within communities to heal the victims surely affects the healing process.

Bearing in mind that the environment in itself can serve as a mechanism for promoting violence, authority over the remembering process, integration of memory, affect tolerance, symptom mastery, self-esteem and self-cohesion, safe attachment and establishing new meaning. These components are fundamental to treatment.

On the other hand, the most damn myths about violence against women have often been incorporated into law and interpretations of the belief that women are men's property and that "family matters", should be private. This accounts for why women have been battered by men. Feminist critics encourage that assistance should always be provided for women who are in abusive relationships and are seeking ways of getting out of such relationships. Root even provides better insights in handling the trauma situation of the coloured woman as is the case in Head's works. She stresses that the abuse of power is seen in violence against coloured women; and that, unfortunately, this has not been explored extensively to date (Root 1997). Root fears that because women of colour have been historically silenced and marginalised, it is imperative that researchers should be cognizant of the effects of a traditionally devalued status in society. Secondly, researchers should provide ways for women to communicate in their native language. Thirdly, the economic status of both the perpetrator and victim and issues of privacy should be considered. Lastly, researchers must consider how methods of data collection and analysis impact research outcomes.

From the theories of Doris Laub, survivors of trauma did not only need to survive so as to be able to tell their stories but also to tell their stories in order to survive. Nothing could have better described the autobiographical element in the chosen texts than this. There is always buried in each survivor of trauma an imperative need to tell and thus to come to know one's

story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. It holds that one has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life. Feminist inquiry also regards recovering narratives, or reclaiming "buried" or marginalised truths by and about women as a fundamental concern. Gilbert and Gubar even go as far as proposing that when literacy or artistic precursors are left unacknowledged, it creates "anxiety of authorship" for female authors. Trinh T. Minh-ha examines the imperative of the female ancestor and suggests that the repetition of the story fulfills both giver and receiver, giving each a sense of pleasure. Griffiths shows that the self is reconstituted through testimony.

When it comes to patriarchy, feminism and trauma theory are very close bedfellows ... Patriarchy, which is largely a system of government in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it is one of the major sources of African female trauma. Its genitive effects on the personality of the woman abound. Misogynists advocate the fact that authority or power belongs to men who have the sole right to control power in the family and society as a whole. This authority or power is not limited to sexual domination of women by men; it entails a system in which men have more access to whatever society esteems than women. It regards women as inferior beings who should be ruled by men.

Patriarchy is directly linked to gender inequality which is defined as biological differences between sexes. Deborah L. Rhode argues, that the ideology of gender differences serves to rationalise gender exclusions in occupations. Not only are some occupations the reserve of the male but also regulation in some contexts even go as far as increasing female unemployment and reinforcing assumptions about the appropriateness of unequal family roles. This is very disadvantageous to the woman and creates not only frustration in her but also trauma in certain contexts. This is well captured by Colin Farrelly in contemporary political theory when he says:

While it is an obvious biological fact that men and women will necessarily be different in some aspects (for example, only women have the ability to give birth) many of the differences between men and women stem from an unjust social structure. (P. 156).

The bone of contention is therefore not over our natural or biological differences but over the man imposed differences. Farrelly sustains this argument by saying that:

...it is women who typically sacrifice their careers for parenthood, do the majority of unpaid domestic work and are made vulnerable by the institution of marriage. These differences between men and women do not stem from biological differences but from unequal power relations (P.157).

This social structure has been regrettably imposed on the woman by society in order to continue to manipulate, oppress and even relegate her to an inferior and second place in society. In this manner, the concept of spacing in feminism would be better handled by men as seen in the chosen texts. The public space which has to do with elections, courts, schools, banks and so on is controlled by the man, while the private space which has to do with the home, the family and friends is handled by the woman. Cynthia Encloe puts it better when she says:

[...] investigate forms of power that are constructed and wielded in what are conventionally imagined as “private” spaces (inside homes, within families, among friends) as well as forms of power wielded in what are presumed to be “public” spaces (elections, courts, schools, television, companies, banks, garment factories and military bases (P. 99).

Overcoming trauma and moving on to freedom for the woman means fighting for the spaces available in society, provided she has the capacity to do so.

Feminism puts women – their experiences, their ideas, their actions, thoughts about them, efforts to convince and manipulate them – on center stage, while feminism also makes “women-as-women” seriously, yet it acknowledges and explicitly explores women’s own myriad, often unequal, locations (P. 99).

Once more, these relevant and edifying strands/tenets of feminism will go a long way towards enriching the analysis of this work.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

At this juncture of our research endeavour, it would be very important to stop and locate the scope thereof within the context of existing literature. This is very important as it would enable us to show how this research is related to previous research in this field. As such, we would be able to establish the originality and authenticity of this work by making sure that it is not just a replication of what has already been done. Hence, this review will enable us not only to avoid duplication but also to throw more light on it or entertain questions left unanswered

from other research endeavours. It would show the relevance and originality of the research problem we are addressing.

There are different facets to a story and the research problem identified herein has been handled by other researchers from other perspectives or through different lenses. This review would, therefore, lay to rest differences in opinion and rather tackle other facets of a complex issue in a bid to find a harmonious resolution that should address and throw more light on what we live on a daily basis.

Head's *A Question of Power* and Maru and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* have received a lot of attention from critics. The texts have been appreciated from different interesting angles. This is proof of the fact that the works have made their own names. They are like the story of the beautiful gigantic tree in the forest that appeals to the creatures of the jungle. Each creature finds a branch on which to perch for a fruit, or a place under it to sit, waiting to pick up a ripe fruit that falls. The enjoyment by one does not take off the sweetness savoured by another. It rather totals to confirm the view that it was such a wonderful tree with free satisfying fruits for all. No matter how much is said of the cited works of the above authors, there is always room for something else to be added to the stock of existing analyses. This research study will, therefore, settle on one of the many facts of the works of the authors under study. Consequently, this section will only attempt a sampling of the vast critical views on these texts.

Talking about *A Question of Power* in his article on "Critical Essays on Bessie Head (contributions in Afro-American and African Studies: Contemporary Black Poets) Maxime Sample sees the novel as a work in which,

Through narrative and rhetorical strategies that subvert genre and challenge the discourse of race and gender, black South African woman writer, Head, creates alternative healing spaces that empower and enable the marginalized, provide potential for transcendence and self-creation, and render ineffective the power of language to subjugate (P. 54).

Sample, highlights the technique Head uses to inscribe an idealistic vision into the response to the psychic fragmentation and rootlessness she experienced in exile. The internal focalisation method whereby the object of pain is perceived from within the system is applied here. The perceptual facet of space gives a bird's eye view of the torments lived in South Africa.

Sample then throws more light on how Head employs madness as a potential site of resistance to the official construction of reality. The write-up argues that Head's writings testified to the trauma of apartheid long before the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission existed, and that exile "gave her the freedom to testify, to bear witness to... the wound (P. 13). Head turns to agriculture as a way of reclaiming a sense of self and belonging being of use to the community in which she builds a utopian village, and finds love, thereby validating Achebe's view in his recent essay published in 2010 and which states that "It is important to understand that the great thing about being human is our ability to face adversity but refusing it from defining us."

This thesis differs from the above cited work of Sample in that it brings in Emecheta and demonstrates how excessive pain is transformed into trauma and its consequences. Madness forms a sub-set.

Stéphane Seignier, 1997, in her thesis "Coping with Alienation and Attaining Psychic Wholeness in three Novels of Bessi Head: *When Rain Clouds Gather*, *Maru* and *A Question of Power*" explores the inner quest of each of the protagonists. The characters are looking for inner peace and a necessary mental balance in order to find happiness. They have to face the difficulty of adaptation to a foreign community, and to their own mental turmoils resulting from traumatic pasts and repressed feelings. In the thesis, she examines Head's protagonists and their quest to attain psychic wholeness. She sees alienation as the most comprehensive term to describe the mental state of some of Head's characters. She points out that her protagonists have their inner beings disturbed and shattered by different causes: difficulty of adaptation, racial and class prejudices, traumatic memories, repressed feelings and unconventional philosophical or religious beliefs. The aim of Head's protagonists, she says, is to lessen their inner alienation and to find satisfactory peace of mind. Psychic wholeness is the term employed in the thesis because it suggests a putting together of all the shattered pieces of the soul into a harmonious whole.

The authorial biographical element is strongly exploited in this work with Head's own assessment of her works when she says, "It's my life and my life alone that I have to present". (Daymond XII). Talking about her second novel, *Maru*, she says, "It was really going to be great for my own sake, for my own life, for the struggles in me". She also called her third novel *A Question of Power* "almost autobiographical". The quest she gives to each of her protagonists

has been in some respect her own quest. This thesis, therefore, respects Head's progressive evolution by also respecting the order in which the novels were written.

This research work goes beyond this evolution to incorporate the impact of growth on society. The success of the protagonists makes her a role model who sets a new world order worth emulating for those who wear the shoes she wore prior to her liberation.

In her critical write-up on "Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, read as a Mariner's guide to Paranoia, "Elizabeth Eva's daughter (1982, 54), holds that whether it is considered as an autobiographical novel or as a third person autobiography, *A Question of Power* is full of the author's experience of what was called at the time "a nervous breakdown". She further expands the notion that even though an author cannot be diagnosed from the text, a character can be. This ties in with the Diagnostic Criteria which throw more light on fictional characters. This reference to the Diagnostic Criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Disorders, Third Edition (DSM-III 1982)] further exploits Head's successful process of self-bluntness and directness as she confronts the forces of good and evil with enough courage. Head's life history is identical with that of her heroines.

This research endeavour will balance this view by demonstrating and laying emphasis on what the characters have lived or gone through that act as springboards to success. Readers will, therefore, not be alarmed by the painful or traumatic events in their lives but will rather be consoled by the profitable consequences of them acting as springboards to success.

Mahlahlo Lithuli in his work "Identity, Discrimination and Violence in Bessie Head's Trilogy" (2002) sets out to explore the perceived intricate relationship that existed between constructed identity, discrimination and violence as portrayed in Head's trilogy. This is seen from varying perspectives, including aspects of post-colonial materialistic feminism. It starts with a background to some of the racial hybridity in South Africa. It looks at how racial identity has subsequently influenced the course of Southern African history and, thereafter, explores historical and biological information deemed relevant to an understanding of this research endeavour. A critical exploration of each text in the trilogy, *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1968) *Maru* (1971) and *A Question of Power* (1974) follows, and the apparent affinities that exist between identity, discrimination and violence are analysed and displayed. The trilogy is discussed from a largely sociological perspective of hope in a utopian society.

Mahlalo dwells on the view of some anthropologists (Eze 1997, Crunshaw 1986, Leston 1993) that physical geography in conjunction with anthropology may provide a full range of knowledge of human kind. According to them, physical geography which studies colours, heights and facial characteristics is seen as having given rise to different human races and racial classifications. Black and white are used as complex signifiers of features within the construction and representation of identity which bear scrutiny in speaking of indent. Violence is assumed to mean the use of physical emotional and mental intimidation explored in order to cause emotional, physical and mental harm. It seeks to express the particularity of one's self or one's situation. Mahlahlo portrays this in Head's trilogy: *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1968) *Maru* (1971) and *A Question of Power* (1974). Here, Head tells her story while exposing the thoughts and feelings in her heart and mind but also battling to find a voice. Mahlahlo, therefore, seeks to show the inter-relatedness of identity, discrimination and violence as Head herself writes as a victim.

While recognising the validity of all what Mahlahlo says, this thesis goes further to contextualising it within the framework of the traumatised African Woman. Therefore, it goes beyond showing the inter-relatedness of identity, discrimination and violence to demonstrating how they are springboards to that success that pulls a people together. The success of the protagonists is an eye-opener to the multitude still chained in bondage. They become models for others to emulate.

Ellinetie Kwanjana Chabwera in her research endeavour "Madness and Spirituality in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*" (2009), focuses on the journey into Elisabeth's innermost recesses (P.59). He holds the view that someone who has not undergone Head's psychic condition would not have been able to successfully invent the phantom world that comes to life every night when Elisabeth's bouts of derangement interfere in her everyday life events and activities such as gardening, motherhood and friendship to give her story its uniqueness. Chabwerera traces Elisabeth's development from alienation to acceptance. Racism, classism and patriarchal prejudices constitute the divisive elements in society responsible for women's fragmented madness. Madness illustrates the depth of pain and rebellion. This, for instance, is what Nyasha in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous conditions* (1988) demonstrates. Nyasha's psychological breakdown is a way of resisting patriarchal oppression which in the text is lived through her father, Babamukuru.

This thesis goes beyond madness to showing that resilience is a major element in the positive adaptation to traumatic events or experiences. When one overcomes it, as Elizabeth in Head's *A Question of Power* does, it is transformed into a common and healthy psychic response to trauma. This thesis proves the point that the victim is not only healed but shines and illuminates the darkness around her. The view that these traumatised women do not only recover at the end of madness but also move on to glory and become models to be emulated is contrary to Chabwerera's.

Germaine Ajeagah Aten in "Discrimination, Trauma and Fragmentation in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* and *Maru*" demonstrates the point that Bessie Head is not at ease with racism and intra-ethnic discrimination which, to her, cause trauma and fragmentation. In Ajeagah's opinion, Head's novel deals with the negative effects of prejudice. Racial or ethnic racism leads to very serious psychological problems. It has been realized that any meaningful quest for social transformation cannot be effected by a single racial or ethnic grouping. Rather, only a collective effort by humanity as a whole can lead to such transformation. Thus, the resultant cross-cultural contacts lead to a kind of cross-fertilisation" which are essential strategies that can help to curb racism and intra-ethnic discrimination in society. She goes ahead to suggest that victims of intra-ethnic racism should not be pessimistic; that they should rather be optimistic and dynamic and should mainstream within society.

This thesis adds flesh to the above view by opining that their optimism, dynamism and mainstreaming with society would propel them to such success as would impel other fellow women in similar circumstances to emulate their achievements.

Lynda Susan Beard in "Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*: The journey through disintegration to wholeness" (1979), lays emphasis on the three fundamental questions Head asks in *A Question of Power*: "What is the whole? (What consists wholeness); how does one achieve it; who or what is God?" What is important in the text is the process of disintegration through which Elizabeth discovers her own wholeness. She immerses us, beginning with the epigraph from Lawrence "God" in a world peopled by the holy ones of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism and Classical mythology. Thus, the hallmark of Elizabeth's integration is the assertion on the last page of the novel: "There is only one God and his name is Man and Elizabeth is his prophet (P.206). The prize Elizabeth feels responsible for earning in her life is "the brotherhood of man" (P.37). Head warns readers of "disintegrative knowledge which pulls one away from God and towards the abyss." Dan and Sello drive her to the brink

of psychological disintegration but with different ends. Dan would annihilate her and Sallo would destroy her illusions. Both would strip her of something as the poor in the beginning of the novel “turned to Elizabeth and permanently stripped her of any vesture garment she might have acquired (P.32).

Part of Elizabeth’s soul’s evolution can be measured by her movement away from compartmentalised, polar definitions. Her definition of God is an important indication of that development: “*God is the totality of all great souls and their achievements: the achievements are not those of one single individual but of many souls who worked to make up the soul of God, and this might be called God, or the God’s*” (P.54). Crop rotation is part of Elizabeth’s metaphysical education which works towards the total de-mystification of all illustrations (P.86). Elizabeth is a new messianic figure: she is a soul mate to Sello. Elizabeth’s experiences have political as well as metaphysical components. “It is mankind in general, and black people in particular, who fit in there, not just as special freaks and oddities outside the schemes of things, with labels like heaven, like a black-power heaven, that existed for a few individuals alone (P.43). The whole comprises not only the “demons” and the “goddess” (P.43) but also the several trinities: father, son and Holy Spirit; the Hindu trimuti, Sello, Dan and Elizabeth.

This thesis supports the view of Beard that disintegration leads to wholeness, laying emphasis on perseverance and determination as springboards to success. Emphasis is laid on the universal brotherhood of Man where God ceases to be an idealised being but the one that has descended and lives in the hearts of men.

In his write-up on “Madness in Exile Literature: Insanity as a By-product of subjugation and Manipulation in Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power*”. Dr Simone Alexander confronts gender, race and class structures in post-apartheid South Africa. Elizabeth’s decision to leave South Africa conveys her desire not to live as a subservient coloured woman any longer. Dr. Simone holds the view that to be deemed mad is to be placed in a position of penultimate alterity, slipping from the category of human to subhuman, from the locus of reason to that of the irrational (Caroline Brown, 93-108). Elizabeth is a case study and her actions, which violate the African tradition, produce the assumed madness. Her self-imposed exile pronounces independence as it forces her to connect her inner struggles with real life experiences. Elizabeth’s “madness” is the result of female subjugation which causes her to oppose all male dominated structures. Her liberation is attributed to divine dispensation because religious undertones are seen throughout the novel but magnified towards the end as Elizabeth escapes

her madness by adopting a belief system that is separate from that of Dan and Sello. While Dr. Simone dwells on Elizabeth's use of madness as an escape from pain, this thesis rather shows the link between pain/trauma and success.

Aull Felice in an online article, "Research in African Literature at 2010 Indiana University Press" dwells on Elizabeth's psychological derangement resulting from her abuse, neglect and exile as a half-black, half-white woman in apartheid South Africa. The human cost of oppressive systems is examined with emphasis laid on Elizabeth's ability to extricate herself from and live affirmatively with the prevailing situation. Her painstaking internal realisations regarding the psychic scaffolding required to overcome exploitation and pursue a "fuller humanity" is duly dwelled on. This thesis shows how the fuller humanity leads to the liberation of many who have lived life like her.

In her article, "Literary Commitment in Bessie Head's *Maru*", Elizabeth A. Odhiambo questions the extent to which the writer is committed as a woman and as a third world person based on the text *Maru*. Her findings revealed that, as a woman, Bessie Head is committed to reconstructing a positive image for her female characters by challenging the stereotypical perception of women through the dismantling of patriarchal structures that previously relegated women to subordinate roles. This is seen in the presentation of the female characters as strong-willed, determined, assertive, independent and enterprising. In delineating the experiences of women as women, she explores their most personal convictions, thereby presenting their perception of issues as women. She voices for the voiceless by advocating gender equity as a basis for development. On the political arena, she examines issues referring to all African politics such as selfish and greedy leadership, oppression and discrimination on the basis of race. The text particularly dwells on the racial prejudices and class differences in society.

This thesis goes beyond the examination of these issues that ail African politics as drawn from *Maru* to pointing out how, if overcome, they would act as a source of motivation to others. Dieke (2007) argued that Head's *Maru* - more than *A Question of Power* - is the very essence of her creative enterprise laced with an overriding concern for an investigation of *Maru* distils into the enigma of human prejudice. He points out that although *A Question of Power* can be said to be an important site for unraveling the strands of her anguished life story with instances of immense suffering, deprivation and crippling alienation, *Maru*, on the other hand, provides the fertile site for mounting literary resistance to the mistaken ideology which often gave rise to her anguished life story. For, without this insane ideology, there would be no crippling

alienation, no suffering and no privation. This study rather combines the two texts as a strong force to demonstrate that when pain or trauma is overcome it leads to success that attracts and impels emulation.

Cherry Wilhelm in his article, “Bessie Head: The Face of Africa”, holds that the world is hell, and men are on the one hand the tormented souls and on the other the devils in it. He goes ahead to say that Head’s fictional landscape is strikingly open to the forces of good psychological, sociological and metaphysical enormity. Like Elizabeth in *A Question of Power*, she feels that “It is quite easy to start an argument from God downwards” (P.15). She confronts the forces of good and evil with an unprecedented frankness, bluntness and directness, and deploys her imaginative power and narrative skills to allow them to be seen in action both within and between individuals and communities. He asserts that individual and collective experiences constantly intertwine in her narratives, and are often suggested as analogues of each other. She often traces analogues between public and private life; between the progress and development of one individual and of a whole nation, or again, between a single nation and the entire human race. Her art – though often painful as it probes into cruelty, oppression, and other evils – is also a vote of confidence in the future of Africa as well as her active contribution towards that future. This write-up buttresses this point by positing that such active contribution would be mere lip-service should men continue to relegate women to the background to wallow and die in their pains and traumas.

Alan Ramon Ward in: “Using the Heart: The symbolism of individual change in Bessie Head’s *Maru*” holds that man is delivered at the personal level though it purports a solution to the racism suffered by the Marsarwo people. The novel traces the symbolic change of Dilepe village (Botswana) – and, by extension, that of Africa – effected by a single Masarwa woman who can read and write. The young Margaret enters the scene with the expectation of “one day” helping her “people”. She is shy and has an awkward manner. She has led some critics to misunderstand Head’s vision which she regards as a failed one. He realises, however, that to Head, racism, no matter its origin, is perpetuated by individuals who can decide to reject any measure that runs counter to what they consider right. In *Maru*, Head seems to suggest that human beings are capable of racism because their hearts have come to live separately from themselves in the course of time. Just as Moleka, the main character, has “taken his heart out of his body and hidden it in some secret place” (26). These people without hearts to guide them can believe ideas without considering their inhuman implications. If one could reunite the head with the heart in these people, then promoting racism would, perhaps, seem unreasonable.

Moleka represents the self without a heart and Maru represents the missing heart. This write-up goes beyond analysing these problems to proving that when the body is merged with the heart, it produces energy that energises other people, thereby making the world a comfortable place not only to men but to all.

Buchi Emecheta's *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second Class Citizen* have also received great attention from critics. Like Head, Emecheta's fiction focuses on the plight of African women who struggle against patriarchal family structures, unfair gender stereotyping and contradictory elements dominant in the text. This is seen in an account of her early life and marital difficulties. This is epitomised, for example, by Adah who leaves her husband and suffers the demoralising experiences of working and raising five children on public assistance in a London tenement. The stories zoom in on her childhood struggles: struggles to be educated in Nigeria, her emigration to England and her determination to write despite the demands of motherhood.

Shodhganga, working on *In the Ditch* and *Second Class Citizen*", takes the autobiographical approach. But for the fact that the names of all the characters have been changed, their composition can be regarded as recordings of vents of the author's childhood and married life. Written within the span of two years, they seem to dramatise Emecheta's own struggle for survival and identity. He holds the view that Ada is Emecheta of the two novels. *In the Ditch* is chronologically the first, but the action presented in it is a continuation of *Second Class Citizen*. Thus, in fictional terms, *Second Class Citizen* comes first, as it begins with Adah's childhood and continues through her dreams, education, marriage, migration to England and the breaking of the marriage. As a sequel to this, *In the Ditch* tells us how Adah, walking out on her marriage and saddled with the upbringing of her children, faces the world in complex situations of her new "aleness" and her new co-existence with a new variety of humans. While trying to fictionalise the travails of a separated wife *In the Ditch*, Emecheta was perhaps not very sure of the germination in her of another autobiographical novel which was going to be titled *Second Class Citizen*. According to Shodhganga, Emecheta is of the opinion that "Everything in this book really happened, it happened to me". Emecheta goes on to tell us that she looked at those events or experiences "as, if I were an outsider, and an eavesdropper" and by thus becoming an outsider, she achieves the necessary detachment so essential for a novelist whose concern is not so much with constructing a feminist thesis of sociological argument, but with the telling of the story, with the job of transforming the raw material of her experience into a novel. The two novels constitute a single continuous narrative with Adah at its center, but each of them can be treated as an independent novel complete in itself.

This write-up uses the combined strength of these two novels to celebrate the success of the writer exemplified through that of her heroines. Her success is the success of a people, especially of the African traumatised women folk who have known pain like her.

In her work titled: “Negotiating Space and Diasporic Identity in Selected works of Buchi Emecheta and Carly Philips” (2008), Prudencia Wase Sakwe handles the text as a topical issue in Commonwealth Literature with particular focus on the Afro-Caribbean perspective. Focus is on the idea of negotiating space and identity in the Diaspora. Characters struggle to cope with the situation they find in their respective new societies. Emphasis is laid on how the characters come to terms with the past and how they assert their identity in the Diaspora. There is a strong urge in the individual to adapt to society. Not only does this research endeavour go beyond showing how the characters adapt to society but also it demonstrates how they adapt and move on to be the voice of the voiceless as well as models to the downtrodden.

Vincent Walsh in “Marriage as a Nightmare: Patterns of Abuse in *Second Class Citizen*” (2015) confronts the scholar critic with a daunting task despite the apparent simplicity of the author’s style and the straight forward nature of the themes. Just the issue of writing style alone has been a matter of serious concern. Walsh, unlike other critics, thinks that Emecha’s writing style is perfectly appropriate for her subject (P.511); her perspective changes from naive and simplistic to more adroit and aware as the title girl grows into a young woman and then a mother, and, more strikingly, as she emerges from a highly Patriarchal Nigerian society where girls and women are sternly programmed to believe that they are inferior. Adah sees a reflection of herself in the eyes of the surrounding society as having little value or worth. We learn that “Adah was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, immediate family and the tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth”. From here, we follow the slow, painful but persistent progress of this girl, step by step as she grows from an unwanted child to a self-made asserting adult. It is, therefore, the story of this self-made assertive girl that we are exploiting in this write-up to show that pain or trauma when handled positively leads to success. Such success is not limited to self, it impacts the lives of others and pulls them to liberation and success.

Chioma Opara in, “Buchi, Emecheta (1944-2017): Beyond Dingy Ditch”, focuses on gender violence, child marriage, virginity, cult, objectification of womanhood, sexual harassment and nation building. Emecheta deconstructs retrogressive traditional values with a tinge of sarcasm, mordant irony, scintillating wit and acerbic humour.

She debunks the cultural myth of woman as slave and she simultaneously unmasks the deflated postcolonial male in this enslaved posture. Clearly, the slave motif traverses her early works. Physically, cultural and metaphysical forms of slavery intersect and bog down her vulnerable protagonists. A survivor of numberless battles and traumas, she brims with pride and exudes ample confidence as she flaunts the varied accoutrements of success. This thesis carries this success beyond victory for self to one for the community, especially as it jolts it into action against gender oppression.

Talking about *Second Class Citizen*, Rosemary Fithian Guruwamy in “Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies” (2008) focuses on gender discrimination. She highlights the Nigerian Diaspora community as they replicate the patriarchal values of their mother country. Her work buttresses the point that women are resourceful and turn adverse conditions into success and triumph. This thesis will extrapolate this success and triumph to that of a suppressed African Women folk with its positive consequences.

Abioseh Mechael Porter in “*Second Class Citizen: That Point of Departure for Understanding Buchi Emecheta’s Major Fiction*” (1988) says that if *Second Class Citizen* were read as a novel of personal development, some of the seemingly inconsistencies within the text would be more fully understood. Also, a look at Porter’s work as a novel dealing with a young African woman’s gradual acquisition of knowledge about herself as a potential artist and the themes of love, marriage and the question of student’s life oversea add more weight to the already popular feminist theme in the book. Adah is presented as an intelligent ambitious young girl who has to fight against considerable odds to gain an education in Lagos.

As a novel of personal development, *Second Class Citizen* is quite successful in the depiction of Adah’s growth from initial stage of naivety and ignorance to the final stage of self-realisation and independence. Towards the end of the story, Adah fully recognises Francis’s lack of love for her as well as the need for her own freedom. She is greatly assisted in this regard by another cast of characters who, in a different way, helps her to realise her self-worth. This thesis goes beyond personal development to social development as a result of the success of a traumatised individual.

Talking about trauma, Majda R. Atieh and Chada Mohammad in their article “Post – Traumatic Responses in the War Narratives of Hanan al-shaykh’s “The story of Zahra” and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s “Half of a yellow Sun”, extend the focus of wartime trauma scholarship to recognise female non-combatant’s variants of traumatic victimisation and agency

as presented in the Middle Eastern and African contexts. He re-addresses *The story of Zahra* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* that revise the role of traumatised female non-combatants in collective change. He holds that reading traumas in both narratives propounds that traumatic recovery is never complete.

However, the impossibility of transcending the “acting-out” of trauma does not necessarily entail the impossibility of the “working-through”. He argues that traumatised victims may fail to entirely disengage themselves from the traumatic past but they can still be agents of change. As such, “*Half of a yellow Sun* exposes the limitations and failure of *the St Zahra's* in realising any social transformation. In the article, he demonstrates how both narratives construe narration and scripto-therapy, as modes of re-enactment, in relation to change.

Van der Kolk, remarks that “traumatised people keep experiencing life as a continuation of the trauma, and remain in a state of constant alert for its return”. In this respect, al-Shaykh's narrative presents a disturbing memory that retrieves early childhood images of intense fear such as a frightened little girl and a mother “trembling behind the door” hiding from a male chaser, and continues to haunt Zahra whenever under stress. In the same way, Adiche's narrative features traumatic memories and images that continue to evolve and haunt Olanna's life. For instance, the image of the plaited hair resting in a calabash revisits her whenever she plaits the hair of Baby, the daughter of her revolutionary lover, Odenigho. Olanna's ability of visualisation even becomes dulled by disturbing memories of victimised relatives such as Arize, Aunty, Ifeka, and Uncle Mbaezi.

The traumatic signs in both narratives develop into the dissociative inability of communicating trauma. Psychoanalyst, Dori Laub, contends that “there are never enough words of the right word to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, and speech”. In Adiche's narrative, such linguistic limitation is translated into an initial failure of narration. Olanna encounters difficulties verbalising what she has been through and loses the ability to narrate her trauma to others. Olanna's verbal failure develops into spatial dissociation that involves her loss of touch with the surroundings and with the sense of time, and her failure to engage in the present. In al-Shaykh's narrative, Zahra is presented as being incapable of exerting any counteracting power against the forces manipulating her life. She is always portrayed as seeking a voice and feeling like crying out and screaming. Zahra's verbal failure also develops into spatial dissociation and drawl. She retreats into her “shell”, perpetuating the

standardised image the others held of her. She recites, “I am at my wits end and I am annoyed with myself and hate myself because I stay silent. When will my soul cry out like a woman surrendering to a redeeming lover?”

This thesis goes on to support the view of Jim Rendon which holds that “The suffering that resulted from horrible experiences was not an end-point. It acted as a catalyst, pushing the victims to change for the better”.

Talking about the plight of women, especially traumatised African Women, in “X-ray the implications of conflict management, justice and the human dignity of women under war situations in the African literary context”, Ngozi Chuma-Udeh holds that “war hits home when it hits women and girls”. This is because girl children constitute the basic domestic stronghold of society. Their vulnerability makes them susceptible to war situations in wide-ranging ways because of basic gender roles and responsibilities. It lays emphasis on women’s political and economic empowerment.

Chimamanda Achidie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chukwemeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn* argue that in Africa, chaotic war situations stress and encumber women in a multiplicity of ways and that they suffer greatest health and social inequities, human rights violations and death in conflict situations. Underneath the sounds of mortar and subsequent violence, beneath the rampages of gun and scud sounds, lie the muffled whines and shrieks of the actual bearers of the brunt of war: the women and girl children.

Emphasis is laid on the fact that such situations are agonising and tend to devalue women physically, emotionally and psychologically. That is even worse in patriarchal societies where women are under cultural pressures in peaceful times.

In Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chukwumeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn*, the authors explore the consequences of tumultuous societies on women. Set in Nigeria and depicting the gory story of the Nigerian/Biafran Civil War, both novels seem to be of the same mind that in war situations, patrilineal groupings become strongholds that are more patrilineal, attitudes and cultural traditions tend to negate women even more. Even under such chaotic and perilous conditions, patriarchal leanings place more exasperating roles on women, subjecting them to a double impact of war.

Women were exploited in a multiplicity of ways. Even inside Biafra, patriarchal leanings continued to trample the already overburdened women. The equally starving Biafran

soldiers were like ravenous wolves, eating up everything in their path. They did not only hijack most of the humanitarian supplies brought in by *caritas* and other religious and non-governmental humanitarian agencies to help but also made women and girl children their victims. Helpless women who had no relationship with the army and widows who obviously lost their husbands to the war or whose sons and husbands were killed in battle or declared missing were exploited sexually before they could be allotted rations for their children. Others were forced either to send their girl children – who were only as old as eight years – to senior Biafran officers as sex mates or, worse still, into marriage to Nigerian soldiers so as to ensure the survival of their families. At a certain stage of the war, the shortage of soldiers led to a wanton conscription into the army; and in a bid to save their children, husbands or male relations from being conscripted into the army, women succumbed to the sexual demands of corrupt officials so as not to be abused or killed.

This thesis expands trauma beyond war experiences. For time immemorial, the African woman has been suffering from one form of trauma to another. There comes a point in time when one deliberately decides to put an end to one's own pain so as to pursue a less painful path. Overcoming pain, succeeding in life and becoming a role model is the focus in this write-up.

Hazel Tafadzwa Ngoshi in her research article “Recovering the tongue: memorialising grieved women through spirit possession and ritual in Zimbabwean Literature” seeks to unravel, in two Zimbabwean fictional narratives, a matrix of authorial endeavours to recover and empower female subjectivity; endeavours that are guided by tropes of spirit possessions, ancestral powers and rituals. The article posits that, through spirit possessions and the resultant voices of wronged females as well as the authorial elevation of dead women to ancestral status, families and communities engage in integrative processes that facilitate healing and introspection. The article is focused on the violated woman-hood during both pre-colonial and colonial contexts and, in the latter case, with special regard to experiences lived during the liberation war in Zimbabwe. From pre-colonial times to the present, discourses, whether historical or cultural, have often articulated the roles of men and their experiences while consigning female experiences to the side-lines. The article discusses the place of women in cultural discourse, especially in relation to spiritual matters and how, in textual narratives, the tropes of spirit possession rituals and ancestral memories are used to inscribe female subjectivity into the cultural memory and national consciousness. The article shows how, through this, the texts under discussion are dialogic (containing other views), thus debunking

dominant and sanctioned institutional narratives that are, in post-modernistic terms, presumed to have great generality and representing so called “final truths”. It gives voiceless female subjects alternative voices as ancestors. The narratives inform and are informed by preceding discourses. This thesis, unlike this write-up, limits itself to the living; that is, to the impact of trauma on the living and the resultant consequences to the environment.

Meryem Belkaid, writing about trauma and Algeria: “Writing Beyond Trauma: Assia Djebar, Maissa Bey, and new national identities after Algeria’s civil war”, says that their fiction presents new and decolonised forms of Islamic and national identity within traditional Algerian society. In this article, they examine how two authors respond to terrorism and authoritarianism by rethinking and re-writing the question of identity in Algeria in terms that escape the oppressive rhetoric and the future imposed either by fundamentalists or the state. Bey and Djebar confront the difficulty of recounting and qualifying the violence that consumed Algeria in the 1990s. Both writers employ colour – not coincidentally –as a metaphor of the country’s state of stupor and oblivion.

In order to transcend the blankness of that trauma and to articulate their revolt against violence and simplistic paradigms, they do not rely on discourse that is purely secular. Literature provides a space in which Djebar and Bey take up a discursive process that is traditionally forbidden to women. But there was a marked increase or proliferation of works by women authors in the eighties. Writers attempted to speak the unspeakable and to explain the unexplainable. Literature became a tool for working through the effects of trauma by showing how ineffable it is, both as a silent and an unarticulated scream. This thesis surmounts this scream and moves to realms of success and positive impact on society.

From the above review, we can see that the works of Head and Emecheta have been handled from different interesting perspectives. Varied views have also been expressed about trauma and even African female trauma.

There is also a clear indication that this research will be handling trauma from a perspective that is different from the ones seen above. Firstly, the Head/Emecheta blend gives our topic a force different from that hitherto articulated by other critics. The South African and Nigerian experiences of trauma contextualise it within the African continent and highlight the African female impact. Secondly, taking into consideration the universality of this theme, what really matters is not so much where we are coming from, where we are or where we are going to. This study goes a step farther to show the positive fallouts of pain which buttress the point

that nothing happens for nothing. Our encouragement comes from the voice that is calling upon us to make the best use of every painful circumstance we have lived. When lessons are well drawn from such circumstances, when determination remains life's guiding principle, then the final destination is success.

CHAPTER TWO

THE AFRICAN WOMAN IN TRAUMA HISTORY

Trauma is a universal and timeless theme. Unfortunately, Africa has known some of the world's worst forms of trauma. It has suffered the worst forms of human rights violation from different classes of oppressors, undergone ethnic and civil conflicts, suffered from diseases and epidemics and lived conditions of poverty trauma in all its forms.

To better understand this work, we will trace the evolution of trauma as has been lived by the African Woman. This is because the way the African woman of today thinks, learns, remembers things, feels about self and others and reacts to situations is greatly tied to her history. This evolution will be traced through the lens of the trauma theory. At this juncture we are confirming the view that trauma theory is concerned with how traumatic experiences of authors have affected their literary works. Their works are, therefore, concerned with the representation of traumatic experiences. As such, Freud's angle of pain that stems from childhood experiences will be very central here. This traumatic experience lies within the central claim of contemporary literary trauma theory which asserts that trauma creates a speechless fight that divides or destroys identity. Lucan agrees with Freud that

Trauma is any powerful excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It provokes a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and sets in motion every possible defensive measure. (P. 23)

Consequently, the evolution of the trauma of the African woman takes into consideration the fact that every human being has their own trauma. Lucan holds that our traumas make us who we are. To Lucan, every human being possesses an essential substance that outlines our identity which is called "traumatic kernel". Very often, therefore, our behaviour is generally geared towards resolving psychological or traumatic problems. The focus here will be on patterns of behaviour in the face of trauma. This chapter will, therefore, shed more light on how trauma has been lived by the African woman from pre-colonial, to colonial and post-colonial periods. A number of relevant texts spanning these different periods will be cited to show how the African woman has always lived pain/trauma.

Thus, trauma as an age-old phenomenon is embedded in human existence. Narratives have helped a lot in shaping a coherent self that has at all times grappled with the realities of

trauma. The rubrics of trauma and status have been the integral part of life which in turn has been reflected in literary works (literature). Man undergoes some behavioural shifts as he moves from one context to another and from one generation to another. This is backed by Lenore Terr's view which says that psychic trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or series of blows assault the person from outside. Such is the case of the African woman. Colonisation did not only introduce a new culture but also transformed the African man into a boss of the woman, an attitude unknown to both in pre-colonial days. And according to Freud, it is very important to trace the origins of trauma, for the unconscious mind is driven by our evolutionary history. The thoughts, desires, feelings and memories of these African women, reflected in literary works have gone a long way towards shaping our everyday behaviour.

As such, the stories or narrated events that will be used from the selected novels to illustrate our analyses are seen as part of the larger construct, also known as the reconstructed or represented world. Bremond's view is valid here when he says:

A story has structured characters, is made up of separable components and has the potential of forming networks of internal relations. The subject of a tale may serve as an argument of a ballet, that of a novel may be told to those who have not seen it. It is words one reads, it is images one sees, it is gestures one deciphers, but through them it is a story one follows (P. 37).

We will, therefore, associate the view of the "Mimetic theory" that is incorporated into the trauma theory to state that literature is an imitation of reality. Characters are therefore equated with people and that is why we use literary texts to trace the evolution of the African woman in trauma history.

THE PRE-COLONIAL AFRICAN WOMAN AND TRAUMA

Women in pre-colonial Africa also knew pain. They were not a homage group that lived static lives relegated to the domestic sphere. In contesting, negotiating, complementing and transforming their societies through their diverse roles in the political, social, religious and economic realities of the pre-colonial life in Africa, they equally knew pain and underwent traumatic experiences. Even though some African pre-colonial societies valued women, this did not totally take off trauma that was still lived by some of these women due to some of the repressive systems at the time.

When we talk of pre-colonial period, we are referring to Africa prior to European colonisation in the late 19th century. Hitherto, Africa had a very long history of state building. It also had a very rich variety of social formations that were decentralised or stateless. It was not a lawless continent. Before the coming of the Whiteman, there existed African legal systems which were often referred to as “customary or traditional law or – sometimes negatively by the colonialist – as savage or uncivilised law. The Whiteman erroneously presented Africa as a continent without a history. They propagated the image of Africa as a “dark continent”. This is because of the Whiteman’s erroneous assumption that the history of Africa began with writing, in other words, with the arrival of the Europeans. What they forgot or forget to register is that at one time in history, the largest empire in West Africa, Songai, peaked in the 1500s and 1600s.

Come to think of it, women of the pre-colonial African society were the economic powerhouse of their communities since they were involved in other economic ventures besides agriculture. The pre-colonial African woman was both a leader and a woman on the side-lines. It is generally believed that women held very submissive political positions in most African countries. While it is believed that patriarchy existed in Africa, women were not totally removed from political positions. Some of them, like the queen mothers and queen sisters, held political positions which, unfortunately, did not afford them much power. In most African societies, women were in charge of fire, water and the earth. In this light, they could cook, transport water and plant the earth, but not own land. The pre-colonial woman felt burdened with these chores.

The Concubine by Elechi Amadi, *The Gods Are Not To Blame* by Ola Rotimi, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *Nervous Conditions* by Titi Dangwarembga, *The Poor Christ of Bomba* by Mongo Beti, *Anthills of the Savannah* by Achebe and *Red Dust* by Gillian Slovo will be used in analysing this evolution. With respect to the periods, *The Concubine* and *The Gods Are Not to Blame* will be exploited for a better understanding of the history of the pre-colonial African woman and trauma. The revisionist’s standpoint on trauma will provide another lens through which we would observe and make our analysis. It states that:

Extreme experience cultivates multiple responses and values. Trauma causes a disruption and reorientation of consciousness, but the value attached to this experience are influenced by the variety of individual and cultural factors... it connects individual trauma to cultural/historical trauma. (P. 40).

This is the case of Ihuoma, the most beautiful girl in the village of Omokachi, even though she is from Omigwe. Unknown to her, her trauma and pain is tied to who she is. She is

married to the sea-king who, in his jealousy, does not want her to get married to any man on earth. Her trauma is connected to the cultural and historical background of a people who do not just believe in gods but also dread the vengeance of these gods when they are offended. The “learned helplessness” tenets of the trauma theory have a better explanation to her situation. Helplessness remains the major problem of Ihouma and the villagers as they find it very difficult to master the situation of the danger surrounding her and the almost near impossible running away from it. Ihouma cuts a pitiful image as, unknown to her, she is a victim of something she is not aware of nor warned against. She got married to Emenike who was killed by his friend Madume over a piece of land.

Though confronted by these dangers the villagers are not prepared to believe that the most beautiful, most hardworking and most elegantly behaved woman in the village, Ihouma, is not an ordinary woman. Two men have already been killed by the wrath of her husband, a god of the sea. Society feels the pains of Ihouma, the one they love and admire. A thousand questions come to our mind as to why she has to go through such traumatising experiences. It can best be explained only by Alexander’s view on trauma when he says that “events that have not actually occurred but are only imaginary can be deeply traumatising”. The people can only imagine the event of Ihouma married to the sea king. To those passionately attached to her, it moves even to disbelief. Those daring enough to go into a duel with the sea king imagine that something can be done to liberate Ihouma, the innocent victim of the god.

We are living a situation of collective trauma. Emenike and Madume – because of their attraction to Ihouma – meet their doom. There is a quarrel over a piece of land between Emenike and Madume whom Emenike considers to be a dishonest land grabber. Madume threatens to beat Emenike if he does not desist from this habit. The quarrel degenerates into a fight with Emenike going away with a hurting side. Madume – who is in his thirties and who, so far, has not achieved anything except his daughters on whose dowries he is counting – also falls sick a day after the fight between him and Emenike. Although Ihouma’s husband, Emenike, unfortunately dies of lock-chest, the people tie this to the fight between him and Madume. They equally feel Ihouma’s pain and keep trooping in to console her. Her traumatic experience spreads out to the people around her. Alexander captures this beautifully in trauma theory when he says:

Collective trauma, is not the traumatic event or its latent presence, but the result of a social-cultural act of constructing a traumatic experience through narrative
“Events are not inherently traumatic but rather, trauma is a socially mediated

attribution to events, usually after an event unfolds or even before they occur.
(P. 10).

Ihuoma, therefore, cries over and over again when she is reminded of her husband's death. The pain is even made worse when Wolu, Madume's wife comes to condole with her. She blames her husband's death on her own husband due to the fight they had. Her pain is the concern of the village as Ekwueme is seen with Wakiri composing and practicing a song to sing in honour of Emenike so as to uplift Ihuoma's spirits. However, when the song is finally sung, her grief is rather heightened as she follows the lyrics:

Do you know that Emenike is dead?
Eh – Eh – Eh
We fear the big wide world
Eh – Eh – Eh
Do not plan for morrow,
Eh, Eh, Eh (P.11)

She cries in a very loud voice, remembering and missing her late husband, the one she loved. Sorrow turns to trauma when the ghost of her husband appears to her and asks for food but later vanishes when she goes to prepare the food. The beautiful use of pathos here involves the audience in the action of the play as they feel for Ihuoma. Freud, in reference to this, says that very often, our behaviour is geared towards resolving psychological problems. He bases his argument on patterns of behaviour in the face of pain or trauma. The concept of "the unconscious" as propounded by Freud ties in with this attitude of Ihuoma. Because "you cannot get what you consciously want, but you get what you unconsciously need" (2008) Ihuoma who could not consciously get back her husband in the physical because he is dead and gone, meets him in the unconscious where life has moved back in time and she can once more prepare a meal for him. Thus, human beings are motivated and even driven by desires, fears, needs and conflicts of which they are unaware; that is, of which they are unconscious.

True to the culture of the people, Ihuoma mourns her husband for a year. This definitely can be a very long period of pain and suffering. With the arrival of the rain and new yams, Emenike's attention is set after the yam festival, when there would be more yams to feed those who attend the festival. The communal spirit is heightened here where the in-laws provide the goats, chickens and much food for the feast. Old ladies turn up with meat, palm oil sauce and pepper. An individual's pain is the pain of all and her joy that of all. Ihuoma dresses up for the

first time since the death of her husband. After the feast, she puts everything behind her and focuses on taking care of the children and what her husband left behind. She once more regains her structure and beauty and becomes the attention of men. Madume is not left out on this as he takes consolation in the fact that the gods had a hand in Emenike's death, and so he goes out to woo Ihuoma for a second wife to the utter shock of his wife: Wolu. On one of such pursuits to her house, he is frightened upon seeing the grave of Emenike and cuts his toe. He is told that it is as a result of the anger of the gods and that he must take a sacrifice to the gods before he can be set free. After doing this, he still tempts the gods by attacking Ihuoma on the piece of land over which he fought with her husband. When he could not use this to persuade her to give in to his demands, he resorted to picking some leaves when Ihuoma left. A cobra spat in his eyes causing him to be blind. This consolidates the idea of the gods being authors of collective pain/trauma in pre-colonial society. Not only is Madume dead but his body is an abomination to the land and, therefore, it is thrown into Minita, the place where rejected bodies were dumped.

Unfortunately, Ekwueme still falls in love with Ihuoma despite the recent happenings and no longer has a place in his heart for Ahurole, his own betrothed in heart. His parents are worried as this would bring disgrace to him. His parents represent the repressive authoritative structures of pre-colonial society. It is not about your personal desire and satisfaction but about what should conform to societal norms. Such tribal models of authority must be respected.

Even after marrying Ahurole, Ekwueme does not give up on Ihuoma. Life becomes miserable for Ahurole. It is even worsened when she moves in on her husband paying excessive attention to Ihuoma. Despite Ihuoma's rejections, Ekwueme still would not give up. In anger Ahurole leaves for her parent's and is given a portion with which to charm Ekwueme. Unfortunately, this yields negative result as it is devastating for his health. Ahurole is sent back to her parents while Ihuoma is intended for Ekwueme. Findings before marriage unfortunately reveal that she is married to a sea king that is so jealous and cannot allow any man to lay hands on her. Ekwueme dies and Ihuoma's trauma is complete.

The events surrounding Ihuoma's life bring to mind a lot of traumatic concerns. We wonder whether there is a relationship between the will to deny horrible events and the will to pronounce them. Nothing can explain the fact that Ihuoma, the most beautiful girl in the village of Omigwe, with an ant-hill complexion and a body so smooth that anyone who sees her for the first time cannot resist the urge to fall in love with her should go through what she has lived.

Judith Herman succinctly describes such experiences or predicaments of the survivor through the trauma lens when she says:

... a conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud... The rhetorical trope of the unspeakable serves to lower expectations ... while in the same breath also points to the overwhelming, soul destroying quality of the experiences that have been undergone compared to which Language cannot do justice to the enormity of atrocity created. Herman 1992, (PP. 1-21).

Indeed, words cannot do justice to or describe the pain of Ihuoma who watches in bewilderment the many lives destroyed because of her. Also, there is nothing that can effectively capture the pain of the family members and the community at large upon the loss of some of the finest young men of the community. It remains an unanswered question why the sea king had to allow his wife to walk the surface of the earth only for him to vent his anger on innocent young men who, like him, admire her for her beauty. The relationship between the lover and the divine is indeed difficult to be defined. We are looking here at the pre-colonial era when the woman, like the man, is helpless in the hands of the gods. The situation is worsened for the woman who is in double trauma because she is made to look like a tool of destruction in the hands of the gods.

It is true that disaster stems from personal weaknesses. But the hidden hand of the gods cannot be overlooked. Had Emenike and Madume not fought over the disputed piece of land Emenike would not have gone away with a pain on the side which ended up in the lock- chest that took his life away. Madume's greed for material things and lust for Ihuoma is his bridge to destruction. Had he been contented with his own possession and had not gone out to grab Emenike's land forcefully, or been contented with his wife, Wolu, and not lust over the body of Ihuoma, he would have avoided death. Ekwueme is like the stubborn fly that follows the corpse to the grave. Had he listened to his parents and had "hands off" from Ihuoma, he would have saved his life. Had he even been contented with his own wife, Ahurole, by making a conscious effort to mould her to his taste, he would have avoided the disaster. The cultural overtone is very strong in this pre-colonial setting where the supernatural powers should never be taken for granted. The environment of cultural values and social relations is the source of trauma. In this situation or context, it has created veils of illusion where the character's attempt to mask or interpret behaviours that cause illusions. Herman summarises it beautifully when he says that survivors might live with fragmented memories, or a dismissed sense of self, or might

feel alienated (Herman 2009: 42-47). Ihuoma surely feels alienated from a society that sees her as a source of ill-luck or misfortune.

Ola Rotimi's *The God's Are Not to Blame* reinforces this view of the pre-colonial society where the supernatural is at the centre of trauma and the woman once more undergoes double pain just because she is a woman; hence, just a tool in the hands of the gods. In this book, Odewale is predicted at birth to kill his father and marry his mother. The themes of fate and destiny once more highlight the supremacy of God. Indeed, the story centres around the theme of identity. When it is predicted at birth that Odewale will kill his own father and marry his own mother, a number of unanswered questions come to our minds. We would have loved to be told the reason for which such a curse is placed on the head of an innocent child. But it is with heavy hearts and depressing spirits that we receive every word of Baba Fakunle, the priest of the gods, in these words: "The boy, he will kill his own father and then marry his own mother". One would expect that after being warned at this early stage, the parents of the child would do everything to avert such a horrible fate. But, "like flies to wanton boys so are we to the gods, they use us for their sports". Odewale grows up and is informed about his tragic destiny as predicted by a priest. As he hastens to ward off the terrible destiny by fleeing the village in which he grew up, believing that he was living with his real parents, he is reminded thus:

Voice: "you have a curse on you, son

Odewale: What kind of curse, old one?

Voice: "You cannot run from it, the gods have willed that you will kill your father and then marry your own mother!" (P. 22).

This is an appropriate reflection of the era of Africa's pre-colonial culture; an era when a child's destiny could be foretold by a deity right from his birth. From the flashback, we are made to understand that Odewale was a total victim of ignorance, thinking that he was an Ijekun man and that the people he stayed with were his real parents. The flashback takes us back to his birth. It definitely is a joyful moment for the family; and doubly so for, not only is his mother blessed with a child but with a boy child; and in a patriarchal society like theirs, the birth of a male child is seen as a double blessing to the family. The joy is even heightened as this is royal birth where a son, the heir to be, is awaited with anxiety and impatience. While there is merry singing and drumming at the birth of this child the spirits of those feasting is dampened by the heavy words of the narrator:

Narrator: *The struggles of a man begin at birth
... A baby, has just been born to king Adetusa
And his wife Ojuolo ... of this land of Kutuye
- birth, growth and development as struggles through life
- beginning of life, joyous ceremonial occasion
Then they call a priest of Ifa, as is the custom to divine
The future that this boy has brought with him. (P.2).*

The heavy words of the curse placed on the child leave no one in doubt that the concept of the Yocuba world view is taboo and an abomination. Attempts are made to mitigate the curse. We can only understand the circumstances of this child's birth in line with the trauma theory when we fall back on Lacan's view that:

... getting born is a traumatic experience. "le trauma de la naissance [the trauma of birth] emerged into the same other environment... The traumas after birth make us unique. Lucan 1998, (P. 60).

We can imagine the pain and trauma of the mother upon hearing this humiliating and painful pronouncement – joy automatically turns into pain. The situation is even worsened with the second pronouncement of the Narrator.

Narrator: *The only way to stop it is to kill. Kill the unlucky messenger of the gods,
kill the boy
Priest bears boy to Gbonka, the king's special messenger ... to the veil
grove
Boy (assumed) killed to prevent prediction coming true. (P. 6).*

Back to the present, we are told how Odewale as a hero gathers his people to discuss the way forward for his community.

Adewale: *I gathered the people of Kutiye under
My power ... we attacked the people of Ikolu, freed our people, seized the
land of Ikolu
Kutuye prospered
In their joy the people made me KING (me, of Ijekun tribe ... (PP .6-7).*

The first person narrative voice renders the story authentic and pulls us along. We cannot help but live the pain of Ojuola who hands over her baby to be killed. It is an autocratic,

patriarchal system where in addition to men succumbing to the gods the woman is voiceless in the assembly of the men. She cannot fight for her child as some modern women would; she is voiceless in the assembly of the men. Her pain is internalised and she has only her tears to shed; and she cries to show to the world how much she is in pain.

The hand of fate cannot be avoided as the gods mock human effort. The king, Adetusa dies and Ikolu town takes advantage to attack Kutuye with the help of a stranger, Odewale, supposedly of Ijekun Yemoja. He helps ward off attacks by defeating Ikolu and is made king as compensation. He is also to sustain the security of the people. This is purely ironic as the opposite prevails:

Odewale: *I, Odewale ... son of Ogundele ... have taken for wife, as custom wishes, Ojuola, the motherly queen of the former king Adetusa. She is now bearer of all my four seeds (PP 7-8)*

the new king (supposedly a non-native) has settled and taken root in Kutuje.

There is trouble in the land, peace is gone. The people wonder at the cause of this situation. They turn to their king for solution.

Second citizen: *When the head of a household dies, the house becomes an empty shell. But, we have you as our head, and with you our chiefs, yet we do not know whether to thank the Gods that you are with us or to look elsewhere for hope. (P. 9).*

Third citizen: *When the chameleon brings forth a child, is that child not expected to dance? As we have made you king, Act like a king. (P.9)*

- a new challenge, a disease plaque the community, again, to be tackled by the "stranger" king; a new responsibility and a test of Odewale's heroism.

Aderopo: *The oracle said that there is a curse in this land, and until that curse is purged, our suffering will go on. (P. 19)*

Odewale: *... who was this man who got killed by this villain? Answer quick (P.20)*

Aderopo: *King Adetusa – my father, the king who ruled this land before you. (P. 20)*

It is with pity that we listen to Odewale make his pronouncements that the sources of the sickness is known and the murderer of the former king must be unveiled in order to find cure for the disease plaguing the community. His fate is sealed when he takes an oath before Ogun, the god of iron.

Odewale: *Before Ogun the god of iron, I stand on oath. Witness now all you present that before the feast of Ogun, which starts at sunrise, I, Odewale, the son of Ogundele, shall search and fully lay open before your eyes the murderer of king Adetusa. (P. 25).*

The importance of this event to the unfolding of the story is captured through the acceleration technique whereby a short segment of the text is devoted to a long period of the story. This, coupled with the repetitive technique of always coming round to the curse emphasises the helplessness of man in the hands of the gods. When the truth of his birth is unraveled, Odewale draws tears from us. We, like the priest are tongue tied when he asks:

Adewale: *Whose child was I?*

Ogun Priest: *It is too late now, you must know the last, even if ...*

Adewale: *[In a frantic scream] I said, who gave me b-i-r-t-h?*

Ogun Priest: *She. The woman who has just gone into the bedroom. Bearer of your children. She too is your ... mother! (P. 68)*

These are heavy words indeed. We cannot help but cry for Ojuola. What a burden for a single individual to carry! Not only has she lost a husband but she is married to her own son and bears children for him. Hers is a chain of a painful existence; from giving up a child at birth for death and living with the pain because you were helpless to stop it, to discovering that that child was not killed after all and that he has come back to marry you and have children by him. This can only happen under the dictates of that cultural world view seen in Amadi's *The concubine*. By the customs of the people, the new king takes as wives the widows of the former king. Had this not been the case this disaster would have been avoided. The hidden hand of the gods is again at work here.

From the above conversation, the hidden identity of Odewale is revealed. The search of the killers of the former king incites the challenge of the crises of Odewale's birth to reveal his mistaken identity. In the reality of his life, he is faced with a three-fold challenge: defending his people, proving his identity and proving responsible at all cost. Like in Amadi's *The concubine*, destruction comes about through some character weakness. In this context, disobedience is the root cause of destruction. Right from the prologue, the gods ordered the killing of the cursed child. Gbonka was ordered to kill the child but on his way to the evil forest he handed the child to another person. Had this been done, the prophesy would not have been fulfilled. Another instance of disobedience is when Odewale went to consult to know more about himself. He was told the same things that were foretold on his birth and warned not to go further.

Odewale: *What must I do then not to carry out this will of the gods?*

Voice: *Nothing. To run away would be foolish. The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell. Just stay where you are, stay where you are ... stay where you are.*

Odewale did not obey but rather ran away. Little did he know that he was instead running towards the point of fulfillment of the prophesy. Though a number of people suffer pain and death, that of the woman, Ojuola, is more pathetic as she is seen as a voiceless victim of circumstances. We cannot even lay a finger on her crime or what she might have done to bring this curse upon her head.

Both accounts of *The Concubine* by Amadi and *The Gods are Not to Blame* by Rotimi prove to us that the African woman of the pre-colonial era was a woman on the sidelines. They suffered oppression under the rule of the gods like any other person in society but went further to suffer a second oppression under patriarchy. At times the gods used them like their baits and victims as is the case of Ihuoma in *The Concubine*. They are voiceless in the face of these traumatic experiences as there is no one to fight for them. Silence during this era did not necessarily mean happiness and comfort. The women were just thick skinned, trying to make the best of their situations.

This does not cancel the fact that apart from the oppressive and traumatic experiences with the gods women in pre-colonial Africa knew no liberty in other fields. Women in pre-colonial Africa held some positions of prominence. They played critical roles socially and economically and contributed to the family by processing food, weaving, making pottery and cooking. This explains why Ihuoma is admired and Ahurole found wanting. Even though households were ruled by a patrilineal system wherein the man was the head of the household, women managed the internal affairs of the house. They were politically active as they governed the home. Elderly women had a voice in many important issues concerning the family and community. Private and public activities were so mingled that the power and privilege women wielded in the home were often mirrored in public. Women who were very successful in the production of food, used the respect gained to dominate the children and influence the men in their lives. Men controlled the activities outside of the household and could bestow titles on women. That of the queen-mother was very common across Africa. She officiated at meetings and had subordinate title-holders assisting her. But when it came to the role of the gods, she was not only helpless but was voiceless and a double victim as she could not even plead her case before the gods. No matter what the gods did they were not to be blamed.

THE DOUBLE TRAUMA OF THE AFRICAN WOMAN

In the 20th century, women lost their influence and power when patriarchy and colonialism changed gender relations. Gender inequality in Africa is tied to the colonial era. The privileges the women enjoyed in pre-colonial Africa did not only disappear but a new status-quo popped up. Scholars point to the colonial legacy of African underdevelopment to explain gender inequality and female disempowerment. Colonial masters exploited the social norms of society so as to widen the gender gap. African men were educated and employed in the white-collar economy built by the Europeans. Women were slower to obtain education and employment due to the social norms that restricted them to the home. Because women often worked in traditional, informal economies, they were subjected to marital gender inequality. The same women who in pre-colonial Africa were queen-mothers, queen-sisters, princesses and holders of offices in some villages became subservient to their fathers and husbands during the colonial era.

If we consider trauma as a discipline that transcends intellectual boundaries, we cannot, therefore, ignore this evolution in the development of our analysis in this research study. It is important to note that during the colonial period, women lost power and economic autonomy with the arrival of cash crops and women's exclusion from the global market place.

What became important was the unremunerated labour of women. The introduction of cash crops even led to changes in women's control over land. In some areas, women continued growing foodstuffs for consumption while men earned wages by working on tea, cotton and cocoa plantations, gold, diamond and copper mines. A number of women moved to the newly developing urban communities in search of new opportunities, though the majority remained in the rural areas. Women were at a disadvantage as even customary laws were now established based on male testimony that gave men, especially the elite, advantages over women in issues of marriage and divorce. The pre-colonial political activities of women were generally disregarded by the colonial authorities. They even turned exclusively to men when they established local political offices and women who used to be members of associations run by women and for women were ignored. African women went the extra mile in an attempt to reverse and come to terms with the colonial history and the aftermath of subjectivity or silence. Women were motivated to use what they had acquired to enhance the kind of authority that Europeans were trying to appropriate, eliminate or transform.

The bitter and traumatic truth remains the fact that women have always been considered as being created to represent the shadow of men. Because their tasks were rooted in the home, they were deprived of the right to be assimilated into the public arena, like serving in government. Men, as representatives of the family, had the right to exercise their despotic power on their subjects. This is what has given rise to the awakening of a feminist consciousness whose objectives are the need to correct and discuss gender inequality. With the industrial revolution, public work was forbidden to women and this paved the way to job separation between the two sexes. Men were identified as being active, moral and rational and domineering, whereas women were viewed as being naturally inferior to men, subordinate, immoral and irrational. Women ended up being considered as objects of men's delight. They were marginalized, raped and harassed sexually.

Therefore, the idea of living and accepting pain took a different dimension during the colonial period: Africans experienced a new form of pain manifested either through oppression, suppression, exploitation and/or corrupt practices stemming from poor governance under the Whiteman. At the inception of this new form of governance, Africans were gripped by fear; fear of the Whiteman and his new way of life was buried in their subconscious minds. They were terrorised by the unknown that took different forms in different societies but centered principally on the premise that the mighty and magical world of the Whiteman could neither be perceived nor be easily comprehended. Their once beautiful world suddenly disappeared and they felt lost. Theirs had suddenly become a sleep walking existence.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a beautiful demonstration of the literature of this era. It captures and portrays the lives of a people on the verge of losing all they had known, loved and believed in. It is a close-knit society from the outset of the novel. The community of Umuofia is governed by norms laid down by their ancestors. This is a society that was one with itself in their cultural, religious and social practices. They were governed by a political system that was not written down on the pages of any book but was well understood by all and handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth and copied practices; a society wherein territorial boundaries were not traced on maps but were well known and respected by all following natural features like streams, forests, hills or even landmarks mutually agreed upon; a society devoted not only to hardwork as a sure source of livelihood but also to relaxation as a means of re-energising the body; a society that communed together in times of joy as in times of sorrow; a society in which age and authority were respected just as merit and hard work were rewarded.

It was, therefore, a traumatising experience when the Whiteman came violating this peace and making little or no effort to find out which aspect of their culture the people loved and would want to keep. He only sought to impose his religion, culture and way of life without bothering to find out if this was what the people would appreciate. The colonial masters throughout Africa implemented oppressive and suppressive policies which inflicted a lot of pain on the Africans, and rather rendered most of the African societies poor and underdeveloped. Life became a nightmare. Trust, love and communal life were lost. The people of Umuofia were helpless in the face of the ruthless introduction of a new culture. They watched, with dismay, as the things that had once formed the pillars of their society were destroyed. The new disgusting culture of children disobeying their parents, abandoning the ways of their ancestors and instead rushing for the Whiteman's ways of life is hard to swallow. The Whiteman came like a thief in the night and took away all that was valuable to them. The elders suddenly lost their stand as they were reduced to figurehead leaders whose word no longer carried any weight in the land where it once reigned supreme. They are hurting inside but dare not give vent to their feelings for fear of the consequences that might be unleashed by the Whiteman whose might was still a mystery to them. The brave and courageous – like Ukonkwo – dared and raised a finger at the Whiteman but ended up like the lone broomstick that is easily broken. He does not wait to give pleasure to the Whiteman to break him; he takes away his own life upon the bitter realisation that his people are no longer one. The Whiteman has succeeded to destroy them but the death of Okwonkwo is the beginning of a time bomb. The people are all agreed that: "The Whiteman has put a knife amongst us, and things now fall apart". The elders acknowledge that Okwonkwo was indeed a great man.

The world of women is most affected. The privileges of the pre-colonial society are gone and they are not only expected to provide dinner to their husbands and children but, also, to dance to their every whim and caprice. In addition, only sons could inherit from their fathers. This causes further tension both for Okwonkwo's daughter and for his eldest son. There were strict gender roles or functions and social positions performed and held specifically and only by one of the two sexes in the Umuofia society of *Things Fall Apart*. When a man has multiple wives, each of them provides dinner for him and the children. When this is not done it creates tension. An example is when Okwonkwo's youngest wife, Ojiugo, goes to the neighbour's hut to plait her hair and does not come back in time for dinner. One of the wives has to feed Ojiugo's children without being asked to do so. Okwonkwo notices her absence when there is no dinner for him. When she returns, he beats her out of anger even though it is the week of peace when

any fighting or punishment is forbidden. As a result, he has to make sacrifices and offerings to the Earth goddess whom he offended by breaking the sacred peace. Here is a clear example of tension caused when a gender role is not respected. In the case of inheritance, only sons inherit their fathers and help them in their work. Ezinma, Okwonkwo's daughter and favourite child, cannot inherit him nor is she allowed to help him. The Whiteman has succeeded to transform society.

Towards the end of the colonial period, Africans were tired and fed up with the oppressive rule of the Whites. It is often said that prosperity comes when you are uncomfortable with poverty, excellence when you are uncomfortable with mediocrity, greatness when you are uncomfortable with littleness. The oppressed were fed-up with littleness and like a man pushed to the wall, they started fighting back. Freedom fighters championed this transitional period. Pain degenerated into trauma and was exteriorised in violence. It did not matter what form or magnitude this fighting back took; but suffice it to say that they as much as started it. After all, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a step. The rubrics of pain/trauma are evoked at this level. At this stage there is a link between traumatic experiences and development as it pushes one to seek change. It is a two sided coin. You can choose to accommodate and live with trauma, bearing in mind that it can crush and destroy you by taking away the manhood in your land, thereby rendering you a slave or second class citizen in your own land. On the other hand, you can allow your traumatic pain to push or propel you into such action as should recuperate or restore your dignity and status in your homeland. Pain generated by anger against the Whiteman, therefore, pushed most Africans into fighting and seeking to oust the Whiteman from most African societies. Such fighting lasted for varying periods in different African countries.

A new kind of pain is experienced and expressed in post-colonial society. After independence, most African leaders took a turn for the worse. Most of the leaders were greedy and egoistic. They were even more corrupt, exploitative, materialistic, oppressive, suppressive, extravagant, ostentatious, unjust and inhuman than the colonial masters themselves. This paved the way for continuous suffering, decadence, pessimism, disillusionment and frustration of the masses. This pain was made worse by the fact that it was being inflicted this time around by their own brothers, the weak and the sell-outs of society who stayed on to lick the boots of the Whiteman while the strong and courageous took to the hills and forests to fight the Whiteman. The former connived with the Whiteman, allowing him to come back through indirect rule. This

was the worst stage of governance as most of these African leaders became the stooges of the Whiteman who continued to rule the colonies from his homeland.

Consequently, most so-called independent African countries ratified the UN charter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as that of the organisation of African Unity (OAU) whose basis was freedom but never bothered to implement it. Thus, beautiful resolutions like those cited in the article below are only on paper, talk that has never been beneficial to the masses.

Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, for instance, stipulates: *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in spirit and brotherhood.*

Article 5 stipulates: *No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*

Article 20: Stipulates:

*No one shall be compelled
to belong to any association...
the will of the people shall
be the basis of the authority
of the government...(P. 17)*

The failure of the new African leaders of this era to implement the above articles in their governance intensified the pain lived in their countries, and very often, with other consequent forms of traumatic pain. The masses thus began shifting from their accommodative stances; pain was exteriorised and lived through violent and revolutionary acts. Writers became the perfect mouth piece of society. They were judgmental and prescriptive in their writings. They came up with thought provoking titles that reflected happenings in society and which equally sent across their desires and wishes for their society. For example, the bitterness and determination of the writers to see a truly independent Africa came across in their writings.

Tsitsi Dangarembga in *Nervous conditions* focuses on the traumatic pressures and pains faced by the African woman during colonialism and, especially, that faced by the girl child who, having been trapped in a patriarchal system that oppresses the female sex and an impoverished stigmatising background – strives to surmount them through education in order to improve her family status and also give fulfilment to her existence. Dangarembga focuses on

the effect of colonialism on native peoples, showing how they have destabilised the equilibrium of the tribal family by encouraging such ills as sexism, racism, oppression and exploitation of the nucleus of the African family. Tambu, the protagonist, is just a representative of a small group of women who struggle to break away from the chain of an oppressive patriarchal system reinforced by a privileged colonial superiority that ties them down. The victory of the women lies in the crusading spirit with which most of them fight against the various nervous conditions to which they have been subjected. Even though inequality has developed a crippling attitude that is killing their ambition, crushing their spirits and discouraging them from bringing out the best in themselves, not all the women are ready to fold their arms and watch in resignation.

The traditionalists, like Ma'Shingayi, epitomise the typical African women trapped in the wedlock of slavish subservience, toil-worn deprivation, enterprising resourcefulness for survival, sexual victimisation, sheepish docility who, to crown it all, have resigned themselves to fate. This group is robbed of their prime of youthful beauty as they fail to bargain for the best for themselves. They get married to the person chosen for them, are sacrificed for others as their bride price goes a long way towards educating their male siblings or uplifting the family from poverty. Marriage offers no comfort or happiness as they are sexually exploited and reduced to child bearing machines by their oppressive lazy husbands. Marriage becomes a bed of thorns as she practically takes over the responsibility of the man in the home. The likes of Ma'Shingayo remain passive victims of male oppression as they cannot fight against the patriarchal marginalisation of her sex. She even discourages her sister from bothering her or trying to talk her out of her condition when she says:

Lucia, she sighed, why do you keep bothering me with this question? Does it matter what I want? Since when has it mattered what I want? So why should it start mattering now? Do you think I wanted to be impregnated by that old dog? Do you think I wanted to travel all this way across this country of our forefathers only to live in dirt and poverty...? What I have endured for nineteen years I can endure for another nineteen and nineteen more if need be (P. 42).

The above resigned statement of a suffering woman makes Ma'Shingayi and her likes objects of pity.

Lucia, her younger sister, is different from her as she is frank about defying society and its oppressive norms and going out of her way to satisfy or gratify her natural appetite for sex. She does not care with whom she does this as she goes to the extent of having sex with her sister's husband, Jeremiah, and his cousin, Takesure. She claims that "A woman has to live

with something ... even if it is only a cockroach. And cockroaches are better. They are easy to be chased away, isn't it?" She, however, undergoes growth and change as she rebels against her trapped condition by seeking a job that would enable her to be independent and self-reliant. She emerges as a new person after her grade one training. She even buys nourishing food stuffs to feed and revive her sister who is under the spell of depression. She dares and reproaches oppressive patriarchy by criticising the god-like Babamukuru for imposing a church wedding on Tambu's parents.

One would say that education, especially the Whiteman's education, should liberate the African woman from the oppressive grip of male chauvinism. Such is regrettably not the case as we observe the case of Maiguru. Though a highly educated woman with the same Master's Degree as her husband, no one seems to value her learnedness. She is seen just as a woman who accompanied her husband to Uk to help take care of him. She possesses all it takes to live as an emancipated western lady, yet she humbles herself to assume the role of a dutiful, respectful, submissive, resourceful, reliable, caring, loving, devoted and tolerant African housewife. It only becomes problematic when she goes to great lengths to submit to the patriarchal status of her husband who is the one managing her income and channelling it to solve his extended family problems. She even reduces herself to a slave to feed her husband's large family during her sojourns at the homestead during Christmas periods. She is not spared from the oppressive role of her husband as is seen when she supports Tambu against her husband. Her rebellious outburst is seen when her husband tries to hush her down and let her know that he reserves the right to punish his brother's daughter. She retorts:

*Yes, she is your brother's child.
But when it comes to taking
my money so that you can feed
her and her father and your
whole family and waste it on
some ridiculous wedding that's
when they are my relatives too.
Let me tell you Baba Chido,
I am tired of my house
being a hotel for your family.
I am tired of being a house-keeper for them.
I am tired of being nothing in a home
I am working myself sick to support (P. 20).*

Maiguru helps in throwing light on the theme of gender equality, oppression, rebellion and the role of the traditional African woman. Her educational status makes her an object of pity rather than that of admiration. Tambu rightly expresses her feelings about her, “I felt sorry for Maiguru because she could not use the money she earned for her own purposes and had been prevented by marriage from doing the things she wanted to do.”

Nyasha is a bolder version of Maiguru, her mother. She is very intelligent, sensitive, critical and rather too mature for her age. She represents the group of emerging African girl children who have experienced the superiority and liberality of western values and think that oppressive patriarchy should be fought to the limit. She rebels against a bully of a father whose myopic judgement makes him think that he should never be challenged by anyone. She does not approve of the praises showered on him for his magnanimity; for she feels that it is only normal and compelling for her father to assist his poor relatives who ought not to honour him to near worship, as if he were some god. She embraces conflicts and disagreements as opportunities to give full meaning to her existence.

Tambu, who passes for Dangarembga’s mouthpiece, holds the lantern that shines and illuminates the right paths to the quest for identity and gender equity during the colonial era. We cannot help but admire this young 13-year-old who is blunt, courageous, very industrious, tactful, resilient but sensitive and deeply probing, loving, sympathetic, respectful, self-reliant, resourceful and determined. She is conscious of her family’s state of deprivation, feels for her toil-worn suffering mother, ragged siblings and irresponsible father. She represents this new breed that remains attached to their roots while doing all in their power to overcome the obstacles to success. To this group, the empowerment of the girl child is not the end of the road. Bringing out their families from poverty after being empowered is the ultimate. Tambu as a model tacitly remains loyal, respectful and grateful towards her benefactor and uncle, Babamukuru, but does not gloss over his highhanded manner of administering his household, his exploitative and domineering attitude towards his wife, his uncompromising attitude towards his daughter – Nyasha – and his despotism in imposing a Christian wedding on her parents that reduces them to comic stars. Like Tambu, this group makes a conscious effort not to compromise their morals and Africanness. We cannot but applaud Dangarembga for this rich and insightful analysis and for probing into the higher heights of the African women despite what she had gone through during the colonial period.

Mongo Beti in *The Poor Christ of Bomba* shows yet another horrible phase in the evolution of the African woman. Trauma is heightened in Bomba as the young girls who are being prepared for Christian marriages live horrifying traumatic conditions together in women camps. It is apparent that the local churchmen have been using the local girls for their own purposes. In this novel, Mongo Beti depicts the effects of French colonial infringement on the Cameroonian landscape and consciousness. One would have expected that the story of the African Woman would be better when it comes to the child. But unfortunately, the Whiteman came and preached a loving, non-bias god but practiced the contrary. Fr Drumont, a catholic priest, assigned to the rainforest region of Cameroon to help convert the indigenes to Christianity is far from being a Christ-like example. He is not what he seems to be as he is bent on forcing his Christian converts, the indigenes, into Christianity even though he is far from being a Christ-like example. He is not what he seems to be as he is bent on forcing his Christian converts to forsake their Africa traditions and cultural ways as a condition for Christianity. The sixa – which is a church establishment aimed at grooming young female converts by preparing them for marriage – is a complete mockery of Catholicism and a subversion of African traditional marriages. *The Poor Christ of Bomba* is a fictional slave narrative that exposes French imperialism by constructing a discourse of resistance that is bound to serve as a path to decolonisation. Post-industrial theories emerged explaining the African's mind as less developed and incapable of complex thought, thereby justifying the European mission to tame the inhabitants whom they imagined were barbarians. They saw African as sub-humans with no jurisdictional authority over themselves. Aimé Césaire upholds that:

*Colonialism is neither
Evangelization, nor a
Philanthropic enterprise,
disease, and tyranny, nor
a project undertaken for
the greater glory of God (P. 32).*

Césaire is referring to the lofty notions and masqueraded labels constructed by imperialists and fed to a European public without much challenge. The voices of embattled Africans were not represented to the Western reader until the slave narrative emerged, as a genre, in England and the United States. An important aspect of French colonialism was assimilation; that is to say, the systematic replacement of the “inferior” culture and institutions of the colonised people with the “superior” French culture and civilisation. Their grand scheme was to educate Africans and then use them in converting everyone else, in the Empire. This,

however, backfired on them as it was, ironically, the implementation of this imperialistic policy that fostered the creation of a diaspora community of “black” students in Paris which later led to the black consciousness. It enabled even black students from French colonies to dissect and reflect about the erosional effects of colonialism on black identity.

Mongo Beti captures this in the novel through Father Superior Drumont. He is a “messenger” of Jesus Christ bringing the gospel to “heathens”. The unfortunate thing is that Father’s understanding of Africans is myopically influenced by French imperialist indoctrination. His relationship with indigenous populations seems to be shaped by the master-slave paradigm. Denis is trained to serve Father and he becomes a devout Christian who feeds on every word that proceeds from the mouth of Father Superior Drumont. In loving Father Drumont more than he loves his father, Denis becomes a perfect model of France’s imperialist strategy to totally brainwash the colonised people so that they should love the French culture more than they do theirs. Women suffer double under this system. The indigenous people depicted in this novel do not deserve the toil of atrocities visited upon them by imperialism. When father asked one of his catechists this questions: “Why is it, do you think that so many backslide from the true religion? Why did they come to mass in the first place? (Beti 29) The catechists tell father just what he does not want to hear:

Father, at that time we were poor well, doesn't the kingdom of heaven belong to the poor? So there is nothing surprising in many of them running to the true God. But nowadays, as you know yourself, Father, they are making pots of money by selling their cocoa to the Greeks (P. 29).

Zacharia, Father Drumont’s cook adds:

*I will tell you just as it is father.
The first of us who ran to religion, to your religion, came to it as a sort of [...] revelation. Yes, that's it, a revelation: a school where they could learn your secret in the secret of your power, of your aeroplanes and railways [...] in a word, the secret of your mystery. Instead of that, you began talking to them of God, of the soul, of eternal life, and so forth. Do you really suppose they didn't know those things already, long before you came? So of course, they decided that you were hiding something (P. 30).*

It is, therefore, with dismay – while walking through the Tala tribe – that Father Drumont finds out that almost all the churches he helped build, using force, have fallen into disrepair. He grows pensively disturbed but this shocking truth from Denis, his houseboy and

Zacharia, his catechist, brings him to the realisation that anything not built on love – the kind that his Lord and master preached – does not last. This pushes him to further reflect on his role as a missionary. The tour of the Tala tribe is, therefore, an introspective journey for him to explore and discover his inner self. It is even more painful for him when he is criticised by his own converts whom he has always seen as mindless and incapable of complex thought. The fight for identity, begins with this awareness of the downtrodden as well as that of the colonisers that Africans, after all, are not really who they thought all of them to be. Father Drumont is obstinately disillusioned with the reality that these people can actually think, and above all, actualise their thoughts. It is a victorious step taken when father Drumont sees himself as a failure. Acknowledging his feeling of defeat to Vidal, a colonial administrator, Father Drumont says that his defeat has been immanent:

I hadn't understood that my defeat was already pronounced, like a young man who refuses to admit that the girl of his dreams has scorned him (P. 154).

Consistent with the hero motif and the Victorian ideal to “explore” and “conquer the mysteries that Africa symbolised, his disillusionment is more with the disruption of his hero’s quest. Yet, he fails to learn that the Talas have turned away because of his self-centred, colonial vision that does not include them in any realistic way. Pride keeps him away from learning from “inferior” beings. This action of his betrays a conscious or an unconscious assumption of his “superiority” over the natives. He sees his failure in Cameroon as a real failure only in the sense that his parishioners have failed to utilise his beneficence for their own betterment. His confession to Vidal is ocular proof:

I wish you good luck here, my dear Vidal! I am a failure, a sacred failure. I doubt if anyone has ever fallen deeper into defeat... These good people worshipped after their own fashion by eating one another, or by dancing in the moonlight, or by wearing bark charms around their necks? Why do we insist on imposing our customs upon them? (P. 150).

This is the hard-to-answer million-dollar question: why do they indeed insist on imposing their customs on the Africans? By suggesting that his parishioners are barbarians who eat one another, Father Drumont reinforces the French colonial assumption about Africans and their “inferior” indigenous culture which is steered by his stoic adherence to the “superior” French culture he is seeking to implant.

Homi Bhabha succinctly explains these assumptions about culture. He focuses on “problematised culture” when he says:

It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation that we begin to understand why hierarchy claims to be the inherent originality or “purity” of cultures that are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. (P. 208).

Father Drumont, though informed about the fluidity of culture, fails to make the adjustments dictated by cultural “differences”. His sickening “sixa” doubly oppresses the woman who, after being subjected to this horror of culture conflict, still undergoes gender oppressions from the men. What he fails to further see is that his sixa will not work in Cameroon just as the xylophone dance may not work in Paris. He continues to blindly see cultures as hierarchical and static objects that can be imposed or disposed of. As an anti-colonial novel, *The Poor Christ of Bomba* assumes the role of an agent revealing the hypocrisy of imperialism as symbolised by the complicity of father Drumont’s church. Denis confesses his sexual sins. This only goes a long way towards showing the precarious state of the woman in the colonial society. Denis places all the blame of sexual sin on Catherine, the “Eve figure” claiming she made him to do it. This is ironical as we actually see him lusting for Catherine.

In this “blame game” saga, the woman cuts a sorry sight. However, central to the decolonising discourse of Father Drumont’s fall is the sixa, the place where girls are sexually exploited by father Drumont’s hired hands. He, regrettably, allows perpetrators to escape without any form of punishment. He instead equips his cook with a horsewhip and shamelessly supervises his beating of some of the girls. The sixa exposes him as just another beguiling French imperialist and symbolically provides an epistemology for reading and understanding imperialist ideology. Commenting on the progress of decolonising impulses, Edward Said notes that the colonised:

Bear their past within them as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a new future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory taken back from the empire. (P.31).

Father Drumont’s Bomba mission is symbolic of the French empire because it orchestrates the exploitation and wounding of the natives. It is such a traumatising experience

for the natives; for forty years. Father Drumont has exacted forced labour from his converts, whipped them as slaves, treated them as juveniles, connived with colonial administrators to further exploit them, and imprisoned their wives in his sixa, indirectly turning them into sex slaves for his staff. He is, however, out-witted as his parishioners now prove to be intellectually agile, exposing him as the one who should be the recipient of enlightenment and conversion. This ties in with Achebe's observation in *Colonial Criticism*:

To colonist's mind it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: "I know my natives", a claim which implied two things at once (a) that the natives were really quite simple and (b) that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand – understanding being a pre-condition for control and control constituting adequate proof of understanding. (P.58)

From this perspective, the church is seen as an agent of colonialism but, ironically, Father Drumont is quick to see the infirmities of French colonialism but fails to realise that he is a coloniser. He is so heartless that when it is discovered that the sixa girls are infected with syphilis, he refuses to authorise recommended treatment for them. Shocked by this attitude, the doctor in charge, Doctor Arnaud, tells Father Drumont: "*Then, Father, you have only to write to me with your decision. But if you will allow me to advise you, you'd better decide quickly*" (P. 202).

Instead of providing the girls treatment, Father Drumont closes down the sixa for good and sends the girls away. What an irony, the institution that was supposed to prepare girls for monogamous marriages has instead raped and disposed of them. One of the girls shares her sense of agony when she cries out: "I have no family now and no homestead to return to. The only home I have is the mission (Betí, P. 206).

Father Drumont's treatment of the sixa as a project is symbolic of his missionary philosophy – to convert all indigenous Cameroonians to Christianity. He plays God in deciding the fates of his parishioners. It confirms what Césaire said: that the dispensation of power between the coloniser and the colonised is always unequal; there is no human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonising man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production. This is who Father Drumont has been to his parishioners. He has

confirmed the idea that imperialism has nothing to do with enlightenment; it rather has everything to do with subjugation and enslavement.

By masquerading himself as “beneficent” and the “bearer” of enlightenment, the imperialist takes focus away from the colonised whom he has wounded, disfigured, raped and enslaved. Mongo Beti in *The Poor Christ of Bomba* has unveiled the masked face of the coloniser, showing him as the one who has inflicted disfiguring wounds of alienation and dislocation on the colonised.

From the above analyses, we can therefore see that even though pre-colonial women did not enjoy full status relative to men, they still had privileges that raised their self-esteem. Colonialism came and reinforced the differences between the roles of men and women. In addition to being queen-mothers, princesses, and even chiefs in some pre-colonial societies as earlier mentioned, the pre-colonial African Woman in some African societies also played important economic roles like processing primary products like milk, meat and skins; and exercised considerable power and influence over the distribution and exchange of the products. This was no longer the situation in the colonial society where the colonial master in Africa introduced policies to facilitate the integration of African societies into the colonial societies as seen from the above chosen texts. These colonial masters challenged the legitimacy of cultural, religious and pastoral institutions through state imposed policies like the new religion seen in Achebe’s works. They also did this in missionary schools where their policies were implemented as seen in Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* with compulsory destocking, restrictions of grazing areas and of movement as seen in other societies. Mongo Beti’s *The Poor Christ of Bomba* highlights the pitiful state of the imprisonment of the girl child in the sixa in the name of preparation for monogamous marriages only to end up abusing them sexually and taking away their self-esteem and identity, that which they enjoyed in the pre-colonial society as the cream and pillar of society. This lost status of the African woman deteriorated during the colonisation of the 1890s. Even though we cannot argue that colonisation was the only factor that contributed to the loss of women’s roles, we could argue that it was the interplay of factors among them: colonialism in conjunction with the spread of Christianity and Islam which added to the forces that reduced the roles played by the African woman, her position and status in various Africa societies. Although both men and women were affected by colonialism, the impact was higher on women who had previously taken pride of place in religious matters as well as in ritual practices.

The process of colonisation – which subsequently led to the commercialisation of African institutions like pastoralism and the gradual integration of the African society into the colonial economic system – is central to understanding the impact on the roles of women and gender ideology in Africa. Population growth in most of these colonial African societies influenced the formation of collective self-help groups for women. The colonial woman shifted to this kind of assistance because she no longer enjoyed the privileges of pre-colonial society where men and women were complementary and their importance was not based on power differences between the female domestic sphere and the male public sphere but rather on the balance between male and female expectations in society. Apart from the primary duties of child rearing, cooking, fetching water and firewood and building of huts in pastoral societies like the one seen in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, women also participated in activities related to subsistence live-stock keeping and management. They cared for small animals at the homestead and were in charge of milking. These responsibilities fall under what is called women's domains of stationary resources. On the other hand, defending the camps as well as natural resources such as water and religious shrines was within the domain of the men. This, therefore, was a close-knit society wherein men exercised greater formal power and authority in the political realm while women influenced political decisions through backstage roles. Unfortunately, the colonial system destroyed this fabric of society by over-empowering the man and turning him into a heartless oppressor. Jeremiah in *Nervous Conditions* does not only relinquish his functions to his already overburdened wife, Ma'Shingayi, but watches in idle pleasure and joins forces with his educated brother, Babamukuru, to further make life burdensome for the woman folk.

In general, gender relations during the colonial period were bound up with historical relations of economic and political dominance, particularly with the workings of imperialism and capitalism. The enduring colonial social construction of gender projects and a broader socio-economic and political analysis was seen in the establishment of the colonial native authority and the commercialisation of pastoralism and post-world War II social reforms. While the French had embarked on assimilation, the British adopted the principle of indirect rule introduced officially in 1934. Indirect rule was a system in which the British ruled their colonies in Africa, as elsewhere, through the pre-existing local governance system. Although there was no full-scale application of the system – in the case of Africa – the policy was guided by the postulation that African and European cultures varied greatly and communities that had developed institutions were best ruled indirectly. Unfortunately, this was not strictly applied for

gender-related issues which were part and parcel of cultural practices. Going by their policies, the colonial administrative system would have retained women in some of their pre-existing positions of power. Unfortunately, this was not the case as colonial authorities mis-represented the meaning of public and domestic spheres to “mean that men and women do not know about each other’s (Sphere Jaylain 2004). This justified the integration of native men into the colonial local administration by default. This new system reinforced men’s authority and status by introducing not only a new hierarchy of native administration, but also a new gender hierarchy. This observation is supported by Dorothy Hodgson in her study on the Masai of Tanzania when she states that:

By extending the authority of men, especially elderly men, over the newly emerging domain of “the political”, indirect rule broadened and deepened their control over junior men and women. It gave certain men, new rights and responsibilities as “representatives” of their communities, including the authority to collect taxes, enforce livestock decisions and codify customary laws (P. 69).

It has been further argued that the European colonial venture was a gender enterprise which thrived on labour forces provided by men. Colonisers reinforced these ideas in their recruitment of natives into their forces based on gender and even cultural background. As such, men increased their privileges and dominance which led to feelings of superiority. With the replacement of collective ownership of land with private property rights, women in general lost their access to natural resources which, by extension, included lands allocated to ranching in which male members had privileged land access leaving out the females. Women, therefore, had limited ability to access and own land which is a form of economic access to key markets as well as a form of social access to non-market institutions. The integration of men, though peripherally, into the colonial cash economy gradually replaced women’s control over even domestic products.

Therefore, colonialists’ land-related policies lowered women’s socio-economic status in Africa. Neither could people transfer land, sell their agricultural products nor erect any building without the written permission of the Direct Commissioner.

This condition was particularly a blow to widows who were vulnerable to eviction upon the death of their husbands (Marsabit District Annual report 1946). These laws reduced women’s access to resources such as land. The colonial economy did not create a niche for African women but rather increased the powers of male figures over the women in the

community as seen in the texts treated above. Women who were thus seen as stockless were placed at the bottom of the social ladder.

The post-World-War-II period that ushered in socio-economic recovery in most colonies in Africa was not wholesome as there was a visible exclusion of pastoral women's needs in general. During this period, emphasis was laid on reforms in health, agriculture, education, trading, apprenticeship and the creation of women's organisations. One of the areas that post-World-War-II social reforms sought to address in the last decade of colonial rule was the participation of African women in formal education. Unfortunately, access to education had very little impact on pastoral women. Generally speaking, only few children had access to modern education; and these were mostly the male children of servants of colonial masters, shop owners, native workers for colonial governments, administrators and members of the local police.

Colonialism destroyed women's traditional organisations, replacing them with a hierarchical system that undermined the traditional system that, in turn, undermined the traditional bases of women's authority in Africa. We therefore agree with Aimé Césaire that colonialism was not and had never been a benevolent movement whose goal was to improve the lives of the colonised. Their motives, as confirmed from the works analysed above, proved that colonialists were purely self-centred. They rather created more problems for Africans. It is ironic that colonisers hoped to rid the countries they colonised of "savages", but ended up, themselves, as savages when they killed, raped and destroyed the land. Césaire labels them as barbaric because of their ill-treatment of those in the colonies. He acknowledges the racial construction of the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser. He goes as far as equating racism, barbarism and colonialism and asserting that colonisation is a form of dehumanisation wherein the humanity of the colonised people is denied. The woman is not only stripped of previously earned privileges of the pre-colonial era but is also subjected to the double trauma of colonialism and male oppression as exemplified in the sixa of Mongo Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba*.

The above arguments, therefore, tie in with Grey Forster's strand of trauma theory. He highlights the salience of trauma to the study.

THE NEW AFRICAN WOMAN OF POST-COLONIAL AFRICA

It is often said that nothing lasts forever. The African woman of Post-colonial Africa is no longer the African woman of pre-colonial and colonial Africa. The New African Woman of Post-colonial Africa has been pushed to the wall by different oppressors and can no longer give in submissively to the forces of oppression. The urge or drive for change is equally not easy as society is not ready to allow her easy ride to liberation. Patriarchy – which from colonial times had been the enemy of the woman – has also regenerated itself, re-emerging with new ways of keeping women oppressed and dependant on men. Patriarchy keeps coming up with new forms of fighting any attempts women thrust to curb it, which makes it difficult to be eliminated completely. Women are resolved to build their lives and their future in order to be able to cope with any stumbling blocks in their way from the system of patriarchy. Gender relationships are tied to political, economic, cultural and social systems. Right from the beginning of the post-colonial era most governments recommended greater social inclusion for women with a view to filling the gap in gender disparity. Women have been encouraged to come together and focus on the mobilisation of local resources and local participation in development. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund established a bottom-up strategy in developing countries, stressing the importance of mainstreaming issues pertaining to gender development. The strategy seeks to bring development agenda to the local level in order to empower women who, in turn, should enable community organisations to access resources as well as participate in local decisions and processes relevant to them. According, to the United Nations, these two aspects empowered women and contributed to economic growth and development (United Nations 1995). Most government schemes envisioned women as agents of social change and invited them to assist in the implementation of development plans in the nation and in their societies. These changes sped up in the 1990s with colonialism. It was postulated that the potential for traumatisation is a constitutive feature of colonial relations. Trauma is lived through the power of colonial domination on individual and collective identities. From what the victims have lived, as can be seen from the above cited texts, there is a combination of profound psychic disorientation, a deformation or an eclipse of memory; an exile from the chronological sequence and the compulsive repetition of past injuries and the emergence of democratic movements. It was argued that the agenda of democratisation, human rights, sustainable development and economic growth could only be archived through considering women's and gender issues as their core. Women's collective actions became an important

strategy in the fight against poverty. There was a proliferation of women's groups during this era.

The post-colonial woman understands that wealth gives them power to control relationships, which is what men have been doing for centuries. The demands of capitalism and patriarchy require women to be overly ambitious. Women keep shifting their positions in order to emancipate themselves financially, a move which in turn would uplift their status. On this count, gender relations have taken a new form because dependency on men – which was designed through the systems of colonialism and patriarchy – is losing its power. Women are now providing for themselves and it confirms the view that money gives power regardless of gender.

The therapeutic stand is more familiar and logical as colonial trauma gives way to postcolonial recovery. In the shadow of nationalism, just as in that of colonialism, there lurks a melancholic survival. The term “Black Man” connotes exclusion. There is a faulty analogy between the psychic and the social. It becomes difficult to see how one might remember the trauma of colonialism and challenge its lingering effects if it is impossible to be remembered or represented without betraying its real unrepresentability. The therapeutic approach tends towards over-optimism about “recovery” that is based on a covert acceptance of the health of postcolonial modernity. In most cases, victims find it difficult to come to terms with the past until the causes of what happened then are no longer active. Like is the case in our chosen novels, the Whites dirty you until you end up not liking yourself and feel totally lost; for example, the women of the sixa. Slavery or oppression traumatises women by way of surplus violence. Roger Luckhurst, in “The Trauma Question” (2008), remarked that in overlooking political concerns, trauma theory fails to address atrocity, genocide and war (213). The interrelatedness of trauma power and recovery in the post-colonial literature is pointed out, indicating that social activism and political protest may be integral to the aftermath of the trauma of colonisation and decolonisation. Respect and resistance function as responses of individuals working through trauma. Chinua Achebe in a recent essay published in 2010 says that while colonialism, “was essentially a denial of human worth and dignity”, it is important to understand that “the great thing about being human is our ability to face adversity down by refusing to be defined by it or refusing to be no more than its agent or victim. (22-23)

Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of The Savannah* deals with the problem of Nigeria after independence. In this novel, Achebe criticises Nigerian politicians and administrators because

of their wrong policies in letting corruption spread in every field of life in Nigeria. He efficiently makes use of symbols and images in the novel to show the extent of corruption in Nigeria. Oppression is no longer directly from the Whiteman. There is neo-colonialism whereby the masses are being oppressed and exploited by their own brothers. The “Anthills” is symbolic of Nigeria – the time of drought has come. It has a double connotation of hope and despair. An “Anthill” is a community of ants which are black or brown and have come together to create a communal society. This is symbolic of Nigeria that has come together irrespective of racial, ethnic, gender or religious differences. Despite the issue of hope or despair, there is the overriding urge for Nigerians to rise and transform their world into a new world of brotherhood, justice and freedom. This dream is far from being attained as justice and freedom tend to be illusions under the new oppressor in a “black Skin”.

Anthills of The Savannah is a socio-political novel set in the fictional nation of Kangan. Tension is lived and felt at the outset of the novel when the reader is treated to an inside look into a presidential cabinet meeting. We are made to understand that the country has had a shaky two-year existence, coming from a chaotic political upheaval. They have just ousted a dictator from the highest office of the land. The three main characters, Sam, Chris Oriko, and Ikem Osodi are childhood friends who have now come to power with Sam as the President of the Republic of Kangan, Chris, the head of the Information Ministry and Ikem the editor-in-chief of the National Gazette – a widely circulated government controlled newspaper. Despite their common origins and deep ties, the three are vastly different in their political leanings and personal temperaments. Sam is a hard, stern man, a career soldier who has come to power but does not have his people’s best interest at heart. He falls out even in the good books of his two friends who discover that he is becoming another dictator himself. Ikem is the polar opposite of Sam. He is a scholarly fellow with an appreciation for arts and culture. He cannot stomach the negatives of Sam and ends up as his vocal critic, stopping at nothing to let him know that there is need for several government reforms to be carried out. Chris is the most level headed of the three and often plays the role of arbitrator between Sam and Ikem. Despite their initial support for Sam, they regrettably realise that things are taking a turn for the worse and regret their support for Sam. They, therefore, seek to restrain Sam by leveraging their positions. Unfortunately, Sam is bent on pursuing his road of no return as he decides that he wants, at all cost, to become a President for life, a position hitherto unheard of in their nation’s history.

The people decide to carry out a nationwide plebiscite but one of the regions – Abazon – rejects the notion of maintaining Sam in power for the rest of his biological life. Like all

dictators, he deprives the region of his support during a drought in the hope that it would break their spirit. For want of what to do, the people send representatives to the capital to plead for their cause and get the necessary supplies. Sam, in his paranoia, takes this for a revolt. Chris at this stage still believes that Sam would be of some good to his country if kept there for life. Ikem, on the other hand, becomes more and more outspoken in his newspaper editorials, openly questioning the president's motives and morality. He would not heed to Chris's caution to adopt a more moderate tone.

Women are no longer relegated to the background as was the case during the colonial days. They come to the limelight when the men introduce their respective female partners. The women in turn play crucial roles in the lives of the main characters. Elewa is Ikem's girlfriend and mother of their child. She is not as well educated as her partner and is employed in a shop.

Beatrice is Chris Oriko's fiancée. In contrast to Elewa, she is an educated career woman, who holds office as an administrator for a local government unit. She also shares common ties with the three male characters in that she is under Sam as a government employee and has been friends with Ikem since they were kids. She, therefore, is privy to both the movements within the government and the media because of her ties with Chris and Ikem. She comes in forcefully in advising Chris and Ikem for she understands the situation from a vantage point. She tells them that they have no relationship with either the populace or the land preventing them from effectively tackling social problems effectively.

Matters come to a head with Sam and Ikem when he instructs Chris to remove Ikem from his post as editor because he, erroneously, believes that Ikem is somehow involved in the "rebellion" being "organised" by the leaders of Abazon. Chris's reaction is an outright refusal because he knows Ikem better. Despite his refusal, Ikem is still fired. Relieved of his post, Ikem unwisely continues his outspoken tirade against Sam's regime. Sam takes it for Ikem's desire to have the President decapitated, capitalising on a joke Ikem had made about Sam issuing a command to cast new coins with his head on them. Ikem is abducted late at night and assassinated by government forces. This assassination serves as a wake-up call for Chris. He rules out Sam as dead and now sees in his place a power-hungry madman who will stop at nothing to secure his power. Leveraging his ties within the international press community, he exposes Sam as a murderer and dictator, and then goes underground. Chris manages to round up a ragtag bunch of sympathisers, including Emmanuel, a former student of Ikem. Together, they escape to Bassa, the state capital, and head to Abazon. In the meantime, Sam calls for a

manhunt. Chris is now on the government's list of most wanted persons; and an order is issued that anyone caught assisting him or withholding information about him is to be arrested as well. En route to Abazon, Chris surveys the difficulty that Sam's regime has brought to their nation. Immersed in the daily activities of his people, Chris reconnects to his roots. Emmanuel meets Adama, a beautiful co-ed studying at the university. A drunken mob stops their bus and Chris learns that the people are celebrating the death of Sam, murdered by his administration in yet another hostile political takeover. Adama is abducted by a militiaman to be violated. He hurries to save her but the soldier ends up killing him. Emmanuel, Adama, and the motley crew of survivors from the previous regime make their way back to Bassa to give Beatrice the tragic news of her husband-to-be's death.

The novel ends with a grieving Beatrice as she holds a naming ceremony for Ikem and Elewa's child. Elewa had given birth after the tumultuous kidnaping and murder of her partner, only men customarily perform the naming ceremony, but Beatrice accomplishes the rite anyway. This is symbolic of a new beginning. The child is given the name "Amaechina, which is ironically a masculine name that means, "May the path Never Close". This naming ceremony in the novel may stand for democracy, because all the people in the room give a name to the baby, regardless of their religion and colour. Laura Gelfman, in "The confluence of Religion and the Economic Class in *Anthills of the Savannah*", says that

The ceremony closes the gap between the elite and the poor because the rituals cross the line: it also represents Achebe's visions of a cross class unity with people from different religions and social classes in attendance. Prior to the ceremony, Beatrice who comes from an elite, Christian fundamentalist background, looks down upon Agatha, [who is] a Muslim servant, with condescension and disrespect. The ceremony portrays Beatrice's newfound respect for those [who are] different from her religiously and economically (P.141).

Ikem's motto "Go home and think" is a two-sided knife that becomes a threat to government and, in return, to Ikem's life. Thinking and having an inquisitive mind is likened to having a bomb in hand in Nigeria. "Story-tellers are, therefore, dreaded by dictators who deem that the exchange of ideas is something to be avoided. In a novel, this is not bound to happen with the declaration that "... we may accept a limitation on our actions but under no circumstance must we accept restrictions on our thinking"

The iron grills in the novel are symbolic as they may represent “the need for protection” as illustrated through Beatrice when she says: “I had been feeling somewhat protected lately since I had all doors and windows in the flat reinforced with iron grills so that even if the fellow outside did manage to knock down the outer wooden door, he would still have to face the iron, all of which gave you sometime to plan your escape” (Achebe 85).

The reason for Beatrice’s insecurity is minute but very significant to female trauma experienced even in childhood. The feeling of insecurity, and the longing to be free stem from her childhood days and the chaotic atmosphere in Nigeria at the time. In the novel, it is stated that she had witnessed violence in her family circles since her childhood. For instance, her father had a famous whip and her mother would often push her away violently. Therefore, she is insecure and, with the iron grills, her sense of insecurity becomes concrete in the novel. She, therefore, leaves her office like a bird from its cage. (Achebe 165) The cliché of “the bird in the cage” is used because not only is she a woman but, also, she is in a colonised country. Thus, she is doubly oppressed. She represents the thousands of Nigerian women caught in this vicious cycle of oppression. Beatrice combines her acquired western values with the indigenous culture and allows it to flow through her pen for a new era. She is the “Pillar of water fusing earth to heaven... at the black lake (94). Like water, two cultures come together in the black lake, which may stand for Nigeria. In another story in the novel, a mythological woman counts until seven (Achebe 95). Seven is a holy number and in *The Anthills of the Savannah* it also becomes the symbol of “peace”:

She holds her hand like a child in front of the holy stick and counts seven. Then she arranges carefully on the floor seven fingers of chalk, fragile symbols of peace and then gets him to sit on them so light that not one single finger may be broken. (P. 91).

It is fragile and people should care for it; this is suggestive of the fact that women are more sensitive towards nature and peace and should be its custodians. The new image of the post-colonial African Woman is highlighted here: custodian of peace. In the mythological story, it is the woman who organises the seven fingers of chalks and it is interesting to know that she puts a man to protect it. Similarly, men in Beatrice’s new environment – except her father whose whip becomes the symbol of authority and violence in the novel – are in the foreground in the struggle for peace and order. The violence in her family can be seen as the microcosm of the violence in patriarchal Nigeria and even in Africa. This is overcome contrary to the male and female lizard anecdote where, in the animal kingdom, the male is more active while the female

is passive in love matters. But in the human world, Beatrice is more active than Chris; she is the judge to decide whether he is worthy or not:

She said: come in; and as he did she uttered a strangled cry that was not just a cry but also a command or a password into her temple ...

She had pulled him up and back with such power and authority as he had never seen her exercise before. Clearly, this was her grove and her own peculiar rites over which she held absolute power and it did not matter whether she was priestess or goddess. No matter. But would he be found worthy? Would he survive? (P. 104).

In addition to the lizards, there are mosquitos and bed bugs that suck the blood of the people just like Britain. Furthermore, there are elephants looking for water and then sucking the juices stored in the years of rain by the tree inside the monumental hole (Achebe 193). Here, the elephants can be taken to be Britain while the trees represent Nigeria's raw materials and resources that Britain has been exploiting. The three green bottles may stand for the three young friends (Ikem, Chris and Sam). Chris knows that the end is coming speedily. One of the bottles has accidentally fallen, one is tilting and it finally falls. "Beatrice, later on, expresses that it is a coded message" (Achebe 214). The last green bottle – which is Chris – died with dignity. He was laughing at himself even in the face of death. With regard to death, he held that, "I shall be born again". His words can be taken symbolically to mean that they reincarnate.

From the above analysis, we see that Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* handles, in differing ways, the question of the restoration of women in the post-colonial visions of Africa's past, present and future. The central female characters' act as sources of passion and inspiration. The story highlights the essential relationship between the post-colonial independence and gender equality. One of the fundamental tenets of recent post-colonial theory which is interwoven in the trauma theory is that among the first necessary steps in the newfound colonial independence is the reclamation of the previously disparaged and disrespected culture. Frantz Fanon calls it the nationalist phase; and Kirsten Holst Peterson refers to it as "service of dignifying the past and restoring Africa's self-confidence (Petersen, *Postcolonial Reader*: 253). Beatrice remains the only character who emerges as the true spirit and heart of the novel as she alone is able to observe the status of Kangan with a perspective more geared towards reality. Africa's failure will keep repeating itself as long as we use the Whiteman's tools to dismantle his house. The very words the Whiteman had said in his time about the black race as a whole are the same words the African oppressors are using on the poor or on the masses. We see

Beatrice accusing Ikem of having “No clear role for women in his political thinking (83). The breaking with tradition where instead of the man naming his child it is the woman doing so suggests a new beginning, a subversion not only of Western tradition, but also that of African. Beatrice leads the change, forcing the others to adapt to what is present. Beatrice even serves as a source of passion and inspiration to the men around them; she provides spiritual leadership. This is a pointer to the fact that the gender issues that exist within Africa, like that of colonialism, clearly cannot be solved with the same old solutions. Without new things and new ways, the cycle of failure is doomed to perpetuate itself.

It is worthy to be reminded of the fact that during the pre-colonial days, most African societies were matriarchal in nature. But this was no longer the case during the colonial period when the African Women took the back seats while males took the lead in becoming the head of the family and the clan. This further changed during independence when women stood side-by-side with men to fight for their nation. Since then women have been making significant progress in being part of the political system of their countries. This is the role played by Beatrice Okoh in *Anthills of the Savannah* that describes the changed status of women in modern African society. The African Woman took advantage of the art of reading and writing and set out to explore the “New Horizons”. Learning gave women in Africa a voice they are making use of now. They merged their voices with the “shrieking White Women”, who have been trying hard to make their presence felt in the male-driven world. For these Black Women, it was “double-trouble” as they had to face dual oppression – being women and being black.

The black women tried to prove to the world that they were beautiful in the way they were born and are no less than the males as proven by Amna Shamin in “Emancipation of Women as Portrayed through Beatrice in *The Anthills of the Savannah*”. They even treaded paths full of thorns, hurting themselves from all corners to pave the way for a secure and hassle-free future for themselves as well as for their fellow tormented souls. It is so regrettable and sad to see Black Women tormented for their gender and colour, another dimension of double-trauma. It is not strange, therefore, that after being oppressed for their colour and race by their colonisers and their African men, these traumatised African Women took time to come to the forefront to make African men realise that they too held a significant place in society and ought to be treated as equals. Women in the pre-colonial society were rebellious. The colonial era with its male domination suppressed them. What the post-colonial society revealed was that this attitude did not totally die; it only laid fallow waiting for the right moment to resurface. The post-colonial era was that right moment. The rebellious attitude of women that was lying

inactive for generations suddenly resurfaced as the education they received made them competent enough to compete with their male counterparts. The much talked-of-insecurity they were grappling with, trying to make a place for themselves in society, did not discourage them. Despite the fact that some people held the view that marital status meant domination, these women did not and have not given up the importance of marriage which still stands high above spinsterhood.

Beatrice Okoh represents educated women given that she was an independent, educated and confident girl who had the audacity to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with males in the male-driven society. More and more, society begins to accept the power and equality of women. *The Anthills of the Savannah* is therefore a building roman talking about the development of Beatrice's character from innocence to maturity. This development is synonymous to the development of women's thinking and the changed mindset of the people in society as a whole. Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, therefore, upgrades the female personae. Beatrice is seen as a "headstrong" girl who is not willing to cheapen herself even for her boyfriend. She is not ready to forgo her morality by having a relationship with Sam to improve on his relationship with Chris. She, therefore, is adamant and stays aloof from Chris despite his advice, insinuating "Let's keep all options open, it is never too late" (68) when Sam invites her for a private dinner at a time his relationship with Chris was not the best. Beatrice responds when she says, "All options? I know of one at least I would not keep open". (69)

Besides, Beatrice's high-self-esteem made it hard for her to accept Sam's invitation to a private dinner, especially as Sam was too blunt in giving her the said invitation. He even misinformed her over the phone where this dinner was scheduled. This aroused her anger and she breached protocol:

My first act of rebellion... was to refuse my escort's offer to sit in the owner's corner of the black Mercedes standing in my driveway... When I said good evening to him on top of all that, he seemed dazed to begin with and then his bafflement gave way to a wide happy grin which pleased me very much for it confirmed that I had successfully compounded my rebellion – first to spurn a seat of honour and then to greet a mere driver first. That was when I smiled at myself and my puny, empty revolts, the rebellion of a mouse in a cage (P.68).

This is how the new African Woman and society had started accepting the equality of sexes. She even goes on to convince the people into accepting that the mother of a child should

have the privilege to name her child, thereby symbolising that women were already stepping into men's shoes.

Elewa and Agatha, though minor characters, also portray the same kind of rebellion. Given that they were not as educated as Beatrice, this symbolises unity in the struggle for equality which goes beyond education and marital status. During the naming ceremony, Beatrice's comment to Elewa that she is a "shy girl" meets with stiff resistance as she immediately retorts that: "I no shy at all ... I no shy but I no Sabi book". (213-214). Her inferiority complex was broken by her reaction to Beatrice's comment telling her to her face that she had seen and known plenty of things beyond the bookish knowledge that privileged women possessed. Agatha on the other hand, was Beatrice's maid who had an air of her own, and hardly paid heed to anyone beyond her own ideas and decisions. She never considered herself inferior to others; hence, she was offended when she was asked to wait on Elewa. Beatrice feels pity for Agatha by the end of the novel and after having rebuked her, she goes over and apologises, something not common in her habit. Women's relationships in this new era are ruled by logical thinking where women should no longer be enslaved by anyone, not even other women. This is the emancipation of the woman. All the menial tasks women did without ado, especially during the colonial period, was now met with hostility and rebellion by the same breed of women. Kudos to education that has come to liberate women's minds.

The post-Apartheid era, therefore, ties in with this new image of the post-colonial African Women. Gillian Slovo's novel, *The Red Dust*, beautifully captures these concerns. It reads for the most part as a formal novel, combining its representation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission elements of courtroom drama and detective fiction. It addresses the reversal of power of post-apartheid South Africa, and poses useful, if not surprising, questions about the relationship between gender and change in the "New South Africa". The novel renders the intimacies of oppression in gendered terms. It redirects our attention to a patriarchal structure that outlasts apartheid, laying bare the continuing gender convictions of new nation building. A new world order is set where the African Woman is one with women the world over to decry and overcome what they have gone through at the hands of society. Through a black male character's redefinitions of self, the novel projects a new version of black masculinity for the post – apartheid nation. It is a slap in the face of White supremacy when a White woman, both as fictional character and as authorial self, decides that her future lies with a black rather than a White man. Black masculinity and White femininity are rendered as ambiguous subject

positions in a novel that formulates ambiguity as an ethnical response to the oppositions of apartheid and the struggle against apartheid.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was one of the greatest achievements of post-apartheid era. It fell in line with the truth recovery projects, which unearth information about systematic human rights violations. The focus was on society moving past mass conflicts. It was believed that sharing narratives can bring people together. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission worked on the principle that creating a forum for testimony about atrocities could help victims of violation to reclaim dignity and force the nation to acknowledge injustices that many had denied. It therefore provided acknowledgment of violations previously denied by the apartheid government. It equally motivated perpetrators to come forward about their crimes in return for amnesty. It offered victims of violence a public forum to give voice to their experiences. Paul Gready writes:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission gave South Africans a shared vocabulary—truth, justice, reconciliation, reparations, forgiveness, accountability and apology—with which to discuss the past and the present. (P. 74).

Therefore, it was the starting point for reconciliation. Even though some critics condemned it for de-emphasising the day-to-day structural violence by focusing on individualised, corporeal human rights violations, it was the gateway to fruitful talking and the building of a harmonious society. It was highly indexed by Jolly and Ross who argued that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission often failed to hear the narratives of females, the lost and suffering people (P.288) as embedded in women's testimonies about violence perpetrated against their husbands, sons, and other male relatives.

This in itself is a positive move for gender equity as other critics like Rolston, Itackett, Stauffer and Chakravarti – just to name a few – point out that the truth commissions can push people into narrow roles as victims in need of healing, preventing them from being heard when they articulate claims to agencies, or demand for justice. They have addressed inequalities that persist in the wake of the TRC. Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* (2000) falls in line with this. We cannot in anyway refuse to accept the view that The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) ability to produce shared narratives remains a touchstone for contemporary efforts at nationwide reconciliation. Manipulations and lies telling must be publicly refuted in order to develop a societal commitment to justice.

It is very rewarding to note that those “terrorists” that the South African police brutally tortured and murdered at will in their unfettered efforts to crush the “terrorist acts” of Black rebels against apartheid have now occupied the higher branches of government while the offending policemen are imprisoned. This is the moving story of Gillian Slovo’s *Red Dust*, where the reader can almost taste the dust and feel the heat of the stultifying locale. Gillian’s powerful novel, full of legal and emotional twists and turns, strips bare the torment forever ingrained in the mind of the victims.

The story centres on Sarah Barcant, an intelligent, independent and beautiful lady. She is enjoying a high-flying legal career in New York when she receives a mysterious call from her elderly mentor, Ben Hoffman, who wants her to return to Smits river, the South African town in which she grew up – but had hoped to leave it behind her. He wanted her to assist him in what might be his last case. He is noted as a famous civil rights lawyer who defended Africans during the apartheid era. The case in hand was to torture the MP and former activist Alex Mpondo to elicit the truth about where Steve was buried. Mpondo unfortunately uses charm and other evasive tactics to mask the guilt he feels, rightly or wrongly, over the death of a friend and fellow activist, Sizela. As MP, Mpondo is to be the key witness at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing of an ex-policeman who has been applying for amnesty for several crimes.

Alex has survived by forgetting and – like his old enemies, the policemen – does not want to change. He had put Steve out of his mind, buried him as surely as Steve himself had been buried. Sometimes, looking around parliament at the other survivors of those terrible years, Alex thought that what they had in common was not just their shared suffering but also the manner in which they all had been forced to keep their humanity by generalising it. The collective had become more important than the individual. This is a strategy for them to survive all pain. This heightens tension between Alex and Sarah as Sarah fails to understand how Alex literally cannot remember; thus making the prosecutor’s skills – of which she is so proud – apparently useless. She is further baffled by the bond revealed between Alex and his torturer as both of them face each other at the hearings. At the heart of this compelling novel is the painful revelation that there is never going to be a truth that these contradictory, fascinating characters can all recognise. Unspoken ambiguous ties of loyalty and betrayal stain each of them. Through Alex who is glamorous and exciting on the surface survives police torture; he is tortured anew by the belief that he betrayed Steve.

Gillian's *Red Dust* adopts a transcultural perspective. It is not only an investigation of the victim's remains, but it is also the body of the individual text and its context – the post-colonial period. Post-colonial literature very often transcends national boundaries. Slovo is one of those great voices in crime fiction. She, through her novels, uses crime and detection in both a personal feminist way as well as in a wider socio-political dimension. She explores – from the incisive viewpoint – issues around feminism, motherhood and psychoanalysis as they relate to a complex set of criminal disruptions that have their origins in the defended brutal apartheid system of South Africa, her country of origin.

In her own view, *Red Dust* which was published in 2000 is essentially a thriller, but it is also an examination of the demands of political and personal loyalty, particularly the intimacies of oppression. It is about the amnesty hearings of an apartheid torturer and his now-powerful black victim. After her assessment of the verdicts of the TRC by attending their session's first-hand, she concludes that "the last thing spoken at the Truth Commission is the truth". As regards the sessions on Ruth, she concludes that "They are White supremacists whose motive for killing Ruth was hatred". She asks a fundamental question at the beginning of the novel:

What do you do when you want to change the world for the better, and you seem to have achieved power, and then everything that you dreamed and hoped for becomes changed and tarnished and destroyed, but in the name of those ideals? How do people survive that? And what are the costs of that survival? (P. 52).

From the above stories and analysis, we think not of the fact that there is clear evidence in the texts that trauma studies in literature find their roots in psychoanalysis. Though not limiting authors' stories only to "trauma narrative", we realise that even symptoms associated with trauma in medical fields often erupt or come up in the texts of these authors. Many critics stress lack of the linear historical development of trauma.

However, Judith L. Herman, cites three major types of significant growth and development that are experienced. From 1980, Post-traumatic stress disorder became officially recognised as a disorder of memory. It is also called shell shock or battle fatigue syndrome. Post-traumatic stress disorder, henceforth referred to as PTSD, is often a condition that develops after a person has experienced or even witnessed a traumatic or terrifying event in which serious harm occurred or was threatened. This was the case with some of the women. It can lead to fear, helplessness, or horror as we have seen in the above chosen texts. Trauma studies, through

these texts, illuminate the processes resulting from contact between indigenous groups and western invaders that were catastrophic. They help us to understand the mental state of the peoples who were victims of catastrophic cultural contact, and who nevertheless mustered the strength to resist and fight for their rights. More importantly, they highlight the way that the trauma of one generation is passed down to later generations through their indirect recall.

Most of the victims of trauma in the above cited texts are the models of post-traumatic growth advocated for in this research endeavour. They lay emphasis on the positive experiences that come as benefits after trauma. There is always a silver lining in a dark cloud for everyone who has undergone traumatic experiences. Life, as it is said, is made up of choices. A victim might choose to see only the darkness and be drowned by it or see the silver cloud and sail on it to light. Nothing lasts forever, our wounds, our failures, our challenges eventually heal. When we work hard to overcome tough times, with a bit of luck on our side, we can become stronger because of them. When you heal within, you do not only bounce back but you bounce forward, and recover better. It is only at this point that we can begin to talk about post-traumatic growth which is the positive mental shift experienced as a result of adversity.

This spirit is picked up by others and it cuts across nations and continents. It is with this success story built on traumatic experiences that we will be dwelling on our selected texts. During this modern – though difficult – era in Africa when corrupt, exploitative, oppressive and materialistic rulers are spared neither by the wrath of the masses nor by the critical and condemning pen of writers, there is no stone left unturned in order to help them to get to where they want to go. The works of writers become even prophetic. They criticise as well as project what they think would happen if the inflictors of pain/trauma do not toe the line. Literature, therefore, becomes an integral part of society; and great and wise leaders often read the signs of the times from literary works. Writers become the mouthpiece of the downtrodden. Head and Emechetta have undoubtedly written their names in the annals of history because they have contributed positively – through their great literary works that are clear pacesetters – to the transformation of trauma into a tool for the development of self, the community and mankind as a whole. By so doing, they abide by Tony Robinson's quote that "The secret of success is learning how to use pain (trauma) instead of having pain (trauma) use you. If you do that, you are in control of your life. If you don't, life controls you". This is what will constitute the core material for our case study in this work.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS CONSTRUCTING THE AFRICAN WOMAN

Character construction or development is the craft of giving characters the personality, depth, and motivation that propel them through a story. In a nutshell, it is how a character identifies setbacks and challenges, and how a character evolves by overcoming them in the course of the story. In this chapter, our focus will be on how the life experiences of Bessi Head and Buchi Emecheta as reflected in their chosen works offer rich opportunities for the discussion of the perception, place and identity of women in Africa. In this light, it would be logical to identify the eclectic sources of pain/trauma before attempting to fix the problems. As such, in mirroring real life, the writers create fictional characters by assigning goals to them, identifying obstacles in their way, and highlighting the conflicts lived by these characters. This is done for purposes of connecting readers to the story by making characters relatable. Consequently, they create believable characters who are unique and three dimensional. Each character has real attributes – like appearance, personality and backstory – that make them relatable. In this light, a character's motivations inform their actions and decisions, thereby creating the narrative arc in the story.

As a result of the above, this chapter will pay attention to how the novelists establish the characters' motivations and goals. That is, how they create characters that are driven by deep-seated motivations and have goals that they are trying to attain. This will definitely create interesting characters with which readers can easily identify. Also, our concern in this chapter will be how the novelists choose a voice in which to tell the story. This is very important as the perspectives of the different narrators in the different novels will determine how the characters' information is revealed in the course of the story. By doing a slow review of information on the characters – that is a bit by bit revelation as the story unfolds – the novelists create realism by mirroring the way in which people get to know one another in real life and are able to identify their obstacles/challenges. As said earlier, in creating conflict, tension is used to move the story forward by forcing characters to make decisions. Furthermore, the mere act of giving important characters a backstory will go a long way towards enriching the analyses.

By digging into the lives of characters and fleshing out their histories, the researcher will be helped in her quest to figure out what makes them tick as well as what informs their decisions in the story. As such the personalities of the characters will be described in familiar terms. This would create recognisable personality traits and quirks. By painting a physical

picture of these characters – hair colour, eyes, stature, mannerisms, body language – readers would envision a more realistic image of the characters. Consequently, this would lead to a more realistic and logical journey in the construction of the African woman.

With this in mind, this chapter will be viewed from the standpoint of Gender/Sexual Politics and the Demon of Patriarchy on the one hand, and on the other hand, the Nightmare of Colonial Incursion and Gender Politics. This will highlight the root causes of trauma in Head's *A Question of Power* and Maru and Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*. The goal will be to enable the researcher draw the far-reaching lessons needed for the construction of the African woman. This is because it is always important to identify what causes pain or pushes people into trauma before determining or advocating the course of action for fixing them. In this light, one would be adopting a more informed and effective line of action for analysing and interpreting the facts in this research work.

Thus, the trauma theory tenet of “fight-or-flight response” will be the major lens through which the eclectic sources of African Female Trauma will be viewed in this chapter. It should be recalled that this tenet stipulates that man, like any other animal, is biologically equipped to protect self from harm as best as he/she can. One cannot protect self from harm if one cannot identify the source of that harm. One can only keep away from or avoid what one knows or sees. In this chapter, therefore, we will follow the characters on their journey of sensing or identifying the pains they have gone through. Once one can distinguish each episode of danger that the traumatised victim went through, one would be in a better position to see how this connects to the other episodes of danger in the victims' mind. This would also enable the researcher to make valid conclusions on the perception, place and identity of women in the African society. This is not to say that the “volume control” tenet will be ignored here. Since man responds to stimulus based on the level of the threat that the stimulus represents, particular attention will also be paid to the victim's reactions to the various forms of trauma they have lived. Thus, there will be a better understanding of the buffer actions put in place to help attenuate the effects of the stressors by the characters.

In addition to the foregoing, certain tenets of the psychoanalytical theory would also provide a beautiful lens through which the concept of sources of trauma will be highlighted in this chapter. Besides, anger stems from the pain one feels within and sometimes this can only be better handled when one seeks to get to the eclectic sources or root causes of pain in the first place. It is an important step that cannot be missed in the process of constructing the African Woman. Head and Emecheta have not only transformed the real and unforgettable painful and traumatic experiences of their lives into fiction, but they have also helped in reshaping the mentalities of people and the focus of society on the sources of trauma. They identify, through

their works, the sources of the thorns of life that they have stepped on or which have pierced them. They try to see why the thorns were there, in the first place, and what caused them to step on them. This analysis compels them to develop ways and means of coping with pain as well as charting survival strategies. As such, the works of Head and Emecheta are a type of therapy which they use in relieving their pain, sharing their coping strategies and prescribing new visions for their respective societies. This ties in with the socio-critic's perspective of work which stipulates that there is no single individual without a society. The chain tying the creator, the specialist and the public together works for the good of all.

Before delving into the root causes of trauma, it would be very appropriate for us to revisit the notion of trauma in this chapter. Trauma stems from a sense of excruciating pain which is defined by the Oxford Shorter Dictionary as:

The opposite of pleasure, the sensation which one feels when hurt (in body and in mind) suffering distress...the trouble taken in accomplishing or attempting something...followed by the penalty or punishment in case of not fulfilling the command by way of punishment. (P .605).

Psychological pain or mental pain is an unpleasant feeling of a psychological, non-physical origin. A pioneer in the field of suicidology, Edwin S. Sheiiedman, 1996, says that pain is:

How much you hurt as a human being. It may also be called mental pain and suffering...It is believed to be an inescapable aspect of human existence differentiated from physical pain which is often localised and associated with noxious physical stimuli. (P. 173).

Such pain builds up to trauma which is the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. It causes feelings of helplessness that diminishes the victim's self-worth and the ability to feel the full range of experiences and emotions lived. From the above-mentioned points, two things stand out that go to reinforcing the psychoanalytical background of trauma. It has an impact on self and its development. It moves in two opposite directions. One either takes the positive path and crushes his/her pain/trauma or the negative path and allows his/her pain/trauma to destroy him/her. These causes of trauma abound in Head's *A Question of Power* and *Maru* as well as in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*. They may differ in application but, generally speaking, they fall under the same broad classification.

GENDER/SEXUAL POLITICS AND THE DEMON OF PATRIARCHY

In her words, Bessie Head pays a lot of attention to women's issues. She explains women's socio-cultural conditions, roles and challenges in her narratives. She illustrates how women are confronted with gender discrimination in addition to the racial and ethnic marginalisation. In this light, gender bias is seen as one of the great sources of pain and trauma in her works. *A Question of Power* and *Maru* highlight the fate of women in a typically male dominated world. Traumatizing pain arises from the way women are misused in a male chauvinistic society. It is a world seen through a man's eyes. What women go through pushes them to wonder aloud why they were brought into this biased world. They are often relegated to the background and allotted roles that reduce them to pleasure providers for men, caretakers of the home, child producing machines. These roles were demeaning enough, especially as the woman's opinion was neither sought nor her voice ever heard. More often than not, women were simply portrayed as commodities that could be bundled off to early marriage so that money could come in for the education of the male child, or used as sex objects for the satisfaction of men, or worse still, as reproduction machines for fabricating family heirs or work hands.

In *A Question of Power*, Head is at her best in mirroring the societal ill of gender bias embedded in the social politics of Apartheid. First and foremost, she captures it beautifully through the choice of her characters that are constructs modelled on the readers' conception of people, thus they are person-like. From the genesis of the birth of Elizabeth, one cannot fail to visualise the painful discriminating Apartheid society of South Africa. Elizabeth is the incarnation of what thousands of coloured women endured under the Apartheid regime of racist South Africa. Elizabeth's mother is ostracised and restricted to a mental asylum because she fell in love with and got a baby by a native stable boy. Here, the choice of characters by Head is very telling of the chauvinistic biases of the South African society. It is no coincidence that little or nothing is said about the stable boy in the text. Whereas Elizabeth's mother's crime narrative takes up much of the story-time, that of her partner in crime takes very little time. The pain does not just end with the lengthening of the story-time, but is made more painful and traumatising by the frequent repetition of the narrative and the use of flash-backs so as to rub it in, thereby portraying the 'devilish' nature of the woman who dared to break the law of the spiteful Apartheid society by falling in love with a black stable boy and even by going as far as daring to have a child with him. His being a boy/man downplays the gravity of his crime. A lot of fuss is made about the woman's act as if it were an act committed alone or with a stick. This

is an age-old phenomenon rooted even in the Holy Bible. Elizabeth's mother is a true replica of Mary Magdalene in the Holy Bible who was brought before Jesus Christ for committing adultery with many men and as such had to be punished alone but not together with the man with whom the act of adultery had been committed. Unfortunately for Elizabeth's mother, her South African society is not Jesus' society in which Mary Magdalene was exonerated from her sins through the merciful heart of Jesus and his diplomatic handling of the situation. Jesus understood the biases of the men who brought Mary Magdalene before Him. He pricked their consciences by calling on any of them that had never sinned to cast the first stone at her.

Furthermore, Head wittingly satirises the situation through her mastery and appropriate use of irony. It is ironical that in seeking to resolve a problem, society instead creates a worse problem for those involved and even for society at large; this can be seen through the hard-heartedness of the executioners of the law. It is a cruel society that sends the knife of division between a mother and a child with hypocritical assumptions that she must have been insane to go so "low" as to having a relationship with a black stable boy. As if the pain of being deprived of her baby were not enough, this cruel family and society condemned her to imprisonment. It has to be the mother whose only crime is that of having to have carried the baby for nine months in her stomach that has to pay the price. One cannot fail to notice the discriminating application of the law in this instance: lenient with the man but hard on the woman. She must have found it suffocating and traumatising to function in such a patriarchal society. Elizabeth's story is not in any way better than that of her mother.

The image of the "Red House" is so beautifully used in painting a pathetic and moving story of this sad history of Elizabeth. The vivid and moving diction used makes the story sadder and more pathetic. No one would read these lines without bursting into tears for this child who is not only discriminated against but also bears the worst brunt of patriarchy and the ills of the social politics of apartheid in South Africa:

Seven years later, when she had become a primary school teacher, she returned to the small town where her foster mother lived and said: "Tell me about my mother."

The foster mother looked at Elizabeth for some time, and then abruptly burst into tears. 'It's such a sad story,' she said. 'It caused so much trouble and the family was frightened by the behaviour of the grand-mother. (P. 17).

We hail the foster mother and her husband for being the only ones to truly care for Elizaberth. She does not even have the heart of breaking her heart after so much time. With pain, she continues telling the sad facts of Elizaberth's life to her:

My husband worked on the child welfare committee, and your case came up again and again. First, they received you from the mental hospital and sent you to a nursing-home. A day later, you were returned because you did not look White. They sent you to a Boer family. A week later, you were returned. The women leader on the committee said: "What can she do with this child? Its mother is White." My husband came home that night and asked me to take you. I agreed (P. 17).

What a moving story of love shown to a child rejected by all.

The brother of your mother came in. He was very angry and said: "We want to wash our hands off this business. We want to forget it, but the old lady insists on seeing the child. We had to please her." The old lady came down every time they entered horses in the races. She was the only one who wanted to see your mother and you. When you were six years old, we heard that your mother suddenly killed herself in the mental home. The grandmother brought all her toys and dolls to you (P. 17).

It will be interesting to analyse the significance of the titles of the texts at this stage as they implicitly inform us of the mindset of the novelists, their motivational drive and their goals in putting their life experiences into creative writings. The titles are not chosen haphazardly – they play a role towards this great construction of the African woman and that is why it is very important for us to pause and have a deeper reflection on the choice of titles for the selected novels.

The title, *A Question of Power* captures Head's preoccupation on why people suffer and go through traumas. It remains a question because she has not yet found an answer as to why people fight for power and pay no attention to those they crush on their way to attaining power. It is equally an unanswered question when she, through her characters, ponder on what people do with the much fought for power once they have it. As a critical observer, Head attributes the sufferings and traumas of the South Africans during Apartheid to vaulting ambitions to power by the colonialists. It is not only outrageous but unacceptable that the whites, who are strangers in the land abuse the warm welcome given to them by sending the owners of the land out of

all lucrative and comfortable areas of their homeland to the peripheries. This is total abuse of power and it again remains an unanswered question that is echoed in the title, *A Question of Power*. It is a question begging to be answered – a foible of autocrats. There is an exaggeration as this power fight is taken to all fields of life – politics, religion, sexuality and humanity. The much-fought-for power relates to us the intricacies, workings and visions of Elizabeth's mind as she moves in and out of insanity, hospitals and mental homes. Her inability to have her worries about human nature and attitudes answered motivates her in voicing it loud and clear in her creative combination of words: *A Question of Power*.

The novel ends up being a reflection of the different power struggles in the society – a question of power indeed. It is all about colonial power/political power wherein the colonialists take delight in lording it over the poor, welcoming but naïve Blacks of South Africa. After oppressing and suppressing them, they turn them into their slaves. They are not good as partners in governance but ironically good for their beds and for labour in their homes. To cover up for their illicit relations with Blacks, laws are passed prohibiting any relationship between Blacks and Whites. Hypocrisy is noticed here when emotional relationships are prohibited but not physical relationships of Master/servant. These questions of how power functions run through the mind of Head who beautifully captures in the title. They are questions that should be properly answered for the construction of the African Woman to be a reality.

Shamelessly this power struggle is not limited to politics and governance but is extended to religion. The vaulting ambition of the colonialists pushes them into making a mockery of the same God they pretend to propagate. God, they say, is love but then this is not that love that they live with the Blacks. It is a simple contradiction of the basis on which this same religion they preach is founded. God is one and creator of the universe; meaning that God created Blacks as well as he created the colonialists; and asked us his children to love one another as he loves us. Blinded by love of power the colonialists over step their bounds by maltreating the same God's children they are supposed to love.

Even amongst the Blacks the question of who wields power is very central. The men want to lord it over the women and those in position of authority throw their weight on those they govern; strife stems from a question of power. Trauma comes from a question of power:

And throughout that whole year Medusa only replied in despicable terms, the wrongs things were stressed. When someone says "my people" with a specific stress on the blackness of those people, they are after kingdoms and permanently child-like slaves.

“The people” are never going to rise above the status of “the people”. They are going to be told what is good for them by the “mother” and the “father”. And she made wrong kinds of attacks on Elizabeth. (P. 63).

Indeed, it is all a question of power with Medusa and the 72 nice time girls proving a point to Elizabeth on who is in control when it comes to spiritual and sexual power. Elizabeth’s trauma does not end here with the raging war between Dan and Sello on who actually owns her.

Fed-up with the above intrigues in power, Elizabeth turns to the Divine Power that is found in the hearts of men. The words of Sello the Monk come back powerfully to her as an answer to the question of power in the novel. There is therefore a question of power and an answer which is not only didactic but also captures the novelist’s vision/ideology:

Sello, the monk, had proclaimed this very road in opposition to horrors – let people be free to evolve, let everything alone and recreate a new world of soft textures and undertones full of wild flowers and birds and children’s playtime and women baking bread. He kept on looking hopefully at Medusa. Oh no, she simply wanted to be the manager of the African continent with everyone she found disagreeable (P. 64).

Head’s heart cries out to the victim of this power struggle. The title is, therefore, a symbolic arrow highlighting the hell the victim is going through and indicating the possible channels to take to get out of this hell:

The victim is really the most flexible, the most free person on earth. He does not have to think up endless falsehoods. His jailer creates chains and the oppression. He is presented with a thousand and one hells to live through, and he usually lives through them all (P. 84).

Head’s bitterness and frustrations are captured in this quotation from which she actually coined the title: *“If things of the soul are really a question of power then anyone in possession of power of the spirit could be Lucifer” (P. 199).* She, therefore, discards all those in possession of such power and embraces the Universal Brotherhood of Man where power is in the hearts of all men who see and treat others with brotherly love. Elizabeth appoints herself the servant of this God who is in the hearts of men, in the form of love; a God who is not love by the condition or colour of one’s skin, position nor continent. This is the answer to the question of power that runs throughout the novel. The universal brotherhood of man will put an end to pain and trauma and this is what Head is advocating for.

In line with the above, the title Maru is also not haphazardly chosen. It bears a lot of weight to the process of constructing the African woman. Maru is both the name of one of the main characters in the novel and the title of the novel Maru in Setswana means cloud. It is most especially an extended metaphor, symbolising or associated to both the cloud and the heart. Head settles on it as a title to show how one of the giants of oppression comes crashing down under the influence of a woman bent on liberating her victimised people, the Masarwas. This falls in line with Head's view that racism, no matter what its origin, is perpetuated by individuals and individuals can decide to reject any measure that runs counter to what they consider right. Maru and Moleka represent two parts of a single individual. Moleka represents the self without the heart and Maru represents the missing heart. The novel is titled Maru to lay greater accent on the heart which is the seed of human love and kindness. It has to be transformed if society must be transformed to a cradle of love. Through a well-developed metaphor used by Head, Moleka is seen as a sun, powerful on its own as a thunderstorm, but one that needs a cloud from which to draw rain. Maru is that cloud as he presents the heart that Moleka lacks. It is lamentable that these two are separated. If Moleka had a cloud, a heart of his own, he would be complete and could combine sunshine with rainfall to produce a rainbow.

From this idea, Head builds a process of change and transformation, using Margaret as a bridge to link the cloud and the heart. She is the impetus for change in two decisive ways. Firstly, by symbolically reuniting Moleka with his heart; and secondly, by withholding herself from him so he could unite with the efficient, unprejudiced, and Leader-bound Dikeledi. By associating Maru with the cloud that needs a force to produce water, and Moleka with the force that needs a substance, the cloud, a relationship of dependence is emphasised between the two characters. Maru, which in Setswana means cloud as earlier mentioned, is indeed that banking of clouds which unfortunately in this context is unable to release its beneficial downpour. Failure to realise that rain is synonymous to failure by the chief to relieve the distress of his people, Moleka, though the sun around which spun a billion satellites, must negotiate to combine his sun with water from Maru's cloud to produce rainbows. Maru is Moleka's shadow. Maru and Moleka belong to opposing kingdoms. Moleka has no heart and falls in love with the physical. He uses women, gives them no love, runs them emotionally and dumps them, all the while remaining unhurt and smiling. Maru on the other hand gives too much love so that the weakest of his women goes insane and walks about the village muttering to themselves.

Consequently, the transformational change comes with Mary seeing that he has been replaced as the heart of Moleka. Like Maru, Margaret has been an outcast. Maru is often

described as a God. Through Maru's transformation, Head is calling for the self-emancipation of humanity which includes Masarwa emancipation. The message here is that individuals, together, would lead Africa out of its dark place and into the swelling sunlight, where temperate rains fall, and there are rainbows.

In this regard, true change comes when Moleka who represents the self without the heart and Maru who represents the missing heart merge. Through the well-developed metaphor in the novel, we come to think of Moleka as a sun, powerful on its own and as a thunderstorm, but one that needs a cloud from which to draw rain – *Maru*, as a title is very telling and ties with the personality of the character Maru and the part he plays in advancing the plot of the novel and effecting change. It is a clarion call for the Maru's of life to merge with the sun to produce rain for humanity.

Buchi Emecheta, like Bessie Head comes up with very telling and meaningful titles for her novels. Her tone and attitude towards her subject matter comes out strongly in the titles of the novels. They have a force of their own because of the heavily worded and metaphorical dimensions of the words used. The titles are not only appealing but they are also directional. They signal the urge for construction as is seen in this chapter. The titles can, therefore, not be ignored since they are devices used in promoting the views of the writer/novelist.

In the light, Emecheta's title, *Second Class Citizen* is a strong summative statement of what she feels and lives as a foreigner in England and when she looks back it reveals even what she had lived in her home land in the hands of colonisers. This feeling brings out other feelings of bitterness and resentment to the way society has treated especially the girl child/the woman she is. Her story is the story of thousands like her and this title is not only appealing but engaging as it touches the core of all those living similar frustrations like her.

When we think of a second class citizen as a person who is systematically discriminated against within a state or other political jurisdiction despite their nominal status as a citizen or legal resident, then we can deign to see the deepness and the validity of the title. The title alone immediately signals the interpretation of class divide within the novel. The title, therefore, is the sum total of the experiences lived by Buchi Emecheta in London. She moved to London in 1960 and later studied sociology and worked in North London as a community worker. This title, "Second Class Citizen", is a summary of her experiences and the major inspiration for her writing. It applies or appeals to anyone who is not given the same rights and privileges as others

in the same country or society. It is even more frustrating if you come to think of the fact that it is not your fault that you were born where you were born.

Adah's title, therefore, is lamentation and a cry against people who treat others as dumb, stupid and sometimes as trouble makers.

Adah draws this and highlights how it works in different fields of life with the aim of sensitising those who have been victims. She highlights and denounces it in family life where the girl child is assigned the status of a second class citizen even by those who ought to love and fight for her. It is not just discrimination but it is as painful as being considered and treated as a second class citizen. She, Adah, does not have the same importance as boy and has to be treated as a commodity that has to be sold in marriage for the money to be used for Boys school fees. Adah has to work and provide the money for Francis's studies. More humiliating is the way Francis's parents treat her as if her own parents, though dead, would not have also loved to see her happy and provided for. In marriage, she is used as the foot stool of her husband, a thing to bear his pains and frustrations and still provide for him and make herself available for his pleasure. If this is not being second class to Francis, then there cannot be another better description for it.

More frustrating and painful is the treatment meted out to the citizens in their own country by the colonialists. They outrightly abuse the hospitality of the people through the dog treatment they give them right in their country. If there is something worse than Second Class Citizen this is what Emecheta would have called it. The colonialists have the best jobs, live in the best areas and have the best treatment from the people. In return, they look down on the indigenes, shun them and reserve dog treatment to them. Moving to London only reinforces this ugly side of the Whiteman.

The Blackman is even treated worse in the land of the Whiteman and outrightly told that he is a Second Class Citizen who has no rights that are to be defended. They have the worst jobs, live in the worst quarters, are exposed to the worst conditions, and have no security.

Also, the Blacks are Second Class Citizens in politics as they are totally kept out of politics. Everything is decided for them and they are not part of policy making. This is not limited to politics, even in the business world they are in the peripheries and treated as Second Class Citizens. Emecheta highlights all of these so they can act as eye opener to them. It is meant to tickle them into joining the train towards the construction of the African Woman who

has been the most affected of the victims. In a nutshell, therefore, the title, *Second Class Citizen*, is not just a window dressing or combination of words meant to entertain. It is meaningful, aimed at tickling and sensitising at the same time. It carries the tone of lamentation that should awaken the traumatised to positive, liberating action. Nobody likes to be considered a Second Class Citizen, nor to remain in a position of one after being forced in on it.

At the end of the day, the vision of Emecheta is to take the Blacks and most especially the double oppressed African Woman out of this position of second class citizenship.

It kicks starts the reconstruction process where acknowledgement of where pain is coming from is central to overcoming it.

Last but not the least is the title of Emecheta's novel, "In the Ditch". The title of this novel is a strong metaphor for where Emecheta and thousands like her have found themselves. This outright declaration of "In the Ditch" is a silent acceptance of how bad things are. Emecheta realises that she and her likes are stuck. No matter how much they resist it or pretend, they know better than the situation: "...burn up a lot of gas and sling plenty of life-mud, stuck means stuck". The acceptance that this is how low one has gone down the drain is the only sure way of strategising for change. Change at this point means that things must be done differently. No matter how much we fight for a better situation in life, there comes a time in our lives when the wheels keep spinning but we are going nowhere. The only people who never get stuck are those who are going nowhere. These are those who embrace pain and trauma and fold their arms waiting to be crushed by them. Everybody gets stuck somehow, somewhere, sooner or later. It is at this moment that deep reflection, critical thinking coupled with logical action is of paramount importance. The title, therefore, is a call for trauma victim to stop and take stock of where they are in order to plot out secure routes to liberation. It is only at this point that one can begin to talk about reconstruction. The road must be re-constructed in a manner that it will lead one out of the ditch.

The title of this novel, *In the Ditch*, is also very telling of Emecheta's humility. It takes a humble person to admit failure. Sometimes it could be embarrassing but it is the bitter pill that must be swallowed for the pain to go away. To pretend that you do not have a problem gives no room for a solution to be found. To admit that you are stuck in a ditch means acknowledging that you need help. There is no getting unstuck without you asking for help. Some people really feel bad asking for help. But this is a situation where one cannot have an omelette without breaking the eggs. Help is the rub that can sooth the pain also. The very fact

that you are stuck means you are no longer the solution to the problem. You will need to cooperate with somebody else to find the solution to the problem.

Nevertheless, there is still some caution to be taken when one is in a ditch. The use of the definite article “The” in this title is not by mistake. It simply means that the ditch is well known. If this is the case, then the one in the ditch should equally know that not all help is the same. Once in a ditch, there are a multitude of possibilities of those who can help you, or try to help you, or pretend they can help you or take advantage of you in the name of helping you. It takes some discernment at moments like this one to know who to trust. This is the implied message from this title. You are in a ditch but watch out for the kind of help you are going in for. It should not be the Dole House kind of help that would keep you in permanent misery. Before crying out for help you should take the following precautions into consideration: are those to whom I am crying out for help honest? Do they know what they are doing? Are they concerned with your needs? There are very pertinent reflections that Emecheta sustains in the ditch life, lived by these women with their poor miserable families. The million-dollar question is: How much help can you get from the very person who has sent you into a ditch life and does everything for you to have his thorns while he has your roses. The one in the ditch should also be aware that help might be immediate just as it can take sometime.

On the other hand, by this title Emecheta is appealing to societal conscience towards those in a ditch. People who are stuck do not need advice – they need traction. Advice on how to get out of the mud might not take you out of the ditch/mud. When extended to a car in a ditch, what you need at this point in time is somebody with a little, a horsepower more than yours who could anchor themselves on a dry road and, hopefully, with tires that could hold their own while towing you back onto the road. In essence, what Emecheta is advocating for here is that people who are stuck do not often need advice on what to do. They need the helpers to give them the motivation, encouragement, strength and hope to do the right things. Above all, they need clarity, communication, courage and some collaboration. These will give them the traction they need in order to know the right step to be taken next.

Nothing really changes if you are out of the ditch but do not know where you are going to. It would be as bad as remaining in the ditch. If you do not know where you are going to, your next step might just as well take you back into the ditch or into another one. Actually, some people have been freed from the most ruthless form of stuck, only to flounder with life in general. Some have escaped the clutches of dead-end situations, only to wind up slogging

through another one. Others have jumped from an unhealthy relationship to another – freed for a season – only to drift back into a relational mess.

The Lesson to be taken home from the implication and insinuation of this title by Emecheta is that, if getting stuck offers any benefits, it is that it offers the victims great opportunities to clarify where they want to go to if taken out of the ditch. If you only desire to get out of the mud with no intention nor idea where you want to go to, you might as well stay in the mud. You are not truly free until you are headed in the right direction.

In a nutshell, the titles of these novels alone foreshadow the causes of trauma that are highlighted in the novels. From first sight, we see that “power” is at the centre of trauma in *A Question of Power*; Maru is part of the problem in *Maru*; the notion of a first and second class citizen is central to the problem in *Second Class Citizen*; and falling or finding one’s self in a ditch is the foundation of trauma in *A Question of Power*. These problems together with the causes analysed below must be resolved for re-construction to take place.

The insensitivity of the social politics of the apartheid system cannot be ignored from the above passage. The fundamental crime of Elizabeth is that she is the daughter of her mother; an innocent child who stands condemned with her mother for a “crime” about which she knows nothing. One cannot fail admiring the beautiful story of the grandmother, her defence, her insistence on filial ties in a country where people were not people at all. Her origins are tied to the ‘Red Building,’ such an unforgettable painful past that lays the platform for the pain and trauma of her life:

In that small town where she had been born, the last thing she did was to walk to the mental hospital and stare at it. There was a very high wall surrounding the building, and the atmosphere was so silent there hardly seemed to be people alive behind it.... It was on the sane road that leads to the bird sanctuary. She remembered saying, ‘Now, we are passing the ‘Red House’ never dreaming that her life was so closely linked to its life (P. 18).

In very concrete terms, Bessie Head effectively employs the above irony to show the seriousness of the acts imposed on man by man. It is so ironical and painful that as a child Elizabeth dreaded the ‘Red House’ only to find out later in her adult life that it had everything to do with her painful origins. The physical environment of the ‘Red House’ further highlights the paradox of human action – a mental asylum situated on the same road with the bird sanctuary that signifies not only freedom but is also a wonderful playground for children. This is to concur

with Jean Jacques Rousseau's philosophy that "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains." These stylistic devices reinforce the sarcasm of Head on the biased social politics of apartheid South Africa.

Gender bias in *A Question of Power* is also exercised by Elizabeth's reckless, adulterous and homosexual husband. To him, Elizabeth is just another pleasure object in his life that can be used and discarded of at will. One wonders aloud why he had to marry her in the first place. This is a very painful source of trauma for Elizabeth who had never lived love of any kind. She moves into marriage with a sigh of relief that she would find in her husband's arms what her biological family never afforded her: love. But her husband turns out to be a reckless, adulterous homosexual who thinks that the world turns at his beck and call. One wonders why he has to exercise his male chauvinism on helpless women if he is having a swell time with other men. Marriage does not debar him from his homosexual tendencies, nor does it keep him off other women. He shamelessly has it off with Elizabeth's neighbours. It is a man-dominated world in which men think they can do just anything they want with women and go away scot-free. This is very painful and traumatising for a love starved Elizabeth who could only express her anger by picking up her boy and walking away, a thing the man would not do if it were the woman cheating on him. In a typical patriarchal African society, the man would have certainly given her snake beating before throwing her out of his house and, curiously, such a man would be supported by society:

She married a gangster just out of jail... What really made her talk to him was that he said he was interested in Buddhism and... A month later, a next-door neighbour approached her and said, "You have a strange husband. Susie was standing outside the door and called to him. He walked straight in and they went to bed. He's been doing this nearly every day now with Susie. I also greeted him and he said: "How about a kiss?" Then there was also a Whiteman who was his boy-friend. (P. 19).

Furthermore, we also see graphic gender bias and its resultant traumatising pain when Dan, one of Head's characters in *A Question of Power*, is lording it over his seventy-two "Nice-Time Girls." In this male dominated world, it can only be many women to one man, and not the other way round. This is a good example of the sexual exploitation of women by men. Dan carries it out in a humiliating and degrading manner as he throws it to the women's face that he has the audacity to treat them as such because they are inferior beings. In a society like that of apartheid South Africa, it is quite painful for a Black to be looked down upon or to be considered an inferior being by the Whites and, worse still, by even one's own brothers, the Blacks. It is

not like Dan is discrete the way he treats these women. He is so insolent and hurtful when he says:

I go with all these women because you are inferior. You cannot make it up to my level because we are not made the same way ... The man took her for a damn fool. He staged any kind of show down to the level of her reasoning. He was to reappear with his boy-friend He is a homosexual, he also sleeps with cows and anything on earth ... The steady peace and stability of soul had been blasted away and replaced by a torrent of filth. (P. 19).

After all, the women are “just women” and are there to satisfy him and the menfolk. The men really do not care in what form this satisfaction comes. If your pain can give them pleasure, then, they stop at nothing to get to it.

From the foregoing, we applaud the excellent craftsmanship of Head who uses various character indicators (direct and indirect) to paint the horrifying image of the African Chauvinist. These direct and habitual actions of Dan and his utterances leave no doubt as to who he is and as to his disgusting biases towards women. The readers also indirectly infer from his morbid philosophy and minimisation of the woman that the African male is very chauvinistic. His activities and the silent activities of his mind as well as those of others lead us to the appalling fate of the woman in a male-dominated world. The following words from the narrator sufficiently reveal the sadistic side of this cruel male-dominated society:

She was to find that Dan revelled in the vice-grip he had on her. The felling was like that of Gulliver, pinned down to the ground with a thousand stakes. She was obviously nothing if his power could knock her over like that (P. 25).

Women are there for men to use and discard. They become angry when you do not go out of your way to give them the kind of pleasure they expect of you. Even after using the nice-time girls just to get Elizabeth jealous, Dan is very bitter and frustrated because he is not getting the right results. He wants a pound of flesh from nearest the heart of Elizabeth. When he finally sees that he is not succeeding in his desire to hurt her, his frustration becomes palpable as he bursts out:

‘I can’t stand it,’ he shouted, ‘I can’t stand this moaning!’ He was stamping off somewhere. He looked like he really was a super slick Casanova who knew all

about the girls. Couldn't she see the angry handsome profile, the expensive suit? He, the king of women had condescended to associate with low trash – and how subtly he always conveyed her inferiority to her in ways like this. (P. 26).

What this means from Dan's standpoint is that, dating so many women at the same time is no longer for the pursuit of sexual satisfaction; he does this to swell his pride. To each of them, he has something outstanding that shall please him. Even with the seventy-two nice-time girls, he is still not satisfied. Elizabeth must join the bandwagon and stop hurting his pride by "playing hard" to get. It had never crossed his mind, nor had it ever bothered him, to seek to know whether he, in return, was satisfying the women. It is not mentioned anywhere in the novel what each of these women stood to benefit from him. According to him, his "handsomeness" is good enough for them to dig hard before getting it.

What is so regrettable here is the naive and subordinate role the women play. Regrettably, they willingly allow themselves to be used as a sponge by the menfolk – another major source of trauma. Elizabeth rebels and, for that reason, gets the worst treatment from Dan. Hers is palpable pain that can only push her in one direction. If she must succeed, she has to resist and escape.

Even the war with Sello is one meant to dominate the soul of Elizabeth, symbol of the weaker sex. Although they have gone down to hell in order to end it, Dan was still feeding on her soul:

... any fool could have seen through his cooked-up plot against Sello; so he switched the emphasis – it all lay on her rejection of his vibration. She had to pay for it through heavy doses of sleeping tablets. Do they ever go away when they are explicitly there to exploit and use their victims? They spit so hard at what they despise, but they stay until they have sucked life dry, until all is desolation. (P.26).

To succeed, Elizabeth must resist being used as "Dan's trigger" for blowing up the world. She has to heed Sello's advice in order to reconstruct the African woman:

His proposition was the beautiful world of the future. He was sitting at the switchboard plugging in the lines to all the beautiful people he had on call. What was presented to Elizabeth as goodness remained consistently so, to the extent that she too rapidly accepted Sello as a comfortable prop against which to lean. He turned to her once and warned her to retain her own mental independence: "You have an analytical mind. You must analyse everything you see" (P. 29).

As a follow-up, Tom, the young Peace Corps Volunteer from America, gives a universal touch to gender bias when he re-echoes the inferiority of women. Though he has a spirit that has grown above this because of his zeal in solving world problems, he remains realistic in recognising that:

... men don't really discuss the deep metaphysical profundities with women. Oh! They talk about love and things like this but their deepest feelings they reserve for other men. (P. 24).

This is the challenge to be overcome for the construction of the African woman. What we draw from the above identification of sources of conflict in Head's *A Question of Power* is that a problem identified is a problem half solved. Through this lens, we see how the social construction of womanhood in African politics is influenced by socio-cultural and patriarchal ideologies that construe the ideal African woman as a docile one; that is to say, an African woman who does not question male authority. Head's autobiography in *A Question of Power* becomes an ideal platform from which the social construction of womanhood versus manhood as well as gender power relations – especially as concerns women's participation in the politics of postcolonial nation states in Africa – can be questioned. Consequently, the trauma theory tenet of “fight-or-flight response” comes in very handy here. Elizabeth, in this context, can only protect herself and those that are in the same situation like her from harm by identifying the source of harm and keeping away from it.

From the above analyses, therefore, in *A Question of Power*, Head frowns at the belittling attitude of both the colonialists and nationalists for seeing the woman only from the standpoint of her body and soul. She lashes out at them for defining these women strictly in terms of demarcated roles of good wives, mothers, and household articles or vicious prostitutes. Through her coloured protagonist, Elizabeth, Head attempts to reconstruct this notion. Identifying the sources of trauma is, therefore, a first step to putting an end to nationalist patriarchy which has become a composite of the coloniser in the oppression of women.

In the case of *Maru*, Head, the role of cultural and psychological forces in maintaining patriarchal hegemony is analysed. These are the forces responsible for the domination of women. The relationship between patriarchal/gender bias and sexism as constructs implicated in the oppression of women is the focus in this analysis. The trauma theory tenet concerning the role of traumagenic cultures play in the oppression of victims comes in handy in the analysis.

It is noted here that one obstacle to healing is traumatic cultures; which is what we see in Head's *Maru*. In fact, individual change is impeded or difficult to come by when societal and environmental changes do not also occur. Consequently, identifying and understanding the effects of a traumatic environment on the trauma recovery process will be a crucial component of feminist trauma treatment. *Maru*, therefore, attests to the relevance of solving a problem by first dissecting its root causes. An analysis of gender/sexual politics and the demon of patriarchy in this text will go a long way towards unveiling the artificiality of the gender dichotomy and shedding light on the encoding of subjectivity within the power knowledge system.

The thematic development in *Maru* lays emphasis on the politics of race and gender in this postcolonial society. The story of the woman is even sadder because she is subjected to double oppression. It is true that racial, sexual and class-based oppression are intricately linked within any given culture. Unfortunately, Black women grapple with oppression not just as Blacks but also as Black women. The men, who are supposed to partner with them for the total liberation of the oppressed Black race, are sometimes their worst oppressors. This is a fundamental source of pain and trauma for these women who cannot easily swallow this bitter pill because those who should have been helping to liberate them are instead the cause of their pain and trauma.

This is beautifully captured by Head in the opening pages of *Maru* where every aspect of the novel communicates this source of pain. To begin with, the textual environment is very relevant:

The rains were so late that year. But throughout that hot, dry summer, those black storm clouds clung in thick folds of brooding darkness along the low horizon. There seemed to be a secret in their activity, because each evening they broke the long, sullen silence of the day, and sent soft rumbles of thunder and flickering slicks of lightning across the empty sky. They were not promising rain. They were prisoners, pushed back in trapped coils of boiling clouds. (P. 1).

The setting in this passage is the dry season which, paradoxically, witnesses storm clouds brooding darkness. This appropriate diction connotes the dryness or pain of the people. Metaphorically, their “soft rumbles of thunder” and “flickering slicks of lightning” do not promise rain but harbour a secret. This can be translated as the hurt, pain and bitterness of the oppressed who are “prisoners pushed back in trapped coils of boiling clouds. *Maru*, who is the main character, pours out his bitterness at the world in these words:

People were horrible to him because they imagined that their thoughts and deeds were concealed when he could see, and hear everything, even their bloodstreams and the beating of their hearts. If they knew all that he knew, would they not have torn him to shreds some time ago, to keep the world the way it was where secrets and evil bore the same name? (P. 2).

Indeed, it is a world where secrets and evil bore the same names. One would have expected that this prism through which the story takes off should carry on. But no sooner has *Maru* entered his house than the ugly head of patriarchy and male domination is seen through his relationship with his wife. The subservient role of the African woman is immediately captured with all its pain and traumatic consequences:

So quietly did he enter the house that his wife looked up fearfully from her work of preparing the table for the evening meal. He sometimes had vicious, malicious moods when every word was a sharp knife intended to grind and re-grind the same raw wound. Most certainly, no memory remained in her heart and mind of previous suffering. (P. 3).

One would say that she is the punching bag that helps *Maru* to give vent to his pain and bitterness with the world. A number of things come across here: the subservient role of the woman in taking care of the home and preparing the meals for the man. Her silence and fears cannot be ignored. She has borne the pain so continuously and so submissively that she is drunk of it and cannot feel it anymore. Equality of sexes is a farfetched dream here. It is not that type of relationship where the man comes home to talk out his successes and failures, joys and pain with his wife; share doubts and worries and listen to her to take counsel. A perfect relationship would work both ways such that the man would also listen, empathise and uplift the spirits of his wife. Unfortunately, *Maru's* wife ends up being threatened to be used as a tool by him in settling his dispute with his rival, *Moleka*:

Perhaps he had seriously miscalculated Moleka's power, ... Was it a superior kind of love? Or was it a superior kind of power? Perhaps his heart was wrong and a day would come when he would truthfully surrender his wife to Moleka because he had decided that Moleka's love was greater than his own. If this mood was upon him, he would walk in through the door and say: "I only married you because you were the only woman in the world who did not want to be important. But you are not at all important to me...." (P. 5).

Sadly, what this means is that women are objects that can be used and dumped at the convenience and pleasure of the “owner.” Their opinions do not count even in marriage and they can be handed over to whomever to settle men’s disputes. Language is a communicating tool and the derogatory language used in talking about the woman here shows the low esteem in which the man and society hold her.

Another worse instance of gender bias comes with the birth of Margaret Cadmore. Head’s excellent application of the skills of “acceleration” in story narration here is an indication of the importance this event plays in the revelation of the theme of gender bias. She accords a long period of story time to this short segment of the birth of Margaret Cadmore. It is not only painful and disgusting to see the nastiness of the circumstances of her birth but also dehumanising to see the way the child and mother have been treated at this crucial and delicate moment of procreation. Apart from racial segregation, gender bias stands out in the way Margaret’s mother is treated.

First and foremost, Margaret’s mother is alone at the moment of giving birth. This could be coincidental, but when she dies and is abandoned because nobody could touch the body of a Masarwa woman, we wonder aloud about the whereabouts of the man who touched her to make her pregnant in the first place. A passer-by could not bury the body and the missionary is called upon to do so; but one would have expected that the father of the child or the child’s mother’s husband – even if he were only her boyfriend – be called in at this moment. But alas! She is just a woman – and a Masarwa for that matter – so her own story could jolly well end there. The authorial intrusion that lays emphasis on her importance makes the story more painful. It is indeed traumatising to see a woman who dies in childbirth being treated like this; it would even be more traumatising if, one day, the surviving child were to chance upon the circumstances of her birth:

True enough, the woman who gave birth to a child on the outskirts of a remote village had the same thin, Masarwa stick legs and wore the same Masarwa ankle-length, loose shift dress which smelt strongly of urine and the smoke of outdoor fires. She had died during the night but the child was still alive and crying feebly when a passer-by noticed the corpse. When no one wanted to bury a dead body, they called the missionaries; not that the missionaries liked to be involved with mankind... (P. 5).

A number of sad and disheartening things come across in this passage. The woman lives in filth, is poor, neglected and abandoned even at a crucial moment. Society is insensitive to human cry and needs as evinced by the passer-by who fails to attend neither to the feeble baby nor to the corpse. The missionaries are, honestly speaking, not who they pretend to be as they do not like to be involved with mankind. This is irony at its best, given that the church preaches that “Loving God with your whole heart, soul and mind and loving your neighbour as you love yourself” is the most important commandment; but here it seems to want to act otherwise. The hypocrisy of the church is not different from the hard heartedness of the passer-by who fails to lend a hand of fellowship to a fellow man. The dead woman is classified as “an untouchable” to the local people. Even other fellow women who know the agony of childbirth would not go beyond their cultural inhibitions to render help to a fellow woman who loses her life in the process of childbearing. Margaret Cadmore, the hospital supervisor, treats the corpse purely as a concerned artist in front of an interesting art object that must be captured and reproduced for the pleasure and entertainment of the world:

Margaret Cadmore was not the kind of woman to speculate on how any artistic observation of human suffering arouses infinite compassion. She put the notes on her sketch pad. One sketch captured the expressions of disgust on the faces of the Botswana nurses as they washed the dead woman's body for burial. She scrawled a note under the sketch: "These are not decent people." (P.5).

The way the woman's corpse is handled is too inhuman; a thing the same society would not do to the corpse of a man because he is a superior being compared to a woman:

There on the stone floor lay the dead woman, still in the loose shift dress, more soiled than ever from the birth of a child ... From habit, she whipped out her sketch pad, then paused. The sketch would not come so rapidly. It was a mixture of peace and astonishment in the expression of the dead woman, but so abrupt that she still had her faint eyebrows raised in query. What suffering had preceded death? And what had death offered to surprise her so? She had even started to laugh. (P. 6).

She observed her in death as if she were an object being inspected for use.

Quite unconsciously of the oddness of her behaviour, Margaret Cadmore walked to several angles of the room, studying the dead woman's expression. The note she scrawled at last said: "She looks like a goddess." (P.6).

In this situation, the narrative voice is very condemnatory of Margaret Cadmore who treats a very emotional situation unconsciously. The simile of comparing her to a goddess is contradictory and revealing of her levity in a situation such as this one. It underscores the follies of human actions vis-à-vis “goddesses” and portrays the contradictions of human acts – Margaret’s failure to pay to a goddess the respect due to it. This teaches us that those we often despise in life are bigger than who we think they are. She might be just a mere Masarwa woman but with critical eyes she is a goddess who, in death, mocks our condescending actions towards a fellow woman.

Furthermore, some of the issues that engage Head’s imagination in *Maru* are the ways sexual and gender-biased oppressions are intricately linked within cultures. In most cultures, it is an unwritten law that the role of women is simply to give men sexual pleasure. The men use them in turns and nothing is done about this even though they are fully aware of the situation. They give much more to the men than what they receive in return. Such is the case of Moleka and Maru. It is even common knowledge that Moleka has no heart for the women he goes to bed with. “It is said of Moleka that he had taken his heart out of his body and hidden it in some secret place while he made love to all the women in the village.” This hyperbole about Moleka making love to all the women in the village is meant to show the degree to which men use women as their favourite sport. It is sickening to think that he does this without a heart; possibly because he thinks that women are not good enough to be human beings like him. Moleka, son of the chief, who drives Margaret to the library is even termed a swine by Dikeledi who recognises, like others, his mean attitude towards women:

Oh, I just remembered that the old library was vacated last week and the books moved to the new library. This teacher can use it for accommodation. I’ll take her over. The man slammed the door shut, turned on the ignition, then there was a cloud of dust. First, one goat jumped out of the road. Then six, seven or eight more. People jumped. Both people and goats looked outraged ... He was royalty, the son of the chief. He’d grown up making goats and people jump. (P.18)

It was even worse with women who were not better than goats. Such acts are not limited to a few. Every man shows his might by the number of women he dates. Moleka is a disgusting womaniser who makes no secret about the numerous women he goes to bed with. “The moon was so bright that few stars appeared in the sky. Moleka walked along the footpath, his hands in his pockets, deep in thought. He had an appointment with one of his innumerable girlfriends.”

Moleka's condescending attitude towards women cannot go unnoticed either. To him, women are some sort of adventure that once done with one he hurries to pick up another:

"I have come to the end of one road ... and I am taking another." He'd lived like a spendthrift millionaire. There was something about him, or in him, that made people walk into a room and turn their heads. "Ah, there's Moleka." He took that physical fascination and traded it all on women. (P. 22)

By creating characters that share similar character traits, Head hits the nail on the head as regards the domineering attitude of African men towards their women. They use women as toys and discard them once they are fed up with them:

Moleka and Maru always fall in love with the same girl. But they never knew that no experiences interrupted the river and permanent flow of their deep affection. It was Moleka, so involved in this river who never had time to notice the strange and unpredictable evolution of his friend. He never knew about the gods in the earth but he could always see the light of their conversation in his friend's eyes. (P. 23).

When one assembles the indirect and direct character indicators of Maru and Moleka, one would readily say that both of them manifest outright wickedness towards women. For, women were their victims and they would exploit them as it suited their whims and caprices:

The clue to Moleka and Maru lay in their relationships with women. They were notorious in Dilepe village for their love affairs, and the opposing nature of their temperaments was clearly revealed in the way they conducted their affairs. The result was the same: their victims exploded like bombs for differing reasons. At the end of a love affair, Moleka would smile in the way he smiled when he made people and goats jump out of his path, outrage in their eyes. (P. 23).

He is treated as a demi-god in the society

There was nothing Moleka did not know about the female anatomy. It made him arrogant and violent. There was no woman who could resist the impact of his permanently boiling bloodstream. But he outraged them, and horrible sensations were associated with the name of Moleka. Moleka and women were like a volcanic explosion in dark tunnel. Moleka was the only one to emerge, on each occasion, unhurt and smiling. (P. 23).

As noted earlier, gender and sexual politics could not have been better captured as in the case of Maru and Moleka's treatment of women. The disgusting and condescending sexual anti-hero, Moleka, does not only explode and hurt his women in sexual encounters but always emerges "smiling." His victims are best explained by the trauma theory tenet of "Thinking under stress." True to this principle, the women under pain and stress find it difficult to weigh all the possible options in front of them before falling in love with him the second time. Society has carved him out as lord of the women and he has the yam and the knife as to whom to hurt and as to when to discard the victim for yet another one. It becomes difficult to assess and fall back upon the realisation that love ought to comfort and keep one happy when the duel is on who would win his heart – a devil's heart.

This bitter experience is not different with Maru who is alleged to have a heart and even "fall in love" with the women. If love it is indeed, then he does not need to fall in love with many women. But this is the sexual politics of society, shaped and directed by patriarchy – a man has the right to own or possess as many women as he wishes in the name of "love." What the men do not know is that their attitude towards women is traumatising and killing as it ends up "exploding some of them. For Maru, it results in deep sorrow even for him too and one wonders why he still goes on with one woman after another:

It was different with Maru. At the end of a love affair, a deep sorrow would fill his eyes. He often took to his bed with some indefinable ailment. The victims too displayed alarming symptoms. The strongest fled as though they had seen a nameless terror. The weakest went insane and walked about the village muttering to themselves. (P. 22).

The paradox from the above act of Maru is the assertion that he always fell in love with his women. Yet his love is one that keeps the women at the margins, preventing them from totally possessing his heart as well. It is difficult to place a finger on who he really is when it comes to women; he is both a viper and a king of heaven:

Maru always fell in love with his women. He'd choose them with great care and patience. There was always some outstanding quality; a special tenderness in the smile, a beautiful voice or something in the eyes which suggested mystery and hidden dreams. He associated these things with the beauty in his own heart, only to find that a tender smile and a scheming mind went hand in hand, a beautiful voice turned into a dominating viper... They only saw the social gains that would accrue to them. It was nothing for Maru to be laid up for three months on end over a love affair. (P.4).

In brief, women are brainwashed into aspiring for some second position by attaching themselves to men of 'importance' in society even at their own detriment. Even the deaths of previous victims of Maru do not stop the others from venturing into such bad deals. Maru takes no caution to protect the women from contracting TB from him. After all, he is the stronger sex that can only be sick of it but would not die. A society where even illnesses are biased against women! Women walk like sheep in blinkers because they must attain a certain social position in order to fit into the fabric of society. This is very painful and traumatising for the womenfolk:

None of the victims could ever explain the process of her destruction, its cause. Everyone took it for granted that there was something called social position and you had to scheme and fight for it, tooth and nail. That is the world, they said, as though all the evils in human nature were there by divine order and man needs make no effort to become a god. Thus, the women whom Maru made love to were highly envied. People said ... he was the reincarnation of Tladi, a monstrous ancestral African witch-doctor. a performer of horrific mag (P. 24).

As regards education, women in this society were not only shut out but were also looked down upon when they struggled to integrate. The woman is considered to be a numskull who can only make it in education through 'bottom power,' physical attraction or connections. This is structured by society in order to prevent women from moving up to higher paying job positions like men. All of this is painful and traumatising, especially as women have come to be aware of these gender role stereotypes even in the domain of education. Such sex discrimination in education against women is well demonstrated by the Principal of the school to which Margaret is posted. The principal summarily dismisses Margaret on first contact simply because she is a woman, and so is supposedly seen to be good for nothing. Her hard-earned advance level papers mean nothing to him, though they raise some curiosity within him. Bessie Head neatly builds his character traits from both direct and indirect indicators so that he can fit squarely into the bracket of men who think that women are under-dogs in education:

The Principal of the school belonged to that section of mankind which believed that a position demanded a number of exaggerated mannerisms ...he had a degree and a diploma and with it went an electric light smile. (P. 26).

To him, it is a bad omen that a Masarwa is on the school staff. But it is no big deal because the Masarwa is a mere woman who can easily be thrown out to solve the problem:

*"Seth," the principal said "There's been some chicanery."
 "How so?" the other queried."
 "I have a Masarwa on my staff" ...
 "God, this is going to raise hell among the Totems here." ...
 "They are going to blame me," he said.
 "I only look at qualifications. She was top of the class the whole way through."
 (P.38)*

Unfortunately, her being the best means nothing because she is only a woman.

*How the hell did she get in?"
 "She can be shoved out," he drawled.
 "It's easy. She's a woman."
 "Wait a bit," he said. "I'll sound out the opinion of the Totems. Her qualifications are good. She couldn't possibly have got there on her brains. Someone was pushing her. We don't know who and they might be important."
 (P. 28).*

Derogatory vocabulary is quite appropriate for a chauvinist like the principal who is not only aggressive towards women but also exhibits exaggerated patriotism. To him, Margaret can easily be shoved out like dirt that has soiled or desecrated the staff. It is so hard for him to swallow the fact that the good qualifications were actually earned. To him, it has to be somebody who propelled her to that and must, most probably be a man. A chauvinistic African male indeed! This constitutes the source of pain and trauma for the woman and if things have to change for the woman, they have to start with a change of such mean antagonistic chauvinists. The humiliating and disgusting plan of the principal to "shove out" the Bush-woman takes the form of manipulating children. It puts to question the values of a society wherein the learner is not only pitted against his/her teacher but is also untaught and suppressed by warped minds like the principal's. The person who is most hard-hit is, again, the girl child framed to a fight and shoved out of the female teacher's class.

Margaret walks into the classroom and the plan is executed by the learners led by the boy who asks: "Since when is a Bushy a teacher?" The others cued in, "You are a Bush-man. You are a Bush-man." Outstanding is the attitude of the little girl who is noticed both by Dikeledi and Margeet:

"It is funny how we agree in feeling," she said. "I saw the little girl too. She put her hand to her throat when I shouted at them. I kept looking at her because her mouth went dead white. I thought: Poor little swine. They have been taught to be brave about the wrong things and laugh about the wrong things. Someone will have to teach them decency, because their parents won't." (P. 33).

Undeniably, the prism through which the woman is seen in this society still leaves much to be desired. She is an object that catches the attention of the male and should be fought over. Her opinion or emotions do not really matter. Gender/sexual politics could not be better portrayed than through Head's x-raying of Moleka and Maru's lusting after Margaret. Even though she is looked down on because she is a Masarwa, she is still desired as a woman meant to boost the ego of the menfolk, or serve as a sex object for them:

Maru laughed a little ...

"Has Moleka made any proposal to the new mistress yet?"

"No, that's gold," replied Ranko.

"He keeps his mind on the gold mine and does not care what people think of his behaviour." (P. 33)

It is a fight of elephants where Margaret is the grass that suffers. Maru causes Moleka to withdraw the bed he loaned out to Margaret to prove a point: that he is the one in authority and not Moleka. What this simply suggests is that the fate of the likes of Margaret who are dependants endowed with attractive bodies lies in the hands of Maru. He can do and undo, without really caring a damn whose emotions he is hurting. Consequently, she sleeps on the hard floor but this means nothing to Maru apart from the fact that she has to know who is in command here. As soon as Margaret – his lust inspiring image – registers in his brain, he can go the extra mile to have her. He is turned on not only physically but also psychologically. The brains of men in this patriarchal society are designed to objectify women. This is very frustrating to women and often constitutes a great source of trauma.

Additionally, this male desire is "a solitary affair." Maru and Moleka's single-minded pursuit of sexual arousal exists totally independent of any corporeal relationship with Margaret. At no one point do we find them courting her into a relationship or offering that which can win over her love. Such arrogant male domination totally takes off any tender feelings or craving for a genuinely intimate human attachment; it is just sex for one. In the 1960s, the feminist movement even stressed that society had restricted women to the role of sexual objects.

Margaret, therefore, laments over the humiliation of the bed. She is powerless to address the bigger fight going on behind the scenes between Moleka and Maru over her as a sex partner:

She quickly closed the door behind her and walked with the men to the van. Oh! What do I do? Why loan her a bed only to humiliate her with its abrupt removal? ... There was a limit to which a human being could be an experiment, especially if he or she were so unprepared for something new.... "I'll return the bed," she said, and walked out as if she were facing her death. How was she to know the true size and natures of this sudden adversary? (P. 45).

Unfortunately, Margaret, a "mere woman," has done what no woman should ever do to a man in a strictly gender biased and patriarchal society. She had picked up a serpent by the tail from the moment she looked down on Maru:

But she had looked down at him, indifferently, from a great height where she was more than his equal. It had nothing to do with the little bit of education she had acquired from a missionary. He treated everyone as a single, separate entity, and measured the length and breadth and depth and height of their inner kingdoms with one alert glance. People who had nothing were as evil and malicious as Pele, and as false. People who had kingdoms were careful not to betray those gods who dwelt inside those kingdoms. (P. 45).

Regrettably, the woman remains the target of these controversial forces. Men have to shape women in the form they want. The pain and trauma they cause in the process is none of their business. Nobody dictates to a "manly man" nor tells him what is right or what is wrong. He is a demi god to women and should be treated as such. So, with arrogances, Maru simply declares:

I don't like anyone to be wiser than thou about my actions," he said in a quietly threatening voice. I don't care whether she sleeps on the hard floor for the rest of her life but I am not going to marry a pampered doll." (P. 47).

The diction used here reveals the inner thoughts of the character. Indeed, the woman is just a doll to him and it does not matter whether she sleeps on the hard floor or in a bed. What matters is the pleasure she would afford him. It becomes even very inhuman and heartless when he confirms his monstrous act of killing the women when they could not satisfy him. He hangs on the pretext that their greediness pushes him to kill them. But one wonders aloud who would dare to kill him for his own numerous atrocities to humanity, and especially to women:

I hated her because she thought too much of herself. I hated her because she was only flesh. No flowers grew out of love, and when I said: "All right, this is over," she still thought the flesh had captivated me forever, until I had to kill her. I killed them all because of their greed. (P. 49).

Ironically, he kills them because of their greed without stopping to reflect on his own wrongs. Head's satire is very piercing here as he exposes the high handed manner of male chauvinism in this rigid patriarchal society. The man is not only superior to the woman but, also, he is her god. He plays god in her life to the point of being "the judged and the jury" that sentences her to instant death without anybody lifting a finger. He would even go as far as to defying society's code of conduct by getting married to a Masarwa simply because she would prevent him from making a public show of himself. Of all of this, the serviceable roles of women in marriage are the most degrading. She is just like a nice outfit or a bullet proof top to keep the man safe in marriage:

A woman like that would ensure that I am never tempted to make a public spectacle of myself. We'd never make the right, conventional gestures. People would never get over it, the embarrassment: "Why, she's only a Masarwa, They'd not know where to look because they spend their lives judging each other by things of no consequence." (P. 50).

Margaret, like any oppressed woman, lives life receiving blows from all directions. She moves around with a permanently raised hand ready to receive the blows of life. What a painful and traumatising scenario to be traumatised by the same society that ought to protect you! "If anyone approached Margaret Cadmore, she slowly raised her hand as if to ward off a blow. Sometimes, she winced, but the raised hand was always there as though she expected only blows from people." (P. 50) The paradox lies in the fact that such a beautiful creature of God would be receiving blows from the ugly and malicious men of the world. For, "Maru is quite an ugly man but the moon is too cool for my liking." "Moleka raised the blood pressure of even a stone ..." The metaphorical raising of the hand mirrors someone battered by the wickedness of gender bias and racial oppression as will be seen in the second part of this chapter.

Even mothers were not spared from the trauma of gender/sexual bias. No mother can be happy to see her son perpetrating a lot of pain on fellow women; worse still, to watch the offsprings of such frivolous encounters with numerous women suffering around her. Such is the case of Moleka's mother. Though bitter about his acts, she is still conditioned by societal dictates to condone and pamper him. After all, he is a male child and, most importantly, her

only child. The male child syndrome in Africa cannot allow Moleka's mother to sacrifice him for his wrongs. In Africa, a woman achieves recognition and status by giving birth to at least one male child, and is, ipso facto, considered fulfilled. She is accorded greater respect as compared to her counterparts who, unlike her, are not lucky enough to give birth to a male child. This gender preference constitutes a great source of trauma for the woman and even the girl child who is sidelined. Moleka's mother is, therefore, helpless to openly reprimand him for his paternity problem:

It must have been two weeks now, his mother calculated, that she had been afflicted with having Moleka at homes. There were always eight motherless children living in her yard, their only justification for being there was that they all looked like Moleka, with his distinctive, thundercloud brow How long this had been going on she could not say, except that he was her son and she was used to him. There was no way in which she could condemn him. She coddled and pampered him as if he were a three-year-old boy. (P. 53).

There is no doubt that Moleka ends up as a spoilt brat. His excesses with women were never trimmed by his adoring mother, all in the name of male supremacy. Consequently, he has the guts not only to take out his disappointment with one woman on another but also to blatantly tell her so and still succeed to go to bed with her again. Dikeledi is just another victim of his:

"What are you up to Moleka?"

"You think I don't know about your notebook?" he said impishly.

"Last night Moleka slept here. The other night Moleka slept there. Grace is not his latest. Well, I want to satisfy your curiosity. Tonight, I'm going to sleep here ... She fell in with his mood: "I see that you are just going on undressing yourself but it is not to my liking."

"I have no more women left Dikeledi," he said, comically. You are the last on the list. (P. 59).

This is truly an understatement from Moleka who is seeking pity and comfort from the same people whose emotions he has crushed. What is even more painful is the fact that he uses women as bullets to fight his battles. He goes to bed with Dikeledi not out of love but out of a desire to get even with his adversary, Maru. "That's what you say," Maru said sarcastically. "I suppose your spies have already told you that I spent the night with your sister," Moleka said, contemptuously. No woman would want to hear somebody she spent intimate moments with report them to another person and in such derogatory terms. It makes one feel like a wet towel

that was used and discarded of disgustingly. These are the frustrating and traumatising attitudes that must be straightened for the African woman to be constructed.

Unfortunately, the above type of attitude from Moleka does not deter other women from aspiring and longing to fall in the same pit. Though Margaret Cadmore equally longs for this hurting experience, she is consoled by one thing: “He will never approach me ...” (P. 69)

Her tragedy is that she is a Masarwa:

And it was something her whole way of life has prepared her for. Love and happiness had always been a little bit far away from life as other people lived it. There could have been no better training ground than that of Margaret Cadmore senior, whose own heart continually muddled her and who had been a woman who lived without love, without her equal in soul statue. (P. 69).

Her whole life story is a long narrative of pain and trauma. “She had missed something and was often irritable and impatient.” Her journey towards construction long started with firmer inner resolves to cope with and move on with her loveless life. It is a system she finds difficult to change and the only window left open to her for the journey towards a better and more fulfilling life is to strategise, be resolved and committed to the journey for survival. Life has hardened her but has not killed her either. Once at the bottom of the pit of gender bias and sexual oppression, she has just one road – force herself back on an upward journey or resign herself to pain and be crushed and buried in the said pit:

The young girl had no confusion of heart, only the experience of being permanently unwanted by society in general. There was an inverse cycle in this. It had created in her an attraction for the unpredictable types of personality most people could not abide or act along with, and for all forms of vigour and growth outside the normal patterns. Maybe she had loved a man like Moleka a thousand times, in the same odd, secret way. It did not disrupt her stability but it made the village of Dilepe hallowed ground, (P. 69).

Margaret Cadmore has not only learned from the senior Margaret Cadmore. She had been strengthened by the people fate had placed on her way, like Dikeledi. More importantly, she had been strengthened by the lower creatures in their simplicity and ease to adapt and move on. Here, we are talking about the life lessons learned from the goat and its young one that has

taken up residence in her home and acted more like the disciples of change for her. She even wonders aloud about her reaction to some of the painful experiences she had gone through:

“Why did she cry?... Her own heart was so peaceful. She stood where she was, empty-handed, but something down there belonged to her in a way that triumphed over all barriers. Maybe it was not even love as people usually think of it. Maybe it was everything else; friendship and strength. There was nothing to grasp then, or cry out for It freed her to work and live with vigour ... It was like all those other agonies of life which she had endured in silence, only those agonies had been linked with everyday things. (P. 69).

In a nutshell, her life was one of misery. Happiness was just an occasional episode in a general drama of pain for her. She alternated happiness with misery, tossing and turning permanently in restless seas. She, like Dikeledi, is in love with Moleka despite the numerous nasty stories they know of him. The hurting truth is that you are sure of how you feel for him but you can never say with certainty what he feels for you. It is even more depressing when you go ahead to have a child with someone like him or contemplate marriage with him without being certain of his love for you. This is the bitter fate of Dikeledi and the rest of the oppressed and suppressed women of society:

“Tell me,” Dikeledi said. “Would you marry someone only because you were going to have a child?”

“It would depend on the man,” Margaret said tentatively.

“That’s the trouble,” Dikeledi said, nodding her head. All I know is that I love him. He tells me he loves me but you don’t know where you are with Moleka...”

Maru crowns the chauvinistic high-handed manner of men by the way he unexpectedly whisks off Margaret into marriage. No proposals are made; neither is her opinion sought. Her “broken neck” over the marriage of Dikeledi and Moleka is quickly “repaired” and her things thrown into the van for a new home and a new life. Strict orders as to what her new code of behaviour should be are dished out to her: *“Self-pity is something I don’t like. Other people have suffered more than you. You must stop this self-pity. There’s nothing hurting you anymore.”*

Such masculine discourse leads to constructing the “woman” as a textual object that prevents the woman from being herself. She remains what the man has imposed on her. Consequently, Bessie Head blames history for the position that women occupy in society. She attests to the fact that our ancestors made so many errors one of them being that they raised the

man to a superior status in the tribe while the woman was regarded, in a congenital sense, as an inferior human being. However, Head lays the blame not only exclusively on men for not changing male attitude towards women, but also on those women who submit to, accept and believe in the fallacy that women are inferior human beings. By their attitude, they are also responsible for men's perception of them. A typical example is the craving, by Dikeledi and Margaret, for Moleka despite what they have seen him doing to other women, or Margaret allowing herself to be dragged into marriage by Maru without any solid love affair duly established between the two of them. It is only by refusing to bow down to a world where women are of no consequence that these women would be able to help construct the new African woman in a more stable and just society. In *Maru*, Head succeeds to cause the reader to empathise with the trauma induced in the individual's mind by sexist discrimination and racial hatred. She equally conveys hope and optimism for positive change in such nightmarish situations as will be seen in subsequent chapters. She condemns the exploitation of women, and advocates equality between men and women with a deeply-felt faith that the goodwill of both women and men can change the quality of life for both sexes on the African continent.

Buchi Emecheta, like Bessi Head, also critically mirrors what people have lived in society in her literary works. She transcends the physical "wounds and damages" on the body to the psychiatric disorder that these people have caused the characters. In her novel, *Second Class Citizen*, the sources of trauma will be analysed to give a better understanding of how "sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blows or series of blows" have not only shaped her characters but have also made them life models. The "learned helplessness" lens of trauma theory is very applicable to this text. The heroine does not only master the situation of danger but also successfully makes use of this knowledge to enable her run away from danger and get help in order not to be crushed by traumatic pain. This can be seen from the way her characters respond to stimuli based on the level of threat they represent in their lives.

Gender bias and sexual abuse form a great source of pain/trauma in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. This cannot be detached from patriarchy which forms the background of oppression to women. The fate of an innocent child is sealed at birth just on the basis that she is a girl. This is the case of Adah whose pain starts at birth. She came into the world as a girl when everybody was expecting a boy. In the Ibo culture, you are a man and a successful one, according to the number of male children you give birth to. Consequently, Adah was a disappointment to her parents, her immediate family and her tribe. It was so bad that nobody

even thought of recording her birth, for she was an insignificant being. All she was told about her birth was that it occurred during the Second World War.

Adah did not know for sure what gave birth to her dream, when it all started, but the earliest anchor she could pin down in this drift of nothingness, was when she was about eight years old. She was not quite sure that she was exactly eight because, you see, she was a girl. She was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. (P. 7).

Hence, Adah, from birth, had to take up the place reserved by this strict patriarchal society for the girl child. Like her mother, she is born to take care of the home. This gives the girl child only the right to basic education and then basic sewing; because she has to learn the rudimentary that would enable her to take proper care of her home. Adah inwardly assesses this situation and rejects this fate for herself. This is very important and crucial; that is identifying the sources of trauma. By so doing, she builds a strategy for herself and maps out a path to be followed. In taking her younger brother, Boy, to Ladi-Lak preparatory school, she nudges different dreams for herself.

At this point in time, Emecheta exhibits great skills in the art of representation through characters. Her characters are constructs modeled on readers' perception of the people around them – person like characters. Characters' names are well chosen to serve as labels for a trait or cluster of traits. The name "Boy" moves him to a prototype. He represents the men who are born with golden spoons in their mouths in this discriminatory patriarchal society. The women characters are given names because the fate of one is the fate of all. They are individuals who must be kept in their little corners to run their homes. Women are even brainwashed into accepting these roles thereby prescribing them for their children. As such, Adah regrettably ends up seeing her mother from a negative standpoint because she stands for the implementation of this unwritten law against women. She, therefore, sides with her father because she thinks that he would be more understanding with her. Ma, her mother, would rather find it outrageous that she fights to go above the level decided for her by fate/society. "Pa would be all right: he would probably cane her; you know, just a few strokes – six or so, not much – but Ma would cane, she would smack and then nag all day long." (P. 10)

Worthy of note is the duration Emecheta accords to this short segment of the story. She uses this acceleration strategy of according a short segment to a long period of the story time to

lay emphasis on the consequences of this action. This is because this negative mother's influence has gone a long way to cutting the ground from under Adah's feet. It helped to forestall the negative opinion she had of herself and her sex. Sexual politics as exhibited in this society, is played so well that women, unfortunately, are the prison wardens keeping other women locked up in these gender prisons. Adah ends up losing her self-confidence as a woman for a better part of her life. The repercussions are far reaching as they form the foundation that made her to accommodate Francis's wrongs and even taking them for rights and obligations.

She thought that it was these experiences with Ma so early in life that had given her such a low opinion of her own sex. Somebody said somewhere that our characters are usually formed early in life. Yes, that somebody was right. Women still made Adah nervous. They had a way of sapping away her self-confidence. (P. 11).

In fact, not only is the woman relegated to the position of a second class citizen, but she is also brought up in such a way that she accepts it, unconsciously, in the Ibuza culture. The woman is painfully relegated to the background even in decision making in her own home. She has no voice, not even over the money she earns. Those whose opinions matter are her father-in-law, her husband, her mother-in-law, her brothers-in-law and then herself in that order. The couple is a puppet when it comes to making decisions that would affect them:

She did not know her husband very well because, as most young African wives know, most of the decisions about their lives had to be referred first to Big Pa, Francis's father, then to his mother. They discussed amongst the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to. (P. 26).

In addition to duration or story time, Emecheta also uses strong communicative stylistic devices to x-ray and, to a certain extent, satirise and condemn this demonic patriarchal system in Ibuza. For example, she uses contrast to show the loopholes of this system. When it comes to earning money for the family the woman is given pride of place for a change. The man is relegated to the background as the woman takes the place of the bread winner for the home. It is very ironical that when it comes to taking a decision on how the money she has earned has to be spent, she is no longer given the pride of place to say something. Her place or position in earning money is in sharp contrast to the one assigned to her when spending the money. Adah finds it very ridiculous that the men, together with her female senior in-laws, budget the money without seeking her opinion and bring it for her to fund. Even more painful is the fact that she

has to fund it without asking any question. This elicits the pathos of her readers who do not only feel sorry for Adah but also cry, indeed, with her. Worst of all is the embarrassing quest of Francis to sustain his machismo by questioning the pay package of Adah which is three times his. He finds his domineering position as a man threatened by her huge pay package.

The ironical twist comes in with the egoistic considerations of Pa, Francis' father. His gender considerations and biases take a nasty twist. He tells his son that Adah might be a millionaire but her money should go to making him, Francis, a millionaire and an important person in society. He, therefore, advises Francis to turn a deaf ear to what his friends may be saying, and see it as a golden opportunity that he made a good choice in getting married to a woman who would bring home so much to make him the person he dreams of becoming:

*Her pay will be three times my own ... My colleagues at work will laugh at me ...
"You are a fool of a man, you are. Where will she take the money to? ... Let her
go and work for a million Americans and bring their money here, into this house.
It is your luck. You made a good choice in marriage son. (P. 24).*

Unless one has gone through some sort of discrimination, he/she would not fully understand what it means to be considered a second class citizen even in your own home. It is very traumatising for Adah. Her money has more value than she has in her matrimonial home. She is a mere woman who owns nothing but works for everything. It is true that bride price is another tool of imprisonment which is used by men in this patriarchal society to totally own and control women. It has the connotation of a purchase or financial transaction.

Once a man pays your bride price, he and his family see you as a piece of property and chattel. More humiliating is the fact that the woman is often stripped of any value in circumstances that warrant haggling and bargaining. It is carried to the logical end without any input from the woman. Adah's situation attracts more pathos when Francis's family even goes as far as owning her without completing the required bride price. This is because she is not only a girl, but also an orphan with nobody to exact the payment of the correct bride price or some respect to be accorded to her.

In brief, parents see daughters as a means of getting rich. A daughter is seen, therefore, as a bank account; and it seems only right to many people that her father should be able to draw from her every so often. In the case of Adah, she is a guarantee for Boy's education. Francis's family, even without having completed this bride price, still claims her reproductive labour.

She is the source of labour for his family and a machine for bearing children. She gives birth to the children, takes care of them but the man has legal rights over them and even over her. her.

In fact, the pain is intense when Adah, in her ignorance, was also brainwashed to perpetrate discrimination against her girl child. Like many other Nigerians, she thinks that a boy child is worth four girl children put together. This explains why she is very furious at the mere thought that anything might go wrong with her son. She can swallow the idea of Francis prostituting with the lady taking care of her son but not his distracting her from taking proper care of him. She can swallow Francis's prostitution with the lady, even his spending her hard earned money to buy pants for her, but not his distracting her from taking proper care of her son. The diction is well chosen here to portray the fact that Adah had fallen into the trap of gender bias. She does not cry out for her "child" but for her "son". This is because the son is the person who gives her value in marriage according to patriarchal norms:

If anything happens to my son, I am going to kill you and that prostitute. You sleep with her, do you not? You buy her pants with the money I work for and you both spend the money. I pay her when I go to work. I don't care what you do, but I must have my children whole and perfect. The only thing I get from this slavish marriage is the children. And, Francis, I am warning you, they must be perfect children. (P. 25).

As an object and possession, Adah is abused both physically and psychologically. Nothing stops Francis from beating her up in front of her children and sometimes with a long pregnancy. He appoints himself a disciplinarian, claiming to be disciplining his wife when he cannot discipline himself. In gender-based violence, the woman becomes a beast of burden as echoed by Bitek in his poem "Song of Lawino". The husband is "licenced" by society to "put the woman in order". This might not only mean physical violence; it might also extend to psychological torture. It does not suffice that your husband is cheating on you. Adah goes through the painful fact of knowing who the woman is; and, incidentally, this woman is none other than the one taking care of her child; the one her husband buys pants for when he cannot buy for her; the one her hard earned money is spent on, and even the one who neglects her children because she is having a nice time with their father. One wonders aloud how a single individual can be able to bear this. Not only does this kind of situation inflict psychological pain, it also leads to trauma.

Even the British society is not void of gender bias. Contrary to what Adah had thought, men and women are not equal before the law in this society. She lives a bitter experience of this concerning the family planning saga. Adah erroneously thinks that she is in a society where she is recognised as a human being endowed with her own fundamental rights and so can walk into the hospital and decide what she wants done on herself. Embarrassingly, her request for a family planning pill meets with the bitter realisation that she cannot be given the pill without the signature of her husband. This realisation is very painful to her as it only confirms her inferior position vis-à-vis her husband and other male counterparts. What it all means is that she is nothing without her husband who, ironically, would not cooperate with her; worse still, one who sees nothing wrong with having children one after the other as long as he is not the one providing for them. Francis does not even bother to analyse the impact of multiple births at very close intervals on the health of his wife. Unfortunately, Adah goes out, single handedly to seek a solution to this problem but meets with resistance from a society like the British society. As the narrator makes us to see, her disappointment comes with the bitter realisation that she is just a woman and cannot take a judicious decision even if it is for her own good:

The last nail driven into the coffin was when the woman brought a form which Adah's husband was supposed to sign to tell them that he was all for it... There was going to be trouble over that, for Francis would never sign a thing like that, and he would raise hell if he realized that Adah got the literature without his permission. What was Adah going to do? Why was it necessary to have a husband brought into issues like that? Could not the woman be given the opportunity of exercising her own will? (P. 144).

It is very frustrating for the woman who discovers the mechanisms built into every fabric of society with a view to allowing the man to dominate and lord it over all women wherever they are. Indeed, these chauvinistic tendencies are most welcome in a patriarchal set up like the Ibo society. The typical idea imbedded in the Ibo psyche that woman are a weaker and inferior sex lives on even with their moving to the U.K. This can be seen when Okpara, in trying to resolve the problem between Francis and Adah, runs to the conclusion that it has to be Adah to go and beg Francis. He promises to take her back to her husband who must have beaten and sent her away. This is a typical Ibo chauvinistic way of viewing the situation. No matter the scope of the problem, no matter the degree of pain felt, a woman has no right to leave her home:

My name is Okpara, and I know you are Ibo because of the marks on your face. I don't want to hear anything. Let's go and beg his forgiveness. He would let you

in ... typical Ibo psychology; men never do wrong, only the women have to beg for forgiveness, because they are bought, paid for and must remain like that, silent obedient slaves. (P. 156).

It is a man's world and so it is not surprising that Okpara, like his kind, believes that men never do wrong. Even the professional rights of the woman are censored by the man. Adah's creative power is controlled by Francis. What is even so disgusting is his belief that Adah is good for nothing. That her husband, Francis, would not read her book was bad enough. But that he had called it rubbish without as much as reading it was deep hurt. He went as far as saying that she would never be a writer simply because she was black and a woman. This was an act of killing even her spirit as well. It left Adah with such a feeling of emptiness that in turn left her with only two options: fighting for survival or abandoning herself to whatever to be crushed.

It is unfortunate that in these demonic patriarchal systems, women are still viewed as sexual objects. This is another great source of trauma. Most marriages contracted under this system are void of love. As such, the woman's major role in marriage is to give birth to and take care of babies, especially baby boys. She is battered, insulted and humiliated when she does not bear even only one boy child. In some circumstances, she is even treated as a witch. In addition to this, the man controls her sexuality and demands sexual satisfaction regardless of whatever the woman's health situation and inner disposition might be. In other words, the woman does not have control over her sexuality in this system. The absence of love or shared satisfaction in such marriages brings about a lot of pain and frustration. Adah's experience in *Second Class Citizen* is frightening and soul-destroying. To her, life in marriage is a journey to Calvary. Love is an almost inexistent component in her marriage. To begin with, her marriage to Francis took off on the wrong premise and subsequently constituted a major source of pain for her. It is her quest for education that pushed her to the doorsteps of a loveless, materialistic and exploitative marriage. The stifling patriarchal cultural practice only came in to make matters worse for her. She marries Francis in order to acquire a ticket for her education. This is because society frowns at any single girl who takes up lodgings on her own while going to school. For giving her this ticket, Francis expects unquestionable obedience from her. She must, therefore, remain silent and grateful to him and his family even in the face of oppression. This is the price she pays for having as husband, a man who sees her in terms of cash value. She swallows her pride and serves Francis and his family with slavish devotion. Even with this in mind, Adah believed she could shape her own destiny or reduce the pain of marriage.

One would have thought that with his educational background Francis would make a difference. Such is not the case; rather, he is even the worst epitome of an educated young African. He went through school but school did not go through him. The forms of pain Adah reaps from him stem from this fallacy that he could be different from others. On the contrary, life with Francis was pure hell. Her wedding day was ironically the saddest day in her life. This was a premonition to the kind of life she would live in marriage. The absence of a ring was synonymous to the absence of a love cord that would tie time together:

The whole affair started off on the wrong foot. They had forgotten to buy a ring, and the skinny man with a black bow tie refused to marry them, even though Adah assured him that a piece of string would do until they got home... "I have never heard of such a wedding" ... "Please, marry as without a ring because, you see, before we can get to Ebute-Metta, you will have closed for the day". Adah begged ... "Never mind about that, you just come back tomorrow with a ring and I will marry you." (P. 24).

Throughout their marriage, Adah is seen and protected as the goose that lays the golden egg and the instrument that gives sexual satisfaction. She erroneously or temporally forgets this position when operating in her comfort zone that she earns money that can help in bringing her dreams closer to reality. In this light, she joyfully proposes to her husband that they should save money and go to the United Kingdom for studies:

"I have been thinking." Adah said all of a sudden. "I used to dream that one day I would go to the United Kingdom. Why don't we save and go now that we shall be able to afford it? We can take our children with us. Everybody goes to the United Kingdom now. I'll be glad if we can go. (P. 25).

The joy of such wishful thinking is immediately taken away from her by Francis's response. He reacts as if he did not hear Adah talking in the plural. He is egoistic and exploitative when he immediately transforms such a good thought from Adah only to his advantage. His response is a reminder to her that she is a tool of happiness to others both physically and sexually:

The smile on Francis's face was like the warm sunshine that comes after a thunderous rain. It spread from ear to ear on his beardless face. He would be very happy if they could make it. He would finish his accounting and Adah would read liberianship. He would go first, and Adah would send him twenty pounds

every month: she was to feed herself and the children whilst they were still in Lagos and pay the rent and help in paying the school fees of some of Francis's seven sisters. (P. 26).

Adah swallows her hurt and pain over such assumptions and Francis's high handed manner of handling matters even though they had not paid her bride price. Francis might be bad but, for the time being, he was the only true company she had. She was suffocated by a new kind of pain at the departure of Francis to the U.K. Nobody saw how much she was hurting inside. The ache in her heart was too heavy for tears. She just stared at Francis and the others without uttering a word. Unfortunately, this was taken for lack of concern by the family. Ironically they did not know that what she was feeling within was far more than what all of them were feeling put together. The plane that took Francis away was like the coffin that took her papa away. This situational irony is very true as the Francis she would later meet in the U.K. would not in any way resemble the one who entered the plane:

Poor Adah! Her heart ached for the departure of the only human being she was just beginning to understand, just learning to care for. May be the separation was too early in their marriage, she did not know. But what she did not know there was this ache inside her heart, too heavy for tears, too heavy for words. She simply stared at them all... Adah had never seen an airplane at such close range. Why, they were bigger than buses! She thought the air hostess was smiling unnaturally and waving two hands instead of one like everybody else (P. 3).

These are definitely not the right emotions a woman should have at this moment.

... The door was cruelly slammed shut ... The finality of it all reminded her of something she had seen before, this cruel finality. The other person who was shut away from her like that never came back ... It was Pa who was nailed down into the bowels of a smaller whale, because he was going to be the only inhabitant of that one (P. 31).

Unfortunately for Adah, marriage had simply turned out to be a tunnel of thorns, fire and hot nails. She was Francis's punching bag, sex object and meal ticket. She hit the bottom and had no more room for pain with this scary and painful experience in the UK. It was both physical and psychological pain in its worst form. The poor living conditions were far from what she had in mind upon setting out for the U.K.

Her whole family was cramped together in one little room. This could have been made light if the relationship between Francis and her were anything to write home about. They communicated barely through monosyllabic conversations. All she wanted was that her husband would pay her some attention, just by asking to know how she was feeling, especially on bad mornings. This was like seeking to draw water from a rock. Francis would rather demand and have sex with her without bothering about her emotions or the consequences of the sex act. Tender emotions of love expressed by husbands to their wives before, during and after sex were luxuries she was never to have from Francis. Such a horrible welcome experience to the U.K. almost broke her. She started losing faith in herself. She really cuts a pitiful image in her pregnancy: a hungry or starving woman who would walk around during break just to avoid her colleague's charity.

Regrettably, Francis's exacting nature transforms marriage life into a slave-run farm. He puts the entire load on Adah's head without the barest iota of human emotion to lift a finger and help her out. For example, it is insensitivity that pushes Francis to demand for an eight-hour sleep without disturbance in a one-room house shared with children and a pregnant woman. He behaves as if he does not know that in her condition Adah needs financial, moral and physical help from him so as to have the psychological balance required for healthy procreation. Ironically and painfully, Adah is the one – even in her pregnancy – who has to rush out early in the morning for their daily bread. She also has to earn the money that Francis badly needs for his up-keep and tuition in order to enable him study comfortably. This indeed is the worst form of torture; it is oppression at its very worst. Francis's heartlessness could not have been better expressed. He is a slave master in the suit of a husband. Adah frames an excuse for coming back home from work because of labour pains, wondering and fearing what her husband, the author of the pregnancy, would say about her coming home instead of going to work in order to bring back the much awaited pay package. In her state of helplessness, she counts only on God to stand by her and give Francis a sign to believe her. These labour pains have only come to add to her psychological pain. It is unbelievable and painful that Adah has to fake labour pains in order not to be seen by Francis as a lazy woman running away from work. She has to hang on the railway strike as a pretext to go back home and have her baby:

Adah knew then that the railway men had been on strike that day for her sake. The pushes, though not constant, were too determined to be ignored. But what would Francis say. She wondered with fear. He would accuse her of laziness and would remind her that they needed her money. "Oh God!" She prayed soundlessly; please give Francis a sign, any proof to make him believe me. As

you can see, dear God, I am in pain. Not just shy of work, but in real pain” (P. 96).

What this means is that Adah finds it easier to confide in God than in the husband who made her pregnant in the first place. Her pain is made worse when she sees the husbands of other women in the ward paying them a lot of attention. She loved watching the cordial relationship between the sleek woman and her adoring husband. All the tables in the ward had flowers except hers. She is the only one still putting on the labour-room night gown in the ward and feels really humiliated when the nurse has to remind her that she is not supposed to wear the labour room gown in the open ward.

The inhumanity of her husband is another great source of trauma for her. The pain in her heart pushes her into uttering these bitter words: “The whole world seemed so unequal, so unfair. Some people were created with all the good things ready made for them; others were just created like mistakes”.

In other words, this hospital incident also opens her eyes to see the heartlessness of Francis: somebody who would use the money for her accumulated holiday to pay for his courses while she lies in the hospital in need. From this, it suddenly dawns on her that she is dealing with an enemy. Adah wonders at the heartlessness of a father who would not even buy something for his baby with money that was given its mother to provide for it. Francis’s wickedness, selfishness and heartlessness gradually push her into being suspicious of everybody. It is so painful that she concludes that she has never been loved but has always been used by Francis’s family as their source of livelihood.

In brief, her marriage has become a bed of thorns for her, thus making her to even contemplate abandoning her children with a lazy and wayward father. This can only mean that she has reached a point where she cannot take it any longer. She concludes that if she leaves Francis, she would not lose anything except her pains. At this stage, there is no longer any space in her heart for him. Every little space has already been taken up by pain. From now henceforth, our accommodating Adah starts fighting her husband. Even with this decision, she still does herself another great disservice: inflicting more pain onto herself by concluding that her marriage is failing because she did not encourage her husband to work. One wonders aloud who encouraged her to work, or who encouraged the other men who went to work to satisfy a need. The bottom line, however, remains the fact that Francis fails because he is a lazy, exploitative

man who has been living in his comfort zone where his wife provides all his needs. Even Okpara's counseling does not change him:

Francis was Francis, not ashamed of being Francis, and was not going to change, even if Adah brought two hundred successful Ibo students to show him. He was proud to be what he was and Adah had better start getting used to him that way or move out. (PP. 157-158).

The final nail driven into her marital coffin, the one drop of water that makes her cup of misery to overflow, is the burning of her brain child. That Francis would not read her book was bad enough, but that, in addition, he had called it rubbish was deeper hurt. He even went as far as saying that she would never be a writer because she was not only black but, also, she was a woman. Francis is a bigoted man who, in this act, seeks to kill Adah's creative spirits simply because she is a woman venturing into writing. These patriarchal confines highlight issues of professional limitations based on gender. In fact, society has socialised men to confidently promote their abilities, and women to doubt theirs. They even play down their abilities and quickly take rejection personally; thus, failing to pursue opportunities like the men do. When a woman breaks through this barrier and writes like Adah does, she is often seen as arrogant. Establishing herself as a writer, therefore, turns out to be a huge physical and psychological battle. There comes a point in time when the system of a human being can no longer take further pain. Adah's has had enough and the burning of her brain child turns out to be the "last straw". Her system cannot register or absorb this pain anymore and simply shuts off. Despite the myriad difficulties she faces in writing, she remains optimistic. She has been pushed to the wall; and with her back to the wall, she has only one direction in which to move: fighting back with focused attention.

In the light of this male domination, Francis thinks he can do just anything and get away with it. He even goes as far as standing in court and declaring that he has never been married to Adah. It is also proof of his high degree of irresponsibility. In fighting to overpower his wife he sacrifices the interests of his children as well. He is a good example of an irresponsible father who shamelessly declares in public in these words: "I don't mind their being sent for adoption," talking of his own children. Francis's heartlessness is an unbreakable wall, not just because he burns their marriage certificate as well as his own children's birth certificates but also because he crosses the Rubicon by disowning them in court. She sheds tears not for the bitter discovery of the emptiness of marriage but because Francis has succeeded to transform their marriage into

chains of pain and imprisonment. It has been one long stretch of pain and torture and Adah looks back in anger. She wonders why she knows neither the love of parents nor that of a husband; parents who were snatched by death too soon and a husband who simply had no love to offer her and her children.

Consequently, Adah is affected by this chronic pain in marriage. It affects her both physically and emotionally by destroying her relationships and her mind-set. Her depressions are transformed into the anxiety to be liberated or set free from pain. Francis's declaration in court enables her to create a positive mantra to counter her pain. She is resolved to create physical distance between her and Francis. For once, she decides to be gentle with herself. She comes to the bitter realisation that Francis is Francis and will never change. In this light, there is neither need for her to keep expecting the impossible from Francis nor to continue to be hard on self. She rather looks at Francis with a lot of pity and then allows the negative emotions in her to flow out.

In a nutshell, Adah becomes Emecheta's mouth-piece and an instrument of change. Through her, the man is seen as being responsible for women's plight in society. The goal here is to examine women's oppression and possibilities for resistance and positive change. All of this is done in a bid to dismantle the master-slave, or the dominator-dominated relationships in society. The man, who is the dominator, oppresses the woman, rendering her voiceless, incapable of progress, and denies her the right to self-fulfillment. Adah's resolve to move ahead without Francis shows a determination to fight against the "Second Class" position assigned to women. Women consider this authority of men over women in all sectors of life in society as criminal because it makes them vulnerable. Adah, however, succeeds in standing upon her feet as a black mother. She provides a way out for black women as she eludes the second-class position attributed to her by black men and men's colonial society.

In the same manner, Emecheta also hits hard on this spirit of gender bias and sexual politics in *In The Ditch* which is a follow-up to her *Second Class Citizen*. *In The Ditch* "depicts the depth of the wound inflicted by Francis on Adah by disowning her and her children in court. This act together with his traumatising treatment of Adah and her kids transcends the physical "wound" inflicted on her and their deep effects to her psyche. In conformity with Zuhmboshi's views on trauma, these external acts are captured in the external events in the text. They logically affect and influence the psychology of Adah and her subsequent relationship with others. What Adah has gone through in marriage and in London has intricately shaped her

personality. Emphasis here is not only laid on the harm caused by her traumatic experiences but also on the many sources that inform the definitions, representations and consequences of her traumatic experiences.

From the opening lines of the text, Emecheta creates a character that is very relatable. She gives Adah a personality and depth that whip up strong emotions of sympathy from the readers. Her surroundings which form the setting of action are dehumanising and immediately evoke pathos. One wonders aloud how a human being is supposed to overcome such setbacks and become happy in a world that stifles happiness. Adah's sources of pain and trauma are numerous and diversified. It is not only about what she has gone through in marriage but also about where she now finds herself. Her immediate companion is no longer a human being but a rat. Her environment makes her believable though unique. Because she is most uncomfortable with her environment, she sets goals for herself and allows herself to be driven by this deep-seated motivation. Hence, the dramatic opening where the rat is not afraid of Adah announces how low she has descended in the ranks of society:

There was a crick, and a crack, then another crick then crack, crack, cra ... Adah pulled herself up with a start and sat in the hollow of the large double bed. It had a gradual valley-like hollow, which gave it a sort of U look. On both sides of her the mattress rose gently, just like two table-lands sheltering her in a hollow valley. The crick and the crack sounds came once more and she grabbed her four month-old baby from its carry-cot. The cot was lying on one of the table-lands. (P. 1).

One cannot help feeling sorry for Adah under these circumstances:

The sleepy baby was crossed, her little face twisted in anger. Adah held the wet bundle to her breast and stared at her room-mate, the Great Rat. The rat was by now used to Adah's fright, he had long sensed that Adah was terrified of his sharp piercing eyes, long mouth and his big brown body. He stood there, relaxed but watchful, wondering what trick Adah was up to now. She was always too scared to shout. The rat was bored with watching her, started to hop from one table to another, happily enjoying its night play. (P. 1).

This setting is packed full with revealing and painful sources of trauma for Adah. The night is supposed to be a period of rest for everyone but, ironically, it is the moment Adah has to entertain her host, the Great Rat. The beautiful onomatopoeic "Crick Crack" sound produced

by the rat's gnawing captures the intensity of its disturbing presence. It is not sufficient that Adah and her baby have to pass nights in an uncomfortable bed; they are also subjected to bearing the painful presence of the rat. The bed is vividly described in such a way that one may not only visualise it but can also feel its discomfort. Though large, it provides her but with a "valley" into which she has sunk; a metaphorical descent into discomfort, pain and trauma. Even the innocent sleeping baby is disturbed and is angry with the rat and most probably with the uncomfortable setting that has rendered her wet. This is the fate reserved for a divorced mother of five. One wonders how society could silently watch these dehumanising lodgings for a divorced mother of five. Gender bias could not have been pushed to a higher limit as nothing is seen or said about the responsibility of the father of these children towards them. They are the sole responsibility of their mother who has to figure out how they would all survive on the miserable allowance dished out to them by social security. It is equally pathetic that even this Great Rat is above her, and is conscious of the fact that it can also oppress, terrorise and suppress her in her own squalor lodgings. This is why Emecheta terms it "Great". What a society wherein even rats are greater than human beings! The rat has an upper hand over Adah as it knows that she is always scared of it. The language of the text is very apt and vividly transmits the pathetic story of the suppressed woman even in a "developed" society like London.

So sad to note that even the rat could go to this length to torment and traumatise her and her baby. However, it is very comforting to note that she and not the rat has the final say. This does not cancel the fact that it is even scarier to note that the cockroaches are equally comfortable room-mates to her:

The rat got bored with watching ... Adah's eyes followed its movement's in the dim candlelight, then carefully and noiselessly she stretched out to reach the small reading-table by the big bed, picked-up one of the library books she had piled on the table, aimed carefully at the hopping rat, and flung. The rat, for once, was scared. It ran right into the broken wardrobe at the end of the room, disturbing a group of sleeping cockroaches. (P. 1).

The rats and cockroaches are symbolic of the filth in which they, the oppressed of society, live. Her situation is even made worse by the fact that she is a black, a woman, a divorcee and mother to five dependent kids. Her Landlord, a Nigerian like her, makes matters worse by charging her double what was normally asked for a room in such houses. He even thunders at her children and makes one of her boys to run at the sight of a black man. This

attitude only makes matters worse for Adah. She is afraid of leaving her children alone or food exposed for fear of being poisoned by the Landlord or anybody. Consequently, all food is stored under her bed, thereby increasing the number of rats in the house. The strain is unbearable and traumatising. The landlord even goes to great lengths to perform his “Nigerian Juju acts” with a view to frightening lonely women:

On that particular morning the Landlord had either slept late or very tired or both, for Adah soon heard the rattling of the milkman’s van ... just outside Adah’s ground-floor window, like a statue, apprehensive of the rattle and whistle ... The landlord could not push the old lady away. He simply did not know how to begin to explain what he had been doing. ... (P. 3).

One would have expected her African brother to treat her better in a foreign land, but she wonders:

How could the Landlord explain to this Londoner why, at such an early hour, he had tied a red cloth round his naked body and arranged an ostrich feather sticking up at the back of his head, looking to them like a television Red Indian who had a shot too many? ... The Landlady started scolding her husband in Yoruba ... Why should he take it upon himself to frighten a lonely woman? (PP. 4-5)

Emecheta accelerates this segment of the story by according a long period of story time to it because of its importance. It depicts the typical condescending male attitude towards women. They, especially African males, take women for toys and pleasure objects. Such bias or gender discrimination catches Emecheta’s attention. Her condemnatory pen exposes the Landlord for condemnation because of such mean acts towards women. This, therefore, is even a kernel event as it opens up the story to new directions. Adah simply cannot stand it anymore and looks forward, with great anxiety, to being moved out for better living conditions.

Unfortunately for Adah, the more things change, the more they remain the same. In her case, she moves out but to worse living conditions. Hers is just a life of pain and frustrations. She is finally moved to a council house. The Vicar’s wife tells Adah that “Those houses look like a monastery, but the Deaconess said they looked more like a mortuary”:

The Pussy cat Mansions were built round a large compound. Adah called the open space a compound, remembering Africa. The Family adviser, whom she met later, used the courtyard for the open space... In the Centre of the compound were some ill-looking buildings? Adah's African friends called these little houses "Juju man's house" when the Vicar's wife visited she said to Adah, "Those houses look like a monastery, but the Deaconess said they looked more like a mortuary." (P. 5).

This simply implies that even though the inhabitants were still alive, they were considered as dead and so should be kept in mortuary-like houses. What a shame to think that the architect had meant them to be used as pram and bicycle sheds, but by the time Adah moved into The Mansions, the sheds had deteriorated to a stage that very few mums would dream of putting their prams there. Mrs Obi cries foul when Adah is lodged in such deplorable conditions with her children. "Come now, that's unfair ... Why do you put a girl like her in such a Godforsaken place?" There is great contrast between the Manager and what he is offering to people: "His cuff links were real gold, and his wrist-watch was golden too." Adah accepts the offer simply because of the kind of fear she nurtured about the safety of her children in her old place:

Poor Mrs Delvin, you don't know the gripping fears I go through every time I leave my children indoors to do some shopping, you don't know what it is like to realize that all your letters are being opened and read before you lay hands on them, and you cannot dream ... (P. 12).

The little houses really ended up looking more like hippy shrines. (P. 16)

These external events have gone a long way towards shaping Adah's relationship with self, family and society. People end up accepting things as they are. Barbed wires that are placed on the windows of the old little houses end up acting and looking like prison walls for murderers awaiting execution. Adah's major satisfaction with this realisation is that it pushes and confirms her resolve to study, keep her job and look after her kids. (P. 17).

Even this resolution has its own challenges that are equally traumatic: how to keep active young children away from disturbing her neighbours in a room with thin walls that can hear your neighbour's cough, is an uphill task for Adah. Her neighbours, the Smalls, use this opportunity to breathe down her neck on the necessity to keep her children under control. The use of this antonym, where their name reflects who they truly are: "small" is very effective.

They think they are better than Adah, richer than her and made of superior clay, so they go reporting her to Carol, the family adviser:

I don't think we've met before. I work here, and my name is Carol. I am the Family Adviser. Are these your children? ... People here say that your children make too much noise, and that you leave them all by themselves in the evenings... So you come to take them away from me lady? She asked aloud. Oh, no. I only want you to check them. But I do! I really do! Adah cried. Do they look noisy and unchecked? Do they, now you tell me? (P.7).

Adah cannot help comparing this stifling society to her more accommodating African society. In Africa, people leave their doors open to welcome others and to receive air; while in Britain people shut theirs even against children's noise. This constitutes a major set-back for Adah. She realises that she is biting more than she can chew by wanting to go to school, keep a job and bring up her children properly. She cannot help but lament aloud on the traumatic life she is living:

Adah's mind was full. She was not interested in the lady's problem; if she had any problems she wouldn't be so bulky. She was worrying about her own problems. What was God's purpose in creating people like her? To be born just to keep tasting bitterness and sorrow and simply watch other humans getting all the goodies. All she had ever known in all her life was sorrow, anxiety and endless bitterness. (P. 25).

With this visit of Carol's, Adah sees her dreams going down the drain. Her children are more important to her than her job and even the school.

Adah's tears started to flow; these horrible tears, always flowing at the wrong moment. She wanted to appear bold, to tell Carol to mind her own business, but could not. She was worried about the children, too, so worried that it told on her job. Though she was lucky to be working with very understanding people, she knew that the bosses could not go on being accommodating forever ... There was a limit to human sympathy, even that of the bosses. She wiped away her tears. Immediately, her mind made up, she threw her decision to Carol. "I am resigning my job at the Museum" (P. 31).

The vicious cycle is now complete. She ends up like her lot in the ditch:

Her socialization was complete. She, an African woman with five children and no husband, no job and no future, was just like her neighbours – shiftless, rootless, with no rightful claim to anything. Just cut-off ... none of them knew the beginning of their existence, the reason for their hand-to-mouth existence or the result or future of that existence. All would stay in the ditch until somebody pulled them out or they sank under. (P. 31).

Francis and the other Africans must have been very happy seeing her in such circumstances:

Her resignation from the museum puts an end to her middle class... This beautiful chaining of the plot of the story goes a long way to confirm the fate of a black single/divorced mother in London – the dole house. She, like her kind, ends up in the Dole house – an impersonal lifeless structure. The faces of these on the dole bench tells the same story; “Benches were placed for people to sit on. The faces of those on the benches showed, dejection, boredom, hopelessness and self-pity.” (P. 31).

The conditions of living at the Pussy Cat mansion made things worse for the inhabitants. “Whenever it rained outside, it rained inside too” (P.42). Mildew grew everywhere, inhabitants made a toilet of the stairs and the smell of urine was everywhere. Mrs. O’Brien’s toddlers are even seen picking things on the stairs and putting in their mouths. Yet Mrs. O’Brien is seen exhibiting “False consciousness” by defending her family name. The irony here lies in the false importance she gives to her family name and not the children’s health. She feels ashamed and miserable about what is said of her husband.

More pressing challenges are their difficulty to balance their meals, bathe as often as they want instead of three times a week in order to save gas. Women are the first victims of this gruesome, wicked social system. More often than not, they end up with divorces or even force away their lazy and dependent husbands so as to be qualified for social security assistance. Such is the case of King’s family:

“Go away bloody good-for-nothing fool! I’ve no need of yet, so don’t ever come bloody back again. Mrs. King was yelling at her husband, her voice croaking and a kind of foam gathered round her twitching mouth ... I got the flat from the Council in my own name, so God off to bloody pubs and drink’ oles into your mother’s bottom!” (P. 50).

Sexual abuse is not ruled out of the lives of these women who already have so much on their shoulders. Matrimony is like an official license to men to abuse their wives sexually. The women have come to the conclusion that apart from being a way of getting free sex, matrimony was a legalised way for men to commit assault on women and get away with it. Mrs. King has had enough from Mr. King and throws it back at him in these words:

You never done a single honest day's job in yer' ole life you... You give me ten pounds to feed us nine, pay for your bloody fags and yer stinking drinks. Oh, no, I'm fed up with yer ... When the family was large one, and the husband could not earn enough to keep them out of poverty, and to cap it all, took it upon himself to bring home only part of his income – It has to be fed, nurtured and even pampered to weather time. How many middle – class women would welcome a penniless, drunkard pouncing on her in bed, ..? (P. 57).

From the experience of the Kings, one would say that the social security scheme of giving assistance to single mothers is the source of breakage in family life. Mr. King's children look at him in shame because he cannot take care of them. His son throws a bottle at him and breaks his head so as to prevent him from harming their mother who is the bread winner. With this kind of set-up women at The Pussy Cat Mansion had to be poor and sex-starved. Those that were sexually active did everything to avoid unwanted pregnancies:

Separated women were not allowed to have sex with their men friends; there would always be unwanted babies, and they would probably have a double income, one from the fancy men, the other from the Dole House ... The trouble with the system on this issue is that no one knew where the definition of respectable spinster ended and that of prostitute began. (P. 60).

It is a society without respect.

Also, with the popularity of the Pill, the diaphragm, contraceptive, Jelly and free abortion, how could it be necessary for society to be inhuman? To most of these women sex was like food. Love was dead except the maternal love they had naturally for their kids. (P. 60).

Emecheta is categorical in her conclusion about the fate of a society with such inhuman policies. Through her authorial attitude she sounds home a strong warning that if not taken into consideration can be the ruin of society:

To be deprived sexually, especially for women in their twenties, who had once been married, was probably one of the reasons why places like The Pussy Cat Mansions were a fertile ground for breeding hooligans and generations of unmarried mums. (P. 61).

One would say that society succeeds in stifling natural marital emotions and so ends up frustrating a good number of people in the process. Tenants of the Pussy Cat Mansion battle it out with emotional frustrations, like Adah, and physical challenges, like the dog droppings at her door. She fights from all fronts, rat and cockroaches from within, dog droppings and sexual frustrations. Unfortunately for Adah, she lives near the chute in the doll house and it stings:

Go away, you idiot ... go away, do that at your own door. Why do you have to come here anyway? The dog seemed to be thinking, for it looked at Adah sympathetically. Unfortunately, the call of nature was imminent and pressing. The dog did not move an inch ... You must get a big mop like mine, it frightens them damned dogs. Eeyer, do you know that you are not supposed to own dogs in these bleeding holes? But nobody cares for this fucking old place. People just do what they like. The bleeding bastards. (P. 63).

Yes, I know, but what I fail to understand is that the dog chooses my door to other places ... You are near the chute, that's why. That was why the tenants who were living there before you moved away. The chute, it smells horribly. Tell them to do something about it. I would hold the rent, I would. (P. 64).

The repetition of “go away” without any success captures the resistance to everything put up against Adah and her kind. It is the reason why people are young but look very old. This is the case of Mrs. Cox who is 49 years old but looks 60. Adah’s life is a constant life of pain, like that of an unlucky gambler. She had been nicely conditioned by rejection:

The hum of irritated voices died down a little and Adah found her tongue. She always felt insecure, uncertain and afraid. It is a curse to be an orphan, a double curse to be a black one in a white country, an unforgivable calamity to be a woman with five kids without a husband. Her whole life had been like that of a perpetually unlucky gambler. Every fool of woman can keep a man; she could not even do that. She had so many chis on her shoulder, and her trouble was that she had only two shoulders on which to carry them. (P. 71).

Like many trauma victims, Adah ended up blaming herself for some of the things that happened to her. She could not stand the possibility of losing her children in the fire incidence in her home.

Thousands of terrifying thoughts raced through her mind. Suppose I had been asleep. Suppose I had been out, or suppose Dada was a deep sleeper! Oh, my poor kids, my poor, poor kids. (P. 77).

To make matters worse, Christmas was dull as long as they depended on grants for kids' Christmas presents. Adah is tired of this and would love to gain financial independence for the sake of her children's happiness. "I want to give my children my own presents, what I actually work for. I don't want my dignity as a person denied me, I must do something. She is resolved when she says: "I must look for a part-time job. After all, I'm entitled to earn another couple of pounds a week without losing my dole money." P. 79

It is equally very frustrating to have a cleaner's job. It is so pitiful that she has to do a six-pound job for two pounds just to be kept within the confinement of the law. The Manager of the charring job cannot hide his sexual feelings and proposes to take Adah out on Friday Nights. There seems to be no end to her pain as she is down with cough contracted during this period of heavy wore. It is so bad that she calls for Adah to make her will. This is humorous as she herself wonders what she would be leaving for her kids in a will.

Through the beautiful dream/flashback technique, Emecheta succeeds in totally capturing and drawing out sympathy for Adah from the readers:

The tablets were very helpful. The first night Adah was delirious. She talked to her mother who had died a long time ago. Her mother stood and chatted with her on their sun-bathed veranda in Lagos. (P. 87).

This dream brings reminiscences of the past. This is suggestive of the beautiful life she had in her homeland in the warmth and comfort of home under Ma and Pa. This ties in with the view that home is where you complain most but where you have the best treatment:

The headmistress had said to her once, "I do lose my temper when your sons look bored, because I happen to know the standard you expect of them. She felt her dignity as a human being was being gradually taken away from her. (P. 88).

Even charity was taking its toll on her. She would have loved to earn her own money and provide Christmas gifts to her children. The point of providing for the down trodden defeats the philosophy that it is better to teach a child how to fish than providing fish to the said child. She even wonders aloud at human vanity. The things people rush to buy before Christmas become litter on Christmas day. More frustrating and traumatising is the fact that she lives in a society where laughter is regulated:

Adah was no longer sure whether she would feel at home in places like the British Museum or the big libraries where she used to work. In those places, your laugh was regulated, intellectual, and artificial. No spontaneity. You waited for others to finish what they were saying before you made your own contribution. You seldom listened to what the other person was saying and by the time it came to your turn to speak; your point would no longer be relevant. You would have forgotten what you were saying anyway. (P. 91).

The winter coldness reflected the coldness in people's hearts. This can be very frustrating for Adah and her kind coming from a warm communal African society – Nigeria. Pathos is beautifully used here as we cannot help shedding a tear for Adah and what she and her children have gone through:

Frustration combined with helplessness and anger came over her suddenly. She felt lonely; she did not like complaining or moaning to anyone. In any case, no one at the Pussy Cat Mansions could have given her the sort of help she needed. Her supply of food was always, and with the kids away from school the food ran shorter still. (P. 93).

Furthermore, everybody brings a new stigma to Adah. In addition to being a female, black divorcee, her family is termed "Problem Family". One would say that the roses of her life must have been taken away and destroyed and a double dose of thorns given her. The hypocrisy of men has no limits as even Carol, a friend, betrays her trust: "Carol calls us problem families ... She talks openly about people, and your secrets become known to everybody." (P. 95).

Here, Emecheta evokes the theme of culture which forms the background of conflict. Mrs. Williams, the Lady in Green, and Mrs. Cox wonder aloud why people who have problems should ignore the fact that they are the problem and go blaming innocent people"

"... But why do they always call us that? When you go to them fucking clinics you they say you are a problem. ... I am an honest-to-goodness hardworking

person not a bleeding problem family. They have problems, people who go about nosing into other people's business when they grow old, who is going to look after them when they have no children of their own? (P. 96).

What this means is that Africans and Indians differ from the Europeans when it comes to the policy on family. Africans sustain warm cordial family ties whereby their children take care of them when they are old. Consequently, it is frustrating for Adah who is bringing up her children far from where these ideals are preached and practiced. It is, therefore, ironical that the problem infesting society in London turns round to call people who are living real hell under their system a problem family. The condition of single mothers and women in general is pitiful. They do not even know their rights and so they go begging for what is rightfully theirs and even sell off their bodies for next to nothing:

At the Pussy, the greatest Whiner got the greatest attention. Many women in her position did not know what their entitlements were, so they felt they must beg ... Women of the ditch had to live at the discretion of such men. (P. 96).

Unfortunately, desperate single mothers are happy at the stillbirth of a child because it is one problem less for the depressed young girl who is the mother:

What worried people was how she would live after the birth of the baby, because it was certain that her allowance would be cut off? The girl looked frightened too. Mercifully, the child was stillborn in her sitting-room. One could feel the relief that went round. (P. 98).

Too sad, life's values are trampled upon by acts like this one. People are happy when a life is saved not lost. Unfortunately, such is not the case of this young lady. When poverty and frustration cause one to be relieved that a child is dead, it shows the extent to which society is broken down. For this reason, women see a need to drop men and go for jobs that can help them more than the men do: Adah advises Whoopey thus:

Don't you go about with fancy men, now that you're going to be alone by yourself, Whoopey why don't you take up something, serving, painting, oh, anything to occupy your time, now that your family will be separated from you? (P. 80).

These women are not only disempowered by these harsh societal policies but are also rendered vulnerable. In brief, these women live lonely, miserable lives and die lonely and sorrowful deaths. This is the case of Mrs. Jackson who dies and her door is broken into to get her mortal remains. Emecheta uses this instance to make the plight of women universal. She dies alone with nobody to give her the much needed last minute comfort:

“Poor Mrs. Jackson, she was such a nice old thing”, Whoopey mourned “Do you know Adah, she could have been buried here ... It’s terrible to die like that with nobody around to make it easier. Its them damp walls that killed her ... (P. 80).

In addition to this depressing way of ending one’s life, Adah is frightened by the scary setting of the Pussy Cat Mansion. The “Pussy Cat Mansion” was built on a cemetery” (P. 117). This pushes her to long for her homeland where there is always somebody to hold ones hand at the moment of death; “O God, let me die in my country when my time comes. At least there’ll be people to hold my hand”. (P. 117).

At last, Adah leaves the Mansion for “more comfortable lodgings amongst writers. She takes along with her a deep lesson on life. “Why deprive yourself of living just because you’re saving for the future? If you live well now, there might be some future for you!” (P. 134).

From the works of both authors therefore, gender bias, sexual abuse and patriarchy are great sources of pain/trauma. The fate of an innocent child is sealed at birth just on the basis that she is a girl. This is the case of Adah whose pain starts at birth. She came into the world as a girl when everybody was expecting a boy. In the Ibo culture, you are a man and a successful one depending on the number of male children you father. Consequently, Adah was a disappointment to her parents, her immediate family and her tribe. It was so bad that nobody even thought of recording her birth, for she was an insignificant being. All she was told about her birth was that it occurred during the Second World War. Such is the case of Elizabeth condemned at birth because of her parentage.

Adah did not know for sure what gave birth to her dream, when it all started, but the earliest anchor she could pin down in this drift of nothingness, was when she was about eight years old. She was not quite sure that she was exactly eight because, you see, she was a girl. She was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. (P. 7).

It is, therefore, regrettable that right from birth Adah had to take up the place reserved for a girl child by this strict patriarchal society. Like her mother, she is born to take care of the home. This means that the girl child has right only to basic education and then sewing. While Elizabeth is condemned to a loveless life deprived of the love of a father and mother.

Both Head and Emecheta at this point in time exhibit great skills in the art of representation through characters. Their characters, as earlier said, are constructs modeled on the readers' perception of people around them – that is person like. Character's names are well chosen to serve as labels for a trait or cluster of traits. For example, "Boy" represents the men who are born with golden spoons in their mouths in this discriminatory patriarchal society. The women characters in both Head and Emecheta's works are given names because the fate of one is the fate of all. Women are even brainwashed into accepting these roles and prescribing them for their children. Such is the case of Adah who regrettably comes to see her mother from a negative perspective given that she stands for the implementation of this unwritten law against women. She rather prefers her father :

"Pa would be all right: he would probably cane her, you know just a few strokes – six or so, not much – but Ma would cane, she would smack and then nag all day long." ... She thought that it was these experiences with Ma so early in life that had given her such a low opinion of her own sex. Somebody said somewhere that our characters are usually formed early in life. Yes, that somebody was right. Women still made Adah nervous. They had a way of sapping away her self-confidence. (P. 11).

In the world of both authors, the woman is not only prescribed the position of a second class citizen but is also unconsciously made to accept and live it. The woman is painfully relegated to the background even in decision making in her home as earlier mentioned. She has no voice, not even over the money that she earns nor the things that concern her happiness. Emecheta laments over Adah's fate in an authorial intrusion when she says:

She did not know her husband very well because, as most young African wives know, most of the decision about their lives had to be referred first to Big Pa, Francis's father, then to this mother, the discussed amongst the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to. (P. 26).

Head and Emecheta use strong communicative stylistic devices to X-ray, satirise and condemn the demonic patriarchal systems of their societies. Both use contrast to show the

loopholes of their different systems. When it comes to earning money for the family the woman is given pride of place for a change. The man is relegated to the background as the woman takes the place of the bread winner for the home. It is very ironical that when it comes to taking a decision on how the money she has earned has to be spent she is no longer given the pride of place to say anything. Her place or position in earning money is highly contrasted to that given her when it comes to spending that very money. For example, Adah finds it very ridiculous that the men draw up the plan without seeking her opinion and brings it for her to fund. More painful is the fact that she has to fund it without asking any question. This draws in pathos as the readers do not only feel sorry for Adah but cry with her. The wickedness of Francis's father is seen when he cautions his son that Adah might be a millionaire but her money should go to making him, Francis, a millionaire and an important person in society. He shamelessly advises Francis to turn a deaf ear to what his friends may be saying and see it as a golden opportunity that he made a good choice in getting married to a woman who would bring so much to make him the person he dreams to become.

Her pay will be three times my own ... My colleagues at work will laugh at me ... "You are a fool of a man, you are. Where will she take the money to? ... Let her go and work for a million Americans and bring their money here, into this house. It is your luck. You made a good choice in marriage son. (P. 24).

Unless one has gone through discrimination of any kind, one would not fully understand what it means to be considered a second class citizen in one's own home. It is very traumatising for Adah that her own money has more value than herself in her own matrimonial home. She is a mere woman who owns nothing but works for everything. It is true that bride price is another imprisoning tool used by men in this patriarchal society to totally own and control women. It has the connotation of a purchase or financial transaction.

Both novelists, lament over the fact that once a man pays a woman's bride price, he and his family see that woman as a piece of property and chattel. More humiliating is the fact that the woman is often stripped of any value when men go as far as haggling and bargaining over her bride price. It is carried to the end without any input from the woman. Adah's situation elicits a lot more pathos when Francis's family even goes ahead to own her without meeting the full bride price. This is because she is not only a girl but an orphan with nobody to exact the payment of the bride price or some respect to be accorded to her. Elizabeth's situation is not better as she does not even get to the point of having a bride price paid for her yet still treated

as badly as Adah. In brief, parents see daughters as a means of getting rich. A daughter is, therefore, seen as a bank account. Adah is the source of labour for Francis's family and a machine for giving birth. She gives birth to the children, takes care of them but the man has legal rights over her.

The female characters are objects, abused both physically and psychologically. Nothing stops the men from beating them up in front of their children or running them down in public. The men appoint themselves as disciplinarian, claiming to be disciplining the women when they cannot discipline themselves. With gender-based violence, women become beasts of burdens as Bitek echoes in his poem "Song of Lawino". The husband is "licenced" by society to "put the woman in order". This does not only take a physical form of violence but, worse still, psychological torture.

Just like the South African and Nigerian societies, the British society is not void of gender bias. Contrary to what Adah initially thought, men and women are not seen as equals before the law in the British society. She lives a bitter experience of this over her family planning saga. Adah erroneously thinks that she is in a society where she is recognised as a human being endowed with her own fundamental rights and so can walk into the hospital and decides what she wants done on her. Embarrassingly, her request for a family planning pill meets with the bitter realisation that this cannot go through without the signature of her husband. This realisation is very painful to her as it only confirms her inferior position vis-à-vis her husband and that of other male counterparts. What it all means is that she is nothing without her husband. Ironically, a husband who would not cooperate with her, and worse still, one who sees nothing wrong with having children one after the other as long as he is not the one providing for them. Francis, like Mr. Head, does not even bother to analyse the impact of his action on his wife. Unfortunately, these women go out to seek solutions to their problems but meet with resistance. It is regrettable that women cannot even take decisions for themselves. This is why to Adah,

The last nail driven into the coffin was when the woman brought a form which Adah's husband was supposed to sign to tell them that he was all for it, that he wanted his wife equipped with a birth control gear. There was going to be trouble over that...and he would raise hell if he realized that Adah got the literature without his permission. What was Adah going to do? Why was it necessary to have a husband brought into issues like that? Could not the woman be given the opportunity of exercising her own will? (P. 144).

It is very frustrating for the woman who discovers the mechanisms built into every fabric of society to allow the man to dominate and lord it over her. Indeed, these chauvinistic tendencies of men are most welcomed in a patriarchal society. No matter the scope of the problem, no matter the degree of pain felt, a woman has no right to leave her home:

My name is Okpara, and I know you are Ibo because of the marks on your face. I don't want to hear anything. Let's go and beg his forgiveness. He would let you in ... typical Ibo psychology; men never do wrong, only the women have to beg for forgiveness, because they are bought, paid for and must remain like that, silent obedient slaves. (P. 156).

It is a man's world and so it is not surprising that Okpara, like his kind, believes that men never do wrong. Even the professional rights of the woman are censored by the man. Adah's creative power is controlled by Francis. What is even so disgusting is his mean attitude in thinking that Adah is good for nothing. That her husband, Francis, would not read her book was bad enough. But that he, in addition, had called it rubbish was deep hurt. He even went as far as saying that she would never be a writer simply because she is black and a woman. This was an act of killing even her spirit as well. It left Adah with that feeling of emptiness that leaves her with only two options: fighting for survival or abandoning herself to whatever and be crushed.

Women are viewed as sexual objects in these demonic patriarchal systems. This remains a great source of trauma. As seen before, most marriages contracted under this system are void of love. As such, the woman's major role in marriage is to give birth to and take care of babies, especially baby boys. She is beaten, insulted and humiliated when this does not occur. In some cases, she is even treated as a witch. In addition to this, the man controls her sexuality and demands sexual satisfaction whatever the situation. This means that the woman does not have control over her sexuality in this system. The absence of love or shared satisfaction in such marriages brings about a lot of pain and frustration. Adah's experience in *Second Class Citizen* is frightening and soul wrenching. To her, marriage life is a journey to Calvary. Love is an almost in-existent component in hers. To begin with, her marriage to Francis took off on the wrong premise which, subsequently, constituted a major source of pain for her. It is her quest for education that pushes her to the doorsteps of a loveless marriage with a man who, in addition, is materialistic and exploitative. The stifling patriarchal cultural practice only came in to make matters worse for her. She marries Francis to acquire a ticket for her education. This is

because society frowns at any single girl who takes up lodgings on her own while going to school. For giving her this ticket, Francis expects unquestionable obedience from her. She must, therefore, remain silent and grateful to him and his family even in the face of oppression. This is the price she pays for having a man who gives her a sense of value. Elizaberth lives the bitter reality of seeing her husband run around with her neighbours. Women's contributions are valued and not them. This is bound to depress them as they see that things are given more value to them who bring in the things.

Unfortunately for Elizaberth and Adah, marriage life is just a bed of thorns, fire and hot nails. Adah becomes Francis's punching bag, sex object and meal ticket while Elizaberth becomes a sex object to her husband. Both women hit the bottom as there is no more room for pain in their lives. It is both physical and psychological pain in its worst form. The men think they can do just anything and get away with it where the women are concerned.

Consequently, women are affected by this chronic pain in marriage. It does not only affect them physically; it also affects them emotionally. Their depressions are transformed into the anxiety that would push them to seek to be liberated or set free from pain. In main characters become the novelist's mouth-piece and their instrument of change.

The setting of the novels are packed full with revealing and painful sources of trauma for Adah, Elizaberth and Margaret. Head and Emecheta accelerate some segments of the story by according a long period of story time to them because of their importance.

Unfortunately, the more things change, the more they remain the same. The external events have gone a long way to shaping the character's relationship with self, family and society. People end up accepting things as they are before looking for avenues on how to transform them

Thus sexual abuse is not ruled out of the lives of these women who already have so much on their shoulders. Matrimony is like an official license to men to abuse their wives sexually. The women have come to the conclusion that apart from being a way of getting free sex, matrimony is a legalised way for men to commit assault on women and get away with it. For example, Mrs. King has had enough from Mr. King and throws it back at him in these words:

... I'm not having you here anymore. You give me ten pounds to feed us nine, pay for your bloody fags and yer stinking drinks.... When the family was large one, and the husband could not earn enough to keep them out of poverty, and to cap it all... Love is like a living thing. It has to be fed, nurtured and even pampered to weather time. How many middle-class women would welcome a penniless drunkard pouncing on her in bed, just like an animal, simply because he married her? (P. 57).

From the experience of the Kings, one would say that the social security scheme of giving assistance to single mothers is the source of breakage in family life. Mr King's children look at him in shame because he cannot take care of them. His son throws a bottle at him and breaks his head so as to prevent him from harming their mother who is the bread winner. With this kind of set-up, women at The Pussy Cat Mansion had to be poor and sex-starved. Those that were sexually active did everything to avoid unwanted pregnancies:

Separated women were not allowed to have sex with their men friends; there would always be unwanted babies, and they would probably have a double income ... The trouble with the system on this issue is that no one knew where the definition of respectable spinster ended and that of prostitute began. Also, with the popularity of the Pill, the diaphragm, contraceptive, Jelly and free abortion, how could it be necessary for society to be inhuman? To most of these women sex was like food. Love was dead except the maternal love they had naturally for their kids. (P. 60).

Both novelists are categorical in their conclusion about the fate of society with such inhuman policies. Through their authorial intrusions, they sound home a strong warning that if not taken into consideration can be the ruin of society:

To be deprived sexually, especially for women in their twenties who had once been married, was probably one of the reasons why places like The Pussy Cat Mansions were a fertile ground for breeding hooligans and generations of unmarried mums. (P. 61).

One would say that when society succeeds in stifling natural marital emotions it ends up frustrating a good number of people in the process. Tenants of the Pussy Cat Mansion battle it out with emotional frustrations – like Adah – and physical challenges – like the dog droppings – at her door. She fights from all fronts, rats and cockroaches from within, dog droppings and sexual frustrations from outside. Elizaberth fights one challenge after another.

Through the beautiful dream/flashback technique, Emecheta and Head succeed in totally capturing and drawing out sympathy for Adah and Elizaberth from the readers: For example,

“The tablets were very helpful. The first night Adah was delirious. She talked to her mother who had died a long time ago. Her mother stood and chatted with her at their sun-bathed veranda in Lagos” (P. 87). This dream brings reminiscences of the past. This is suggestive of the beautiful life she had in her homeland in the warmth and comfort of their home under Ma and Pa. This ties in with the view that home is where you complain most but where you have the best treatment: “The headmistress had said to her once, ‘I do lose my temper when your sons look bored, because I happen to know the standard you expect of them.’ She felt her dignity as a human being was being gradually taken away from her.” (P. 88) What this means is that women are not only disempowered by these harsh societal policies but are equally rendered vulnerable. From the above, women live lonely, miserable lives and die lonely and sorrowful. This is the case of Mrs. Jackson who dies and her door is broken into to get her mortal remains. Head and Emecheta stretch the plight of women to universal concerns in this instance. Women, who resign themselves to this fate, die alone with nobody to give them last minute comfort.

From the above analyses, we see beyond any doubt that gender bias, sexual abuse and patriarchal practices contribute a lot to causing trauma. When preferential treatment is given to one gender over another it is bound to result in physical, psychological or social harm to the victim. In the selected novels it has brought a lot of suffering to the women including threats, coercion or deprivation of liberty. We have seen this resulting in lack of safe access to basic needs like food, water, shelter, fuel, and security and hygiene supplies in the homes. The victims even lack knowledge or awareness that humanitarian assistance is supposed to be free in their societies. Unfortunately, there is even lack of awareness among women about their rights and ability to achieve equality. We have also seen how sexual abuse has also had long term negative effect on the victims. We can therefore say that sexual abuse is a profoundly a negative and traumatic life event with widespread psychological and sociological effects on the victim. From the above analyses, we have also seen that patriarchy has also greatly contributed to trauma occurrence in the text. We have seen that in the context of the novels, the home is not as safe as it ought to be especially for the girl child. Embarrassingly, harassment, derogation and misogynistic violence against women is seen as normal within the context of Head and Emecheta’s communities. For example, emotional abuse and deprivation in parental styles correlate with control over female children than over male children and result in traumatic experiences in women.

THE NIGHTMARE OF COLONIAL INCURSION AND GENDER POLITICS

Colonial incursion was and still is a knife that has been driven through the heart of Africa and Africans. It is very nightmarish and traumatising to realise that this is the process that forced Africans to be dependent on the colonialist. Colonialism made African colonies dependent by introducing a mono-cultural economy for each of the territories colonised. Therefore, it forced Africans to work in plantations for very low wages or to become their slaves in the form of “housemaids” or “houseboys”. The Whiteman had an economic, cultural, religious and political agenda for Africa: to set confusion among Africans in all spheres of life. And the Whiteman did implement his agenda by deliberately balkanising Africa, thereby rendering its inhabitants unable to jointly fight the Europeans.

The first nightmarish and traumatising action of the colonialists was their racist tendencies. It is not only painful but traumatising to discover that one’s fate in life is determined by the place from where he/she comes. The Whiteman passes for a Lord, a commander, a dictator and consequently an oppressor. The Blackman, on the other hand, is the downtrodden, a hand and, consequently, a second class citizen even in his/her own country. The writers echo the thoughts of the Africans, questioning the colonialists as to who gave them the mandate to classify the races or peoples of the world in the first place.

Suddenly, a people that have been and have lived on their own continent right from creation are said to have been discovered by persons foreign to the very continent. Their identity is taken away from them and they are painfully considered as human beings without personality. Head did not only see this manifested in Apartheid South Africa but was also a victim of this. Thus, her story is very emotional and pathetic as it is coined from her own first-hand experience. Upon a closer look, racism is even more monstrous and unpardonable than anything else when we see the conservative racist grandparent of Elizabeth tag her mother as a mentally deranged being and summarily sends her to a mental asylum, her sole crime being that of having had a child with a black stable boy. What an irony that the fruit of something as beautiful as love is condemned. Elizabeth is, therefore, classified as a coloured, the worst category of persons in racist South Africa. She is totally lost as she is neither white nor black. Her sense of pride and self-esteem is further destroyed when Head says:

They played on her experience in South Africa. In South Africa, she had been classified coloured. There was no escape from it to the simple joy of being a

human being with a personality. There wasn't any escape like that of anyone in South Africa. They were races, not people. (P. 44).

Even more traumatising is the hypocrisy of the missionaries who preached God but could not live up to what they preached. This can be seen in the principal of the mission school who is very heartless as seen from the manner in which she declares Elizabeth's origin to her. Life becomes very traumatising for Elizabeth when she is also rejected by the blacks because she is coloured. Through repetition, Head demonstrates that racism is a two-way traffic. This means that the Whites reject the Blacks and the Blacks, in turn, fight Blacks by rejecting the Whites as well. An example is the horrible rejection of Elizabeth by Medusa; she hates her intensely because of her colour and excludes her from an African haven:

The wild-eyes Medusa was expressing the surface reality of African society. It was shut in and exclusive. It had a strong theme of power worship running through it, and power needed small, narrow, and shut in worlds. They never felt secure in the big, wide flexible universe where there were too many, cross-current of opposing thoughts. (P. 38).

As such, racism stands out as the principal cause of trauma in Head's *A Question of Power*. It deprived Elizabeth of her mother, set her apart from the White race as well as from the Black, and caused the father image to be non-existent in her world. These constitute traumatic memories for Elizabeth and account for her hallucinations. She deeply decries the fate of the Blackman in South Africa as she thinks that the Blackman was just born to be hated. It made life in South Africa a living hell:

It was like living with a permanent nervous tension, because you did not know why the white people there had to go out of their way to loathe you. They were just born that way, hating people, and a black man or woman was just born to be hated. (P. 19).

It sounds like condemnation from birth as one thinks he/she is born to be condemned.

There wasn't any kind of social evolution beyond that, there wasn't any lift to the heart, just this vehement vicious struggle between two sets of people with different looks; and like Dan's brand of torture, it was something that could go on and on. Once you stared the important power maniac in the face, you saw that he never saw humanity, compassion, and tenderness. It was as though he had a total blank spot and only saw his own power, his influence, himself. It was death. (P. 19).

Also very frustrating is the fact that racism in South Africa is extended to education. As seen in Head's *A Question of Power*, it is thought that the Blackman is naturally dull, stupid and inferior. Ironically, the same people who think so are the first to deprive him of education. In his quest to dominate and permanently lord it over the Africans, the Whiteman deliberately takes away from him the tool of liberation: education. Head, through the theme of education, shows the heartlessness of the Whiteman. Even when there is a lone miserable school for the blacks, it is understaffed and has no reference books. The few teachers sent there do not have any better training themselves.

The teachers simply had to rake up information from their minds to teach their students as seen below:

Education was so hard to come by. They concentrated over intensely, over-eagerly on their lessons. They paid for an education in schools so ill – equipped. The teachers had no reference books and had to rake up information from their own brains on the structure of the tropical rain forest of Africa. English composition was the starkest bleakest lesson of the day. Someone had set the pattern and it remained the furthest reach of the children's imagination. (P. 83).

The colonialist prescribed for Africans the kind of education that would not liberate them. This explains why learners in the text would abandon the classroom for their farms and cattle when the rains come. Camilla is a perfect prototype of the Whiteman who walks around with the Blackman without noticing the Blackman's educational starvation. It pains Elizabeth to notice the highhanded and disrespectful manner in which Camilla treats the Blacks. Her pain is palpable when she says of Camilla:

She's stone-deaf and blind. She takes the inferiority of the Blackman so much for granted that she thinks nothing of telling us straight to our faces that we are stupid and don't know anything. There are so many like her. They do not see the shades and shadows of life on black people's faces... There's a dismal life behind them of starvation and years of drought. When there was no food, no hope, no anything. There's a magical world ahead of them with the despair and drudgery of semi-desert agricultural alleviated by knowledge. (P. 83).

By all indications, this is very frustrating for Elizabeth and the Blacks. Elizabeth's heart, therefore, cries out for the likes of her son who is not getting anything better than what she got. Shorty's teacher spells "evaporation" "eveporation". It is painful to see the continuous abandonment of a race in matters of education. The Whiteman is more concerned with

education than with anything else. This is why Elizabeth embraces with open arms Eugene's scheme as the only way out.

From another perspective, the White colonisers did not grab only the wealth of the Africans in their rush to colonise Africa; they also legitimised their hegemony over the countries they colonised by claiming that they were coming to civilise the barbarous natives and raise their standards to those of the Europeans. Unfortunately, where their presence was justified and accepted by natives who tended to believe in their "goodwill", they retraced and embarked on changing the identity of the natives. Consequently, they also set out, albeit subtly, to take away the self-esteem of the indigenous people. The colonisers considered them as second class citizens in their own countries and those who succeeded to move to the colonisers' countries were still considered as such. Till today, this oppression is still going on as the coloniser still lives in the best quarters in African cities, eats their best food and tells the natives that his language is better than theirs. He even goes as far as asserting that learning his language is equal to learning his culture. Painfully, their condescending attitude transmits the false message that everything about the indigenous people is bad and bababric. Consequently, they have to go to his schools, dress like him and adopt his rules and regulations in all that they do. The natives are taught to be humble without minding their own lost identity. This sort of humiliation – which is very noticeable in the lives of the characters in Head's *A Question of Power* – is very painful. Africans are not just strangers in their own homeland, but they are empty vessels with their self-esteem taken away from them. A man is no longer a man in his own society, he has lost his identity and is ridiculed in front of his wife/girlfriend. This is the situation of the man whom the Boer policeman addressed as a boy in front of his girlfriend.

Situations like this one compel us to wonder with her characters when the man helplessly asks:

How can a man be a man when he is called boy? I can barely retain my own manhood. I was walking down the road the other day with a girl; and the Boer policeman said to me: "Hey, boy, where is your pass? Am I a man to my girlfriend or a boy? How do you think I felt? (P. 45).

This issue of a pass before you go anywhere in your own country is ridiculous. You are a person because of the piece of paper that you carry on you and it determines how far you can go in your own land. This is painful and ironical; it is provocative, nay, inadmissible that the Whites should be doing this to Africans even in their own land – Africa. Nobody can do this to

a White in his land. The Whites have indeed abused the embrace of friendship offered to them by Africans. They have turned the order of society upside down too and have now become the masters of the land. They determine how and where the Blackman may or may not go to in his own land. It is unimaginable that a people that were once free have become slaves in their own land. The woman bears the pain and humiliation in silence but cannot help the situation while the once powerful man who was not only her husband but also the strength and pillar of her home is reduced to a “boy”. The fabric of a perfect home during the pre-colonial days is falling apart before their very eyes and there is nothing they can do. It is traumatising to notice that the proud African man Achebe highlighted is gone. The great Chaka should be lamenting in his grave upon seeing his beloved noble countryman treated as a child/boy and humiliated in the presence of the woman whom he is supposed to govern. Like Alan Pattern, they cry the beloved country that now exists only in their minds. In South Africa, there are races and not people; with some being superior to others. The Blacks are even seen to be better than the Coloureds. Medusa goes further to declare that Coloured men lie down on their backs with their penises in the air and die slowly. Some simply fall down in the rivers and die. This is the apex of traumatising frustration which compels you to question not only who you are but also what your existence is.

More painful was the destruction of the African belief system. Prior to the arrival of the Whiteman, Africans had a religion based on the concept of the Supreme Being. Unfortunately, even this religion was taken away from them, giving the impression that no religious traditions and heritage existed prior to the arrival of the Whiteman. What this means – according to the colonialists – is that the Africans were barbarians who did not know God and so had to be delivered by the Whiteman’s religion. Thus, Africans were forced or cunningly made to abandon their religious beliefs for Christianity. Even though the Africans resisted this vehemently, they were pushed to a point of looking down on their own beliefs and customs as being inferior. The negative was and is still highlighted to show how backward and uncivilised the Africans were and are still in their belief systems.

Such is the case with witchcraft in Head’s *A Question of Power*. Elizabeth sees witchcraft in Africa as “Terror tactics” which people use against one another. The Whiteman uses this to paint Africans as being bad. Not only are they superstitious but, also, they use witchcraft to destroy themselves. Their religion is reduced to something bad, something to be discarded through the Whiteman’s education; the teacher knows that witchcraft is simply tricks played by the enemies on their victims:

Suppose someone hated him: That person will creep into his yard at night and place a bunch of dried leaves, doctored by a witchdoctor, in front of his door. Being educated, he would merely pick up the bunch of leaves and throw them away. But the ordinary villager would straight away make off to the witchdoctor for a counter-medicine. (P. 48).

The uneducated Blackman has to be exposed in this manner to show how ignorant he is because he does not know the Christian God. Consequently, it is regrettable and pitiful that disasters from major killers – like endemics – are immediately linked to witchcraft. For example, not being able to explain such major disasters that might be stemming from malnutrition and other ailments, they fall back on the only thing they know and believe that can kill which is witchcraft. Another interesting incident is that of Elizabeth in the pitch-black darkness of the Motabeng night. When she blew out her candle, she had a feeling that someone moved into her room from the roof. This cannot be explained in the normal world in which she lives; a world which is flat and straight with things she could feel and touch. She is neither a Christian to surrender it to God:

She had just blown out the light when she had the sudden feeling that someone had entered the room. The full impact of it seemed to come from the roof and was so strong that she jerked up in bed. There was a swift flow of air through the room, and whatever it was moved and sat down on a chair. The chair creaked slightly alarmed, she swung around and lit a candle. The chair was empty. She had never seen a ghost in her life. She was not given to “seeing” things. (P. 22).

Elizabeth’s drifting into the abstract and back to reality is intensified by witchcraft practices. The insinuation here is that Africans are doomed because they do not know God to whom they can surrender their fears. The presence of the dead owl in front of her house and Thoko’s weird and hair raising stories only help to instill more fear into her with a view to discrediting the African belief system:

A great big Mamba snake jumped out of the ground and ran over my body; tsweee like lightening! I dropped dead on the ground with shock. The cattle jumped high in the air! In the night the jackals come and cry around the hut. They want the meat which we hang up in the trees. Then there is a wild cat, like a leopard ... He comes around softly, and cracks open our skulls, and eats our brains. He always puts back the skin nicely over the eaten part and when we find people dead like that, we know the wild cat is about. (P. 60).

Such gruesome details make Elizabeth shudder within. What a life full of everything negative and frightening that takes joy miles away from you! Yet, the belief systems of Africa

in the years gone by before the colonial masters were full of positive colouring which the racist colonialists now paint black. In the same light, Head, in *Maru*, uses intense imagery and vivid description to condemn the evil of colonial incursion. Emphasis is laid on injustice and oppression brought about by the colonial masters. The concept of race functions as a vehicle of displacement. In this novel, Head dwells on loneliness caused by racial intolerance which causes a whole section of society to be considered as untouchables. The pathetic story of Margaret Cadmore, an orphaned girl, mirrors what Head herself lived in South Africa. This autobiographical element draws out pathos as we journey with Cadmore on this traumatic journey. The plot of the novel centres on injustice and prejudice, depicting acts well perpetrated by the colonial masters. The setting of the novel is Dilepe, Botswana. The novel contributes enormously to revealing the theme of racial prejudice, a product of the colonial master. Racial prejudice is rife here given the difficulties people have in accepting a young Masarwa – Margaret Cadmore – as one of theirs because she is of “lower birth”. It goes without saying that racial prejudice creates very frustrating circumstances that generate trauma.

To begin with, the very birth of Margaret is quite painful and draws out our emotions of sympathy. As seen before, Margaret’s mother dies on the day that Margaret is born. Her corpse lies untouched by the roadside until Margaret Cadmore, a white missionary, issues orders that it be buried. This simple fact of being rejected by her people shows the universality of the theme of racism. It does not start and end with the Whites. It is even more painful when you are rejected by people you consider yours. In *A Question of Power*, Elizabeth’s white maternal family rejects her because they think she is not one of them. In *Maru*, Margaret is rejected by fellow blacks because she is a Bushman or a Masarwa. The White lady takes her to her home and gives her her own name: Margaret Cadmore. What this means is that, it is not all lost. There are still some people who see the beauty of the world beyond the colour of the skin. While Margaret is looked down upon as a village stray dog, with tin cans tied to its tail as a form of torment by the cruel boys of the village, a total stranger gives her shelter. It is traumatising when young Margaret is rejected and even spat upon by her prejudiced classmates. However, she remains a fighter as she is determined to overcome the challenges of her life. Consequently, in her loneliness, she turns to the world of her books. She learns very early in life that her survival from the inevitable battles on her way lies in education. When given the prestigious teaching job in Dilepe, her tribal background is not known and she is accepted because they thought she was coloured. She, however, declares that she is Marsawa with the attendant consequences.

She is admired by some for this honesty and boldness. For example, she wins Dikeledi's respect and even becomes the object of love of the two most influential men in the village. On the other hand, she lives palpable pain emanating from the treatment reserved for her people – the Marsawa's. The Marsawa's who lived off the land were considered subhuman by most citizens of Botswana. They lived off the land, scavenging for food and water in a subsistent lifestyle. The name "Masarwa" is an insult of the same class as "nigger" reserved for the Blacks by the Whites. All the other characters in the novel face the reality of Margaret's integrity and intelligence.

To begin with, the rich use the Masarwa's as their slaves since they work for them as cattle ranchers, farmers or servants. The lessons from colonial incursion were not only learned but were also well implemented:

Before the Whiteman became universally disliked for his mental outlook, it was there. The Whiteman found only too many people who looked different. That was all that outraged the receivers of his discrimination that he applied the technique of the wild jigging dance and therattling tin cans to anyone who was not a Whiteman. They all have their monsters. You just have to look different from them... Then, seemingly, anything can be said and done to you, as your outer appearance reduces you to the status of a non-human being. (P. 5).

Head does not only expose or decry such treatment of the human being by his fellow specie because of the colour of their skin but, also, she questions the authority of those who have divided the world into races and skin colour. This, regrettably, is not done for any good reason; rather, it is done in a bid to classify some people as animals not fit for the human world. Man is even ranked last in the animal world: this is very traumatising as is seen in the novel:

In Botswana they say: Zebras, Lions, Buffalo and Bushmen live in the Kalahari Desert. If you can catch a Zebra, you can walk up to it, forcefully open its mouth and examine its teeth. The Zebra is not supposed to mind because it is an animal. Scientists do the same to Bushmen and they are not supposed to mind, because there is no one they can turn round and say, "At least, I am not an animal." (P. 5).

The bushmen are, therefore, not different from animals according to their standards:

Of all things that are said to oppressed people, the worst things are said and done to the Bushmen. Ask the scientists. Haven't they yet written treaties on how Bushmen are an oddity of the human race, who are half the head of a man and half the body of a donkey? Because you don't go poking around into the organs of people unless they are animals or dead. (P. 5). Sometime ago, it might have been believed that words like "Kaffi" and "nigger" defined a tribe. Or else, how can a tribe of people be called Bushmen or

Masarwa? Masarwa is the equivalent of “nigger”, a term of contempt which means, obliquely a low, filthy nation. (P. 6).

The above inhuman treatment is seen when nobody – out of genuine love – lends a hand of assistance to the corpse of Margaret’s mother or to the orphaned child. Even the White lady, Margaret Cadmore, helps to fulfill the societal opinion of her:

She died during the night but the child was still alive and crying feebly when a passer-by noticed the corpse. When no one wanted to bury a dead body, they called the missionaries; not that the missionaries really liked to be involved with mankind, but they had been known to go into queer places because of their occupation. (P. 7).

Come to think of it, it is horrifying when one comes to see the underlying reason why Cadmore takes the orphaned baby to her home. The theme of appearance and reality is highlighted here to show the hypocrisy of the white man. In the eyes of the public it is seen as an act of kindness which erroneously places his clan above others. The good thing is that the child’s life is saved. Her actual reason is to use the child for an experiment. Fortunately, it is an experiment geared towards changing the world. But it does not cancel the fact that the child is used as a guinea pig for Margaret’s experiment:

As she put the child to bed that night in her home, her face was aglow. She had a real living object for her experiment. There seemed to be a big hole in the child’s mind between the time she slowly became conscious of her life in the home of the missionaries and conscious of herself as a person. A big hole was there because, unlike other children, she was never able to say “I am this or that”. My parents are this or that. There was no one in later life who did not hesitate to tell her that she was a Bushman, (P. 7).

At this juncture, we are talking about a child whose identity has been taken from her. She is formed to change the world not by drawing from her lineage like it is advised in the bible through the genealogy of Jesus, but through transformation. Through her pains and traumas, she is formed to create new worlds:

Then they were thrown into confusion when she opened her mouth to speak. Her mind and heart were composed of a little bit of everything she had absorbed from Margaret Cadmore. It was hardly African or anything but something new and universal, a type of personality that would be unable to fit into a definition of something as narrow as tribe or race or nation. (P. 8).

She is appreciated for her intelligence but, unfortunately, the mark of a Marsawa still remains. She is treated as an outcast and humiliated by her Boss, the Principal, at her work place. It is so humiliating and traumatising when the principal partners with other colleagues and her learners to humiliate her because of her tribe:

The principal of the school belonged to that section of mankind which believed that a position demanded a number of exaggerated mannerisms ... Margaret's advance papers had aroused his curiosity considerably. He made the same error as Dekelidi, assuming she was a coloured... "Excuse the question, but are you a coloured?" he asked
"No", she replied. "I am a Masarwa." The shock was so great that he almost jumped into the air...!" (P. 24).

This shock and condescending attitude of the principal is not different from that of Margaret's classmates, in training school, who would mock her by saying:

"You are just a Bushman ... Since when did a Bushy go to school? We take him to the bush where he eats mealie pap, pap, pap" ...
There was only one thing left, to find out how Bushmen were going to stay alive on earth, because no one wanted them to except, perhaps, as slaves and down-trodden dogs of the Batswana. (P. 11).

The characters are self-centered and hypocritical in their attitude towards the Masarwas. Moleka, pushed by his passion for Margaret, carries out acts that show him as one who loves without discrimination. He goes the extra mile to share one spoon with a Masarwa to show that a Masarwa is also a human being. Hit by love, he looks like a replica of Maru. But the truth about them is unchangeable. Maru remains the epitome of Power, he breaks barriers. While Moleka is the symbol of the sun, he radiates force, energy and light. But ironically their actions towards Margaret and the Masarwa stand in great contradiction to the image they have built for themselves. For example, Maru orders for the bed loaned out to Margaret by Moleka to be withdrawn. He even owns Masarwas who still work like slaves and do not have the luxury to sleep on beds:

A servant, not a Masarwa... said that all the Masarwa slaves in Moleka's home sat at table with him when he ate ... One fork of food went into the mouth of the Masarwa and the same fork went into the mouth of Moleka... Moleka looked up.

At first Mary blinked, thinking he saw almost a replica of himself before him. The savage arrogant Moleka was no longer there, but some other person like himself – humbled and defeated before all the beauty of the living world. So, is that what love is like, he thought. So is that what love is like ... (P. 39).

Ironically, just from saying this, he proudly and vehemently confirmed with his own mouth his inhuman attitude towards the Masarwa. It is heartless of him and disgraceful for society when he arrogantly pronounces this racist stand:

I still own the Masarwa as slaves. All my one hundred thousand cattle and fifty cattle posts are maintained by the Masarwa. They sleep on the ground, near outdoor fires. Their only blanket is the fire. When the fire warms them on one side, they turn round and warm themselves on the other side. What will they do when they hear that a certain Masarwa in my village is treated as an equal of the Botswana and given a bed from my office? I want the bed you loaned to the Masarwa woman returned. (P. 42).

The story time is dragged out over this issue of the bed until the time when the bed is returned. This shows the meanness of Maru, thereby emphasising the strong impact of the tribal oppression of the Bushmen by the Botswana. Margaret, like her kind, is pushed to the limit. She always raised her hand when people approached her as if to ward off a blow. Sometimes she winced but the raised hand was always as though she expected only blows from people. This is a symptom of acute stress disorder. Mechanisms of undoing this have to be applied for her to overcome it.

In a nutshell, racism has a universal language. The Botswana did to the Masarwans what the oppressive Whites did to the Blacks:

How universal was the language of oppression? They had said of the Masarwa what every Whiteman had said of every Blackman: “They can’t think for themselves. They don’t know anything”. The stronger man caught hold of the weaker man and made a circus animal out of him, reducing him to the state of misery and subjection and non-humanity. The combinations were the same, first conquest, then abhorrence at the looks of the conquered and, from there onwards all forms of horror and evil practices. (P. 43).

Just like Bessi Head, Buchi Emecheta x-rays and satirises the colonisation of Africa, and more especially, that of Nigeria. She laments over the racist tendencies of the Whiteman

that reduced Nigerians to second class citizens in and out of their land. This is the case of Adah in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. Racism in the world of Adah is not as over-palpable as in the world of Elizabeth in *A Question of Power*.

As can be seen from the thematic analysis of the text, the Whiteman is suffering from superiority complex. Unfortunately, the Blacks are bound by an unfortunate inferiority complex that places them at the mercy of the Whiteman. The exploitative and oppressive tendencies of the Whiteman stemming from his racial superiority complex are all too conspicuous. The United Kingdom (U.K.) is placed at a more superior level to the extent that going there was seen as paying God a visit. Evidence of this is the fuss surrounding the return of Nweze from the UK.

Even the theme of religion comes under criticism. The people toast to the goddess of River Oboshi for guiding their son, Nweze, and protecting him in the Whiteman's land. Emecheta's sting comes in with the satire on the curses of leprosy meted out by the goddess of the river to anyone who flouts any of its laws. The irony lies in the fact that the goddess is dead silent when the Whiteman desecrates that very river by digging up its bed prospecting for oil.

In the following scene, we cannot but join Emecheta who enables us delve into Adah's mind as she wonders inwardly why a goddess would punish its sons and daughters for such desecration and yet would let the Whiteman go scot-free for the same sacrilege:

Later, Adah did not know what came over that River Oboshi. Though oil was discovered very near her, and she allowed the oil men to dig into her, without cursing them with leprosy. Or she had long been declared redundant by the greater gods. That would not have surprised Adah, for everybody could be declared redundant these days, even goddesses ... So Oboshi was faster than most of her sons and daughters at catching up with the times. (P. 29).

Consequently, racism cannot be overruled when a people go out of their way to make laws that prohibit their sons and daughters from marrying other people because of colour differences. This is very much like the Prohibition Act of Elizabeth's world in *A Question of Power* that prohibits intermarriages between Whites and Blacks. Though not as overt as in Elizabeth's world, pain underlies the existence of the people of Ibuza. This is mirrored in Adah's disappointment when man is only seen through the lens of race rather than just as a human being with a personality. She punctures this falsehood of her people by ridiculing their belief in the goddess of Oboshi who abandons the people for modern trends. The goddess no

longer curses, with leprosy, those who get married to Whites. This is a subtle advocacy for the higher goal of just being seen as a human being with a personality of one's own. In other words, racism in *Second Class Citizen* becomes really palpable when Adah discovers, with bitterness, the dog treatment reserved for Blacks in the UK. Her hurt is even more profound when she recalls the first class treatment given to Whites in her own land. Not only are the Whites accepted in Africa but, also, they are given the best of what Africa has to offer. They even go as far as dictating the pace in her motherland. They live in the best quarters, are paid the most comfortable wages and even take precedence over the Blacks in bidding for the best of what Africans can produce. Ironically, this is not the fate reserved for Africans in the U.K. In their land, Africans are treated as second class citizens. Anything pure and beautiful is for the Whites whereas the worst form of racism lived in the UK by Adah is discrimination against the Blacks by the Blacks or against the lower class by the lower class. In a bid to take out the pain buried deep inside her, Adah cries out loud when she says:

Maybe if the Blacks could learn to live harmoniously with one another, maybe if a West Indian landlord could learn not to look down on the African, and the African could learn to boast of his country's natural wealth, there would be fewer inferiority among the blacks. (P. 70).

More painful is the fact that one has to resign oneself to a situation that has been carved out for one by others. Adah lives this situation but deep inside her she does not really accept it. The fact that she is regarded as an inferior being produces a negative psychological effect on her. Worse still is when, in shops, she starts buying from soiled articles in sections reserved for her kind before daringly moving up to prohibited ground to the dismay of her husband and kin. From the following words of her husband, who does not miss the opportunity to remind her that she is no longer the goose that lays the golden egg as was the case back home, we see the gravity of the situation:

You must know, my young lady, that in Lagos, you may be earning a million pounds a day, you may have a hundred of servants; you may be living like an elite, but the day you land in England, you are a second class citizen. So you can't discriminate against your own people, because we are all second class citizens ... Well, my darling, in England the middle class Black is the one that is lucky enough to get the post of bus conductor. So you'd better start respecting them. (P. 39).

The hypocrisy of the Whiteman could not have been better x-rayed. He bows only when he has something to benefit from you. It is painful and traumatising to see the double standards

applied in their treatment of Blacks, be it in their country or back in Africa. It is quite painful to see how the disappointment derived from such situations has destroyed the weak, like Mr Noble. He has turned into a clown for children young enough to be his children. More painful is the fact that he is reduced to a level where he has to remove his underpants for a pint of beer. It is traumatising for the son of a Benin Chief that he is when he almost lost his life in trying to prove his African prowess by operating a lift manually. The English treat their dogs better than they would humans. They would rather the dog kills a Blackman than a Blackman killing it. Nothing can be more dehumanising than this. It is for this reason that Adah smiles over the fact that racism exists even among the Whites. She sides with Bill, the Canadian, who looks down on anything British. But the puzzle and trauma remains when one seeks to see the logic of a world that only sees people as races and not just as the human beings our creator intended them to be.

Talking about colonial incursion as seen by Buchi Emecheta, we cannot forget the near total enslavement of Africans by White colonialists that resulted in the expression of bitter emotions in her novel *In the Ditch*. Colonialism had a huge impact on the African way of life. Europeans adopted economic policies that went a long way towards destroying the colonies. Africa was destroyed politically, culturally and socially. To this effect, the Whiteman placed himself in a superior position and gave dog treatment to the Blacks. The opening lines of *In the Ditch* go a long way towards confirming the racist dog treatment reserved for Blacks. While in their land, Adah is subjected to inhuman treatment. She shares her loggings with rats that even feel superior to her. They are no longer afraid of her. This is too disheartening to see a human being becoming a roommate to rats and cockroaches in a land that upholds the dignity of man. This, simply, is proof that she is not better than lower beings:

Adah, a hardworking single mother of five, fights against considerable odds to avoid being pushed into insanity by the degrading welfare system. Emecheta in this novel illustrates the enslaving power of poverty based on race, sex, class and property. It is no longer the communal African spirit of sharing a grain with all. (P. 4).

Consequently, *In the Ditch* provides the feminine perspective of the social issues of racism, injustice, social welfare and the state of women in the culture of poverty. Despite the fact that her landlord is a Kin's man, he still treats her nastily because he considers her to be poor. He is one with the system of segregation that relegates this poor woman to the ditch:

Are you Mrs Obi? ... We've got temporary accommodation for you at the Pussy Mansions not very far, just around the corner. "Come now, that's unfair". Mrs Deulin cried. Why do you put a girl like her in such Godforsaken place? Her children are very young, and she is very hard working. It is not fair at all. (P. 4).

Even though Adah called the Pussy Cat Mansion a compound, it was nothing compared to the compound space in Africa. The ill-looking buildings in the middle of the compound rather looked like a "Juju Man's house". This is why the Vicar's wife who came visiting told Adah that "*Those houses look like a monastery, but the Deaconess said they looked more like a mortuary*". The racist and dog treatment is taken a little too far with these very pitiful living conditions. Originally, the architect had meant them to be used as a pram and bicycle shed. They were not only transformed into living quarters for the poor and destitute but, also, they were forced to accept them because they had no choice. Barbed wires were even fixed on the windows of the elderly, thereby making them look like prison windows of murderers' awaiting execution. Such horrifying settings emphasise the traumatic experiences of the immigrants who are served dog treatment by their host.

Apart from the setting, mean nasty characters also contribute to this narrative of pain. For example, the Landlord thunders at the children and makes one of the boys to run at the sight of a Blackman. Racism is drawn out as a tool to frighten the already vulnerable woman:

The man was separate and would stop at nothing. He had switched off electricity so that she had to keep a candle burning all night, conscious of the terrible fire risk to the children, but even more afraid of what accidents could happen in utter darkness. But now, there was something new, he was trying magic. (P. 3).

The negative side of Africans highlighted:

The poor man, instead of sleeping like everyday else, would wake up very early in the morning, around three or four, drape himself in colourful African material just like Juju masqueraders in Lagos, and start moving to and fro to the music of his low-toned mournful songs. When Adah had first seen this figure, she could not believe her eyes. She was on the verge of screaming, but when she looked closer and saw it was only her landlord, she could not believe her eyes. (P. 3).

In another voice, the psychological face of Adah's dilemma on how to study, keep her job and look after her kids as a single Blackwoman is the source of traumatic pain:

The only disadvantage was the Mansions' children. The open space was used by them as playground and on summer evenings looked like a circus. Big boys and girls cycled round like the little houses, dogs barking and yielding at their heels; some boys played organized games of football while many more would engage in just throwing balls, broken milk bottles, and stones at random ... Adah's problems were many: How to study, keep her job and look after the kids? (PP. 16-17).

Emecheta drags out the duration of events here to show the impact this has on the psychological health of the character.

The dole house's impersonal and cold structure and atmosphere is also fertile background for trauma. This is beautifully captured by the faces of those on the dole bench: dejection, boredom, hopelessness and self-pity. Even children are stressed to the limit as they have to go a distance in a foggy weather to relief themselves. It is not different from the horrible living conditions in the Mansions. For example, whenever it rained outside, it also rained inside in the Mansions. Mildew has grown everywhere and to make matters worse, children have made toilets of the stairs. As if this is not enough, they use the same stairs as a playground. Mrs. O'Brien's toddlers are even seen picking things on the stairs and putting in their mouths:

Ditch dwellers had long given up hope of scraping off the wretched green stuff...scraping off the wretched green stuff when to do so simply meant creating room for a fresh coat of green? ... The urinal smell mingled nicely with that from the gaping rubbish chute... "I don't know love, I just don't know the right thing to do. I have two toddlers at home, you see. I can't take them out with me all the time and those social security officers would raise hell if they found out that I leave them to play by themselves. (PP. 42- 44).

A number of pertinent issues emerge from this critical analysis and sharing between Adah and Mrs O' Brien. The paradox of urinal smell mingling "nicely" with the gaping rubbish chutes is a satire on what the government has reduced the poor and needy to. Not only is the oppressive social security system exposed here but, also, it is criticised and ridiculed. The system is too exacting but raises no hand to help those who are heavily burdened. Mrs. O'Brien is not given enough and is not allowed to go out and fend for her family because she must be at home to take care of the children. She often goes out of her way to defend the name of her family by defending her lazy husband who would not go out for a job to assist his family. It simply sounds like jungle life opened to the survival of the fittest. When you are late in picking up your milk it disappears. The ditch dwellers have difficulties in balancing their meals. They

even reduce their baths to three times a week in order to save gas. The social security men take advantage of women. All of these are sources of trauma to the women in the ditch. These poor women look older than their ages because of what they are going through. For example, Mrs. Cox is 49 but looks 60. Her body is distorted by either too much work, bad food or frequent child bearing. This vivid description draws an unforgettable picture of the depressed woman that life has battered and traumatised:

Mrs Cox was a dear soul, but a disappointed woman... Mrs Cox looked sixty, but she heard the family adviser say on one occasion that Mrs Cox was only forty-nine. Her figure, if one could call it that, had been irrevocably distorted by either too much work, or bad food, or by frequent child bearing. There was no demarcation between her bust, waist and hips. Altogether they formed one huge cylindrical block. Mrs Cox also reminded Adah of most African matrons – you don't ask them to help you, they just do it. (PP. 63-65).

All said and done, nothing at the Mansions can replace the comfort of communal life back in Africa.

Emecheta also uses pathos to make us see the darkest side of racism. When it takes its toll on you, you might just be transformed into a being you cannot recognise. For example, Adah falls sick and has to accept that “charring is a tiring job”. She starts coughing and is depressed to a state that she thinks of death. The dilemma of what would happen to her children if she dies looms in front of her:

. Suppose I should die, what will become of my children? They would be taken to a home... and then they would grow to become delinquent coloured youths who would not know how to love, because they had grown up without any. Please God, I pray. You can't kill me now. My little girl wants to be a mum with loads and loads of children, while the second boy wants to be a policeman, a gambler and a doctor all at once. Well, all I want to give them is a good home background with warmth to cushion them through life. (P. 64).

This deep fear pushes her to call for Carol: “I'm dying. Please, I want to make my will.” The psychological and emotive facets blend and rather heighten her fear, pushing her more into depression. There is a unity of her mind, thoughts, emotions and feelings. It is frightening to think of her children without her at this stage in their lives. If it had not been easy with her around, it sure would be worse with her gone.

In brief, her meeting with her mother in a dream during her sickness and pain elicits a high degree of pathos:

The first night Adah was delirious. She talked to her mother who had died a long time ago. Her mother stood and chatted with her on their sun-bathed veranda in Lagos. She fought with her boyfriend at the street tap, and later they married. She remembered the Shakespearian parts she played at her school dramatic society. She was beside the Australian headmistress she had at school, telling her that she was cut out for greater things. (P. 87).

These fond memories captured through the dream and flashback technique are not only soothing but are also reassuring. She is fortified to move on as well. She is fortified to move on through the encouraging words of her Australian headmistress that she was cut out for greater things. The voice of childhood continues to spur her on.

As a result of the exercise which inhuman treatment meted out to Adah and her likes, she regrets her origins and even wishes she had come into the world as a White and as a middle class person. One would say that racism has succeeded to drive her to a state of regret and self-pity. Even the headmistress of her children feels her pain. She sees Adah as a human being caught up in uncomfortable circumstances:

The headmistress had said to her once, "I do lose my temper when your sons look bored, because I happen to know the standard you expect of them". She was one of these people who had come to regard her as a human being caught up in uncomfortable circumstances. (P. 87).

As such, Adah's environment contributes to shaping her character. Had she remained in her homeland, she might not have been forced into wishing to become a middle class White. It is even worse when she and her likes are termed "problem families" by Carol and the system. Adah felt that her dignity as a human being was being taken away from her. It was not just depressing but equally traumatising to live in a society where everything was spontaneous:

Nothing was planned; everything was done as it came. Adah was no longer sure she would feel at home in places like the British Museum or big libraries where she used to work. In those places, your laughter was regulated, intellectual, and artificial. (P. 91).

It is therefore not surprising that people live life as if they were in some prison cells; and frustration sets in whether you like it or not. At one moment or another one just feels too tired to keep fighting. Adah has reached this point in her struggles; and the narrator laments over her frustration:

Frustration combined with hopelessness and anger came over her. Suddenly, she felt lonely. She did not feel like complaining or moaning to anyone. In any case, no one at the Pussy could have given her the sort of help she needed. Her supply of food was always low, and with the kids away from school the food ran shorter still. Because of Christmas, most mothers on the dole had been paid two weeks in advance. That meant that they would have to do without pay. She was a week in arrears with the rent. (P. 91).

Mrs O'Brien is reduced to a miserable begger as "she would cry and tell all sorts of pathetic stories in order to get a few pounds off Carol." (P. 95) Carol takes advantage of this and treats them with spite. She does not only call them problem families but she also easily betrays their trust. Unfortunately, some people see themselves superior to others and go around putting labels on others:

"Yes, thought Adah, these things do happen. Why do certain people feel it right to put labels on others? A brown person is labeled "black". A poor family is labeled "problem". A lad who decides to wear his hair long is called a "long-haired layout a "skinhead", a traditionalist is square and a modern thinker is "Bohemian". The world is beautiful, but its inhabitants create problems for themselves. (P. 93).

The above rhetorical question which is thought-provoking is meant to be answered by all. It is a puzzle that as the novelist, in her authorial intrusion, wonders who has the authority to label people according to the colour of their skins.

From this chapter, therefore, our take home is that colonial power and the capitalist economic system that accompanied it had a huge negative impact on Africans and their ways of life. Literature is a beautiful mirror that helps in x-raying some of these ills lived by Africans as is seen in these selected works of Head and Emecheta. Top on the list of negative consequences is the change of Africa's social system of living as seen above. Furthermore, they introduced patriarchy which also had huge destructive effects on the peace loving Africans. There is no denying the fact that patriarchy perpetuates toxic masculinity which in turn perpetuates sexual assault, sexual aggression, negative mental health, domestic violence and even negative parenting techniques and expectations. A new system of living is introduced into African societies: an obnoxious system wherein men are the primary holders of power over women in political leadership, moral authority, social privileges and the control of the very power. Consequently, the Adahs and the Elizabeths of the world become tools in the hands of men. In line with this, Head and Emecheta go the extra mile – thanks to the arts – to let us see the damaging effects of seeing that it is not normal to be "a stay-at-home dad". It is even

frowned at when a woman makes more money than her male partner. To overcome the trauma that this system has brought upon the woman, it would be but normal to revisit its roots.

Also, a smooth transition is built for chapter four which will focus on resisting oppression and marginalisation. Relative power is increased by either enhancing one's own power or decreasing the oppressor's power. By constantly refusing to be humiliated or to feel humiliated the traumatised heroines under study, herein rejected the distorted, oppressive relationship that the oppressor sought to impose on them. This chapter, therefore, points out that it is very important for the African woman to muster courage at one point or another in her pain to take stock of the causes of the said pain. It is often said that a problem known is a problem half solved (Charles Kettering 1920 – 1947). What this means is that, if you do not know what you are looking for, you are unlikely to find it. And if you find it, you are unlikely to recognise it. Once the cause of trauma is identified, figuring out the course of action to fix it would be easier. Otherwise, taking action without identifying the factors that contributed to the problem could result in wasted effort.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESISTING THE MARGINAL DOMESTIC SPACE

Resisting pain is often a natural and sometimes spontaneous action taken by the body when faced with a painful situation. In this light, this chapter will dwell on how the characters in the selected novels resist pain and rebel against the status quo. The beautiful process of healing found in pain itself will be critically analysed to show that re-visiting and re-narrating trauma histories is often the starting point for healing. The pains of trauma victims hardly leave them. However, this chapter will demonstrate the many ways in which by narrating their stories characters create for themselves healing environments which often stem from a conscious awareness of the impact of historical narratives in shaping current realities. Furthermore, the potential for healing through re-claiming new and more hopeful narratives will be highlighted. The focus, therefore, will be on narrating traumatic experiences as a starting point for resistance/rebellion which leads to healing. This means that resistance can be suppressed in a child but very often when the victim becomes an adult or comes to self-awareness, they do everything to establish some level of self-soothing and self-control.

Thus, this chapter will focus on how the characters in the selected texts resist traumatic pain; how pain pushes them to assess the inner skills and qualities in them that could help them resist the margin. As such, it will be seen how the characters consider their aims in life and set specific and realistic goals that would enable them to discover and maximise their potentials. These would be seen through activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potentials, build human capital and facilitate employability, improve the quality of life and contribute to the realisation of dreams and aspirations.

For a better understanding of the texts and the resistance of the characters, relevant tenets of the trauma theory and related theories will be used. These tenets will throw more light on the particular aspects of the texts that are significant to resistance. They will, therefore, be the tools that will be used in looking at the different angles from which the characters put up resistance to trauma and its outcomes. To begin with, the trauma theory tenet of “thinking-under-stress,” by Sandra I. Bloom, will throw more light on the decisions taken by trauma victims in these texts. This tenet advocates that decisive action is better than any complicated mental processing when an action is needed to save life. For the most part, pain provokes immediate reaction and sometimes it is not necessary to obtain all vital information before making or taking a good decision. It has been noticed that self-protection and avoidance of pain

is often the first reaction as would be seen in the analysis below. Another trauma theory tenet that will come in handy in this chapter is that of “remembering under stress”. This theory by Joseph Ledoux lays emphasis on the reaction of trauma victims who, long after the trauma, are still often overwhelmed with the same emotions that they felt at the time of the traumatic event. The “Fight-or-Flight Response” tenet crowns it all as it emphasises the fact that man is an animal like other animals. What this means is that we are biologically equipped to protect ourselves from harm as best as we can. This tenet advocates that when anybody is exposed to danger and pain repeatedly, their bodies become unusually sensitive so that any minor threats can trigger off a series of physical, emotional and cognitive responses. To help these victims, this tenet advises that a safe environment should be created to counteract the long-term effects of chronic stress.

Freud, in this psychological traumatic tenet, emphasises the fact that the unconscious processes of life shape human behaviour as will be seen with the trauma victims in this chapter. The Socratic views of Edmund Cross based on the principle of asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to illuminate ideas equally lay emphasis on the multi-forms of mediation between literature and the background of the stories of the texts. This is why the apartheid racist regime of South Africa, for example, is inseparable from Head’s *A Question of Power* and her other works. The feminist view that a female victim needed to tell their stories in order to survive is very true of the experiences lived by the characters in the selected texts.

FEMALE RESISTANCE AND REBELLION

With the above in mind, we see how Bessie Head, in her works, endorses the philosophy of Kenji Miya Zawa in his book, *We Must Embrace Pain and Burn it as Fuel for Our Journey*”. (P.9).

In her works, recovery from traumatic pain begins by first embracing pain and resisting it by taking the risk of sharing it with others or leaning on the Supreme Being you serve for divine strength. Talking could be with a friend, family member, and a group or just with your God. Head and Emecheta have demonstrated – in their selected works – that pain is to man as fire is to gold and that people do not grow in their comfort zones; for change comes rather when one stands up when faced with adversities. As such, endurance is not just about bearing the hard things of life but it is also about turning them into glory. There is some evidence suggestive in

the lives of the characters that in times of defeat or at the point of giving up, we never know how close we are to victory.

A closer look at Head's *A Question of Power* and Maru and Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* proves beyond doubt that the characters go the extra mile to resist the margin and fight for liberation, starting by doing everything to liberate domestic space from trauma and regaining sanity and comfort there. In *A Question of Power*, for example, Elizabeth withdraws from the environment of pain – South Africa – and moves to Motabeng with the hope of having a better grasp of what she is going through. In the same vein, Adah checks out of a long time marriage in order to re-live wounding experiences, and then takes decisions that would make her forge ahead.

In *A Question of Power*, Elizabeth does not only narrate and explain what she is going through but also interprets, infers and predicts what would happen. This is drawing inner strength to bear on her challenges for positive results. This process of reflecting on her pain and mapping out new paths is a tool of liberation in her hands. She explains the oppressive apartheid system in South Africa where people are seen as Blacks and Whites and not just as the children of God that we are meant to be. After inference, she takes a firm decision for herself, a decision which would affect or impact not only herself but also her community and the world in general. In this application stage, Elizabeth is bent on applying the decisions taken in order to change the things she can change and resolve the problems she can resolve. She, therefore, moves to Motabeng where she tries to put the pieces of her life together to form a whole. This is in conformity with the fact that life's broken pieces sometimes need to be patched to enable onward movement or the formation of new shapes that should enable total movement out of the zone of pain. Elizabeth undergoes the full process of liberation guided by a meticulous chain of careful analyses in which inferences are made from facts, new whole structures synthesized from diverse parts put together, all crowned by an elaborate process of evaluation involving the act of making judgment about the value of ideas or materials that come in to support the implementation of certain resolutions.

This journey towards self-realisation in *A Question of Power* is embellished by Head's apt use of imagery, symbolism and even the narrative technique. Head uses images that magnify the ideas the reader receives and responds to. For example, the image of Buddha symbolises Elizabeth's search for a God or a god. The absurd distorted versions of Buddha that appear in the novel demonstrate how godliness can be illusory. The image of Thoko's pumpkin represents

Elizabeth's healthy understanding of the importance of crops to our pain. Like her, when we plant a seed and watch it grow, we draw inspiration from it to exercise patience and allow time to heal our wounds. They, therefore, make the story of Elizabeth our story and her resolutions are likely to be our resolutions as we empathise with her in the sad experiences of her life. The symbols used also stand for things common to the reader too. They, therefore, elicit responses from readers by their ability to offer memorable impressions to the minds of the readers. The omniscient third person narrator delves into the mind of Elizabeth and enables the reader to have full knowledge of the happenings in the text. These devices exhibit the craftsmanship of the novelist in the attempt at re-creating and reflecting reality.

Thus, Elizabeth's encounter with pain enables her to undergo some behavioural changes. Her experiences constitute the lens through which the community is viewed when drawing certain conclusions. Elizabeth builds resistance by learning the first lesson of happiness: that self-knowledge is indispensable to the understanding of happiness. She acts in conformity to Eugene Kennedy's view in his work, *The Pain of Being Human* which holds that,

People who know themselves do not seek goals that are either beyond or beneath them. They constantly engage their strength in a realistic approach to tasks that match them. They do not demand what they can never achieve nor turn away from what they can really accomplish. (P. 26).

From the bottom of the pit of her life, Elizabeth grapples with her environment, seeking to know who she is and where she is going to. As a child, she lives accepting her foster parents – George and Neillie – as her true parents. When the bombshell of her origin is thrown in her face by the gaunt Principal of her school, she is bitter but immediately withdraws to a lonely place for quiet moments of self-realisation. After reflection, the first step she decides to take is to purge out her pain through tears. The floodgate of her heart is let loose and her pain pours out in rivers of tears. This river image intensifies pathos as we equally feel and cry with her. After tears, she sets a realistic goal for herself. She begins by appreciating and being grateful to George and Neillie for the care and love they have shown her. The truth of her conception and birth then throws her into a new kind of anger. She is very bitter with the racist South African society that sets up or enacts discriminatory laws that stifle the expression of love and makes victims of innocent products of love. This knowledge of who she is, where she comes from and where she is living, forms a solid ground whence her fight against racist South Africa takes off. She takes the bold step of moving out of her country of origin with a “never to return visa (P.91). She resists destruction or suffocation in taking this bold step. She acts in conformity

with the view that great and graceful pottery emerges from fire. By this act of hers, we, the readers, also confirm the fact that our best selves come out only when we experience the truth about our frustrations and longings. Elizabeth turns her back on the things she cannot achieve – fighting Apartheid in South Africa itself. She has to move out to live other situations that would motivate her to fight back her racist South Africa.

Consequently, her Motabeng experience becomes the muse that she needed to see how low South Africa had gone down the drain. The soothing experience derived from her interpersonal relationship with some people in Motabeng is very important; she faces her own personal test with real life. The reader discovers with her that life waits for us patiently. Elizabeth can only make any meaning of her life by knowing who she really is. Thus, pain has pushed her to pass life's first examination: knowing who she is, where she comes from, and putting these together to map out the road leading to where she wants to go. What this means is that the change of self or society begins with full knowledge of self or what is happening in society. If we do not know where we are, we cannot plan for where we want to go to. And if we do not know where we want to go to, we would never arrive there. Thus, knowing self is the first step in this great journey of change since pain can only be affected by individuals. Knowing society is, therefore, imperative since you cannot change what you do not know. And when all of this is done, Mankind would feel the impact because what is good is good for all at all times. She, therefore, has a good grasp of the first things necessary for her resistance and rebellion.

Secondly, pain also pushes Elizabeth to develop coping strategies for resistance. After receiving the pain inflicting blows, she looks for means of accommodating them for the period it takes the mind to come up with strategies to fight it back; what Ledoux calls "Remembering under stress". She encounters problems in this process but the problems in this process are the price she pays for progress. What is important is what she gets from bearing pain over the period it takes for her to bounce back. The reward needs not be very obvious to be effective. Elizabeth has touched the bottom of the pit of traumatic pain and cannot fall any lower. The only road open to her is to move up and be liberated or remain down and be crushed.

In a nutshell, pain has pushed Elizabeth to examine all hell. Her examination of inner hell is meant to end all hell because it had to help her to get rid of her pain-torn conscience. The trauma of being rejected by her own family has to be done away with. It is true that we all need to know and live in the comfort of the assurance that we are the product of love and that we are

loved and cherished for who and what we are. Such is not the situation with Elizabeth who lives with the horror that her family did not want her and even went as far as to giving her up for adoption. She does not give up. What pains her even more is the fact that her mother, the one person who might have loved and cared for her because she got her out of love, died insane from being maltreated for conceiving her with a black stable boy. She is deprived of knowing who her father is. From every indication, nurturing and keeping this pain alive would only kill her. After all, the deed had already been done and the result of it was there staring at her in the face. Should she allow it, it would destroy her. Were it to be any better for her to withdraw to her own corner where she would live feeling sorry for herself and waiting for some magic wand to wind back the hand of the clock for the wrongs to be erased, she would have done so.

Elizabeth resists destruction by moving with the times and by allowing herself to be ruled by a proactive mind. The pain of a loveless childhood pushes her to seek love in marriage. In such a way, she is not only building her coping strategies but, also, she is intensifying her determination to find true love. Unfortunately, her marriage with an ex-convict turns sour but she is not giving up. She has no intention of allowing her gangster and flirtatious husband to destroy her happiness. Politics in South Africa has not worked out for her either. She makes a summary of the back-breaking life of Blacks in South Africa and dismisses it as worthless to have to sacrifice anything for it. Attempting this would have been like trying to live with a permanent nervous tension, because you did not know why White people hate or loathe you. Unfortunately, racism preaches the gospel that a Blackman or woman was just born to be hated:

Once you stared the important power maniac in the face, you saw that he never saw people, humanity, compassion, tenderness. It was as though he had a total blank spot and only saw his own power, his influence, himself. (P. 19).

As earlier said, it is this awareness that prompts Elizabeth to take the “no return” visa for Motabeng. It requires something more than just courage to give up one’s homeland for one’s self-development. That something is nerve born of the insatiable quest for self-fulfillment. It pays off as she discovers that Motabeng is not only different from South Africa; it is the land of the Rain Wind; that is, land of relatives married to relatives; a land where people stop and greet with love and concern. This is why people look at Elizabeth with a cheated air because of the barrenness of her greetings. She now lives a new trauma, the pain of being different. She is determined to belong. Her first success is in acknowledging that she is different and has to change. She gladly noted that somewhere out there, there are still people who are far more

humane than the South Africans. Bit by bit, her knowledge of mankind begins to grow and balance out. She discovers that there are still people capable of loving one another.

Unfortunately, she does not have the luxury of enjoying this love because she is different; she is considered as a stranger in Motabeng. As this bitter truth stares at her in the face, she realises that she belongs nowhere. But like a true Spartan who dies but never surrenders, she is bent on overcoming this obstacle. She puts up her coping strategies once more and reaches out to others. She ends up not only interacting with the people but also adopting and enjoying their ways. At this point in time, stories of witchcraft and darkness do not terrify her anymore. She even ends up enjoying blowing out the light and being swallowed up by the billowing darkness of the night:

It was barely three months after her arrival in the village of Motabeng when her life began to pitch over from an even keel, and it remained from then onwards at a pitch-over angle. At first, she found the pitch-black darkness of Motabeng night terrifying. She had always lived in a town with a street light shining outside the window, so the first thing she hastened to buy was a chair on which to place a candle, beside her bed. (P. 21)

As seen below, the burning candle is very significant as it symbolizes the hope that keeps her going:

She kept the candle burning right up to the point when she felt drowsy, then blew it out. Often she fell asleep with the candle still alight. The chair, a bed and a small table were the only pieces of furniture she had in her hut. After a while, she became accustomed to the extreme dark and quite enjoyed blowing out the light and being swallowed up by the billowing darkness. (P. 21).

This is a small victory, but one that tells us that we can achieve victory or success in life if we can make sacrifices, accommodate or adapt new ways. Life in Motabeng, therefore, affords her the possibility of seeing things differently. She realises that things are not all that bleak, and that there are still good values in Africa for those who want to see. The Black of Botswana is not like the Black of South Africa who is born to be hated. He is an embodiment of love and so can give out love to warm a cold inhuman world.

Elizabeth, therefore, acts as Bessie Head's mouth piece. She criticises, with subtlety, the loveless racist South Africa by comparing it with Botswana-Motabeng. This comparison works directly on the collective conscience of South Africa, actually yielding fruits that usher in change and, eventually, the abolition of apartheid. Mankind is given another opportunity to

believe in the love of a fellow man and that we are created equal and endowed with love. The didactic element is that the colour of our skin should not be a barrier to love.

Thirdly, pain also develops Elizabeth's wisdom and intellect which she equally uses as wrestling tools. Her traumatic pain pushes her to stretch her imagination and creativity. She draws energy from within in order to come to grips with the reality of making sacrifices. She pays the small debts of forlorn services in order to generate love for us and acts as motivation for us to love others. Elizabeth discovers that there is no pain deep enough to kill the love in our hearts for others. Wisdom tells her that instead of spending time brooding over pain, she should use that time in a positive way by developing love for self, community and mankind.

When you reach this point in life, the pain lived would, far from killing you, instead liberate you. This goes a long way to proving the hypothesis that the traumatising pain lived by the characters propels them to success rather than to destruction. The traumatic experiences of Elizabeth have enabled her to develop inner instincts that have, in turn, enabled her to fight for her liberty and success. Her take-home lesson is that pain has a liberating force for those who shun and seek to discard it. It is when our pain is most excruciating, and when life's darkness is thickest that a glimmer of hope flickers in the horizon of the mind; that is, when one cries in a source of goodness. Pain takes Elizabeth to this point and Head says:

Elizabeth had no vesture garments left. It did not matter who had planned evil. It was always there, the plan. But deeper still was human passion. There seemed to be no safeguard against it, no depths to which the soul could not sink. (P. 34).

In her deepest cry, Elizabeth stumbles on the sources of goodness and has the wisdom and intellect to identify them as such: her encounter with the Poor of Africa. They cried out, "Send us perfection". Then Elizabeth was sent. They again cried out, "What is perfection?" And they said, "Love The awakening of Elizabeth's power corresponds to the awakening of her love for mankind".

Furthermore, the urge to discard or do away with pain pushes its victims to extirpate their inferiority complexes; for Africans have been pushed into believing that they are inferior beings even in their own land. There is no pain as deep as that which stems from being minimised in your own home. Then you are no man and, either consciously or unconsciously, you succumb to being called a boy, whereas you are actually the master. So, the Blackman walking down the street with his girlfriend is red with anger when the white police officer

addresses him “boy”. He laments, “How can a man be a man when he is called a boy,” (P. 46). Coloured people are not spared this humiliation: they lie down on their backs with their penises in the air and begin to die slowly. Medusa attempts to subject Elizabeth to this fate when she declares: that’s your people ... you have to die like them (P. 40). She rubs it in by turning her records in her head: “Dog, filth, the Africans will eat you to death.” (P. 40)

Elizabeth ends up temporarily becoming what Medusa wants her to be. She confirms and lives the inferior position assigned to her. She moves into Medusa’s torture house with Dan as a soul wrenching partner. Dan almost succeeds in sending her to an early grave with his prophetic declarations. Fortunately, fate plays a positive hand in her resistance. The twist in the fate of Elizabeth and the Africans is likened to that of the African in the story of the African in the German Woman’s flashback. The tray was kicked out of the hand of the African woman who served tea. But once the war was over and liberation came, the complex also disappeared.

In the same light, Elizabeth kills the imposed inferior position. Sello has made her a punching bag for Medusa but this lasted only as long as she remained weak and resigned herself to this position. She ends up mustering courage and shaking off the yoke of inferiority. For this reason, she can also look down on the littleness of Camilla who looks down on the Blacks. And speaking of Camilla she has this to say:

She’s stone deaf and blind. She takes the inferiority of the Blackman so much for granted that she thinks nothing of telling us straight to our faces that we are stupid... She’s never stopped a minute, paused, stood back and watch the serious concentrated expressions of the farm students. There is a dismal life behind them of starvation and years and years of drought when there was no food, no hope, no. There’s a magical world ahead of them with the despair and drudgery of semi-desert agriculture alleviated by knowledge. (P. 82).

To sum up, Elizabeth has demonstrated that it is time for Africans to pull themselves out of the quagmire of colonialism and oppression. Traumatic pain has pushed them to this decision and the tool they have is knowledge. It will take them to the dream they have carved out and have long cherished in their hearts: a love-filled society for all; a society like Motabeng where “children were caressed and attended to, their conversations were listened to with affectionate absorption.

One can, therefore, say that traumatic pain in loveless South Africa has pushed Elizabeth into the loving arms of Motabeng. Here, she extirpates her inferiority complex by moving into a liberating society where people are treated as kings and queens. The young girl’s analysis of

Motabeng to Elizabeth is a perfect pointer to the fact that she had taken the right decision to seek how to put an end to her imposed inferior position. Speaking of Motabeng, the young girl says:

They make you feel like a queen. Your every need is catered for and attentively watched over. There is little to share but it is shared beautifully so that evens an offer of the most expensive champagne. People here are kings and queens to each other. (P. 72).

The care and attention given her by some of the people opens her eyes to the reality of true love. It pushes her out of the torture house of Medusa and Dan. Her liberation pushes her to higher heights. The narrator vividly captures it beautifully when he says:

Eli had been forcefully thrown into a state of death, alongside Sello, battered and smashed about, but she instantly sprang to life again, laughed and flung her hands into the air with a bounding sense of liberation. (P. 41).

Pain has a liberating effect on Elizabeth when, at the end of it all, she makes a very important decision; she is one with nature and so she happily cries out: “May I never contribute to creating dead worlds, only new ones?” This resolution is a pointer to her level of growth after a lot of resistance and rebellion. To reach this point, she had to undergo transformation: that of letting go certain stances on issues and adopting new philosophies. The change of society begins with the change of individuals. She can no longer create worlds because she is new herself. You can only give what you have, warning signals are thus put up for those who oppress and force people into little cupboards labeled “inferior persons”. Elizabeth’s code of conduct at work runs thus, “Never wage war against an inferior. He is a rat who pulls many dirty tricks”.

In *Maru* still by Bessie Head, her heroine, Margaret, resists the traumatic pain she has gone through in order to attain psychic wholeness. Margaret does all to the best of her ability to find inner peace and the necessary mental balance she needs for her happiness. As such, she has no choice but to face the difficulty of adaptation in a foreign community with the challenge of embracing their own mental turmoil resulting from traumatic past and repressed feelings.

The first tool of resistance/rebellion that Margaret uses to overcome traumatic pain comes from her powerful inner life which saves her from madness. Her psychic wholeness is not affected so much by external forces. Unfortunately, her psychic instability comes through her encounters with people capable of touching her heart and affecting her psychological self.

The craftsmanship of Bessie Head is aptly applied at this level through the paradox of turn of events with these same people that accounted for Margaret's psychic instability. Ironically, her psychic wholeness would be helped by the same people who threatened it: Dikeledi, by her friendship with Margaret, Moleka by his marriage with Dikeledi, and Maru by his harshness towards Margaret. Margaret's boldness and daring nature is also a contributory factor. This is seen when she threatens Moleka's peace of mind. She even becomes a threat to both Maru's and Margaret's mental equilibrium.

As far back as her childhood, Margaret built survival mechanisms to help her come out of her stigmatisation as a Masarwa. She does not allow her identity problem to destroy her. The first resistance is in accepting who she is and even becoming proud of whom she is. This acts as a defeating tool to those who think that they can crush her by making her feel inferior as a Masarwa. She adopts silence and wears a face that reveals no emotion to her tormentors. She avoids any verbal battle with her tormentors because they think that as a Bushman she has no weapon of words or personality. She even dismisses the importance her tormentors place on the word "Bushman" as an inferior people. Her tormentors force her into an ethnic group while in her heart "she was a little bit of everything in the whole universe". This mindset is very good for her survival, especially as, unlike other children, she was never able to say: "I am this or that. My parents are this or that. There was no one in later life who did not hesitate to tell her that she was a Bushman, mixed breed, half breed, low breed or bastard". Fortunately, this notion is consolidated by the value of the woman who brought her up – Margaret Cardmore senior. Her upbringing helped her to build up such a character trait that each time she opens her mouth to speak her tormentors are thrown in confusion:

Her mind and heart were composed of a little bit of everything she had absorbed from Margaret Cadmore. It was hardly African or anything but something new and universal, a type of personality that would be unable to fit into a definition of something as narrow as tribe or race or nation. (P. 9)

This is very much like the universal brotherhood of man preached by Elizaberth in Head's *A Question of Power*:

As she swore at everyone... so did she tear to pieces any idea that even remotely had no grounding in good sense. And it was the simplicity of her approach and arguments that created the impression that she could open any door, make the content within coherent, and that she stood for all that was the epitome of human freedom. (P. 9)

As seen below, she acknowledges what she has learned and it is very important for change:

She would have to take them and apply them to the experiences gained in a hostile and cruel society. They would mean, in the end, that almost anything could be thrown into her mind and life and she would have the capacity, within herself, to survive both heaven and hell. (P. 9).

Margaret even shocks Dikeledi when she refuses to pretend that she is coloured. She boldly tells her that she has nothing to be ashamed of as a Masarwa. Part of her growing up and resisting lies in her ability to receive pain without allowing it to crush her. Such is the case when she endures the cruelty of the school's principal without letting it crush her. Her psychic wholeness – as well as her life – is endangered and her salvation is now in the hands of the people around her. The admirable twist is how Head depicts her as an eternal victim who is always fated to be saved. She becomes a representative of those who are saved, and who succeed in life because of endurance and patience.

Furthermore, Margaret's good character constitutes her strength in resisting the margin and belonging. When the principal of the school where she teaches coached a fourteen-year old boy to disrupt Margaret's classroom and disrespect her on the basis that she is a Bushman and cannot be a teacher, she is unwilling to react. But because of her good relationship with Dikeledi, she manages to take control of the boomerang as the principal who set out to ridicule Margaret is instead the one who is ridiculed by the teachers of the senior classes for his failed attempt against Margaret. When the people of the village noticed the next day that the "new mistress had dignity and respect for everyone, they swallowed the shock about Margaret being a Bushman and began debating the matter. This action is liberating not only to Margaret alone but also to her Masarwa kinsmen working for Moleka as slaves who equally benefit from the fallouts of this her liberating action. For example, in reaction to Margaret's presence as a teacher, Moleka invites all Masarwa slaves to sit with him at this table and share a plate of food and a fork with him:

The next day people noticed that the new mistress had dignity and respect for everyone. People decided to change their minds about entering their children for Maroba school... Moleka, who heard that the principal and the high-ups were planning trouble for the new mistress, could not make allowance for the slow removal of prejudice (P 37)

Somebody has to stand up for somebody at one point or other in life and Moleka does for Margaret with this barrier breaking action:

He removed it all on one day. He told Seth, the education supervisor, that there was good food in his house on Sunday. When Seth arrived, he found all the Masarwa in the yard of Moleka also seated at the table. Moleka took up his fork and placed a mouthful of food in the mouth of a Masarwa, then with the same fork fed himself. (P. 37).

Another tool for resistance to Margaret Cadmore is her double personality. When she feels threatened, her double personality comes up forcefully to her defense:

If anymore approach Margaret Cadmore, she slowly raised her hand as if to ward off a blow... She was a shadow behind which lived another personality of great vigour and vitality. She raised her hand to hide this second image from sight, but the two constantly tripped up each other... You were never sure whether she was greater than you, or inferior, because of this constant flux and inter-change between her two images. (P. 38).

The fact that Margaret cannot lie also empowers her. She is natural and down to earth and the image she gives of herself to people is natural and almost unconscious. This is because of what society has done for her. It has shaped her outer temperament and made her discreet, shy, obedient and silent. That is why she would not pretend to be coloured. She is faithful to Margaret Cadmore senior's word which says: "They are wrong. You will have to live your appearance for the rest of your life".

When the tide is strong against her, Margaret reverts to the external kind of life she is used to. She isolates herself in her house at the top of the hill and observes the village life. She neither asks nor hopes for anything, and everything around her is quiet and harmonious. This is applying the method of stooping low to conquer. Despite this attitude, she does not hesitate to abandon isolation and live in the pleasant feeling that someone cares for her once she falls in love. One would say that the sound and balanced training she had from her foster mother, Margaret Cadmore senior, prepared her for the challenges of her life and empowered her with skills to enable her overcome her challenges and be strong and powerful enough to face a tormented life and to overcome. This was largely due to good sense and logical arguments that Margaret Cadmore senior taught her. This white lady knew that:

They would never be the sole solutions to the difficulties the child would later encounter, but they would create a dedicated scholar and enable the child to gain control over the only part of her life that would be hers, her mind and soul. She would have to take them and apply them to the experience gained in a hostile

and cruel society. They would mean in the end that almost anything could be thrown into her mind and life and she would have the capacity, within herself, to survive both heaven and hell. (P. 9).

As such, Margaret is able to control her mind and soul as long as the attacks of her persecutors are physical or verbal. On the other hand, Dikeledi's friendship with Margaret is beneficial to her psychic wholeness: "Margaret grew in strength of purpose and personality". Dikeledi's love definitely brought to the forefront the hidden and more powerful woman who dwelt behind the insignificant shadow. She has finally found someone she can rely on in times of danger.

Margaret's paintings also act as a tool of resistance. Her paintings carry themes that come from her inner spirit person. She puts down on these paintings the things she constantly sees inside her head. It beautifully reflects Freud's interplay of the "conscious" and the "unconscious" mind. Her unconscious wishes to have a house of her own with a field of daisies and a loving husband depicted in her paintings.

Consequently, Margaret purges herself of maddening secrets in her paintings. At times she even feels like she is fighting against adverse forces:

I felt so ashamed, thinking I had come upon a secret which ought not to be disclosed, that I turned and tried to run away. Just then a strong wind arose and began to blow me in the direction of the embracing couple. I was terrified. They did not want anyone near them and I could not feel it. I dropped to the ground and tried to grab hold of the daisies to save myself from the strong wind. At that moment I opened my eyes. (P. 79).

Margaret's visions are both her wishes and fears. She is even considered a goddess by the narrator. This is because she has the faculty to influence and transform people, especially those with parapsychological powers like hers. Her transformational powers are seen at work in the life of Moleka. Moleka needs someone else to open his kingdom for him, and Margaret is the only one with this capacity because she is Moleka's complementary soul:

Moleka is only half a statement of his kingdom. Someone else makes up the whole. It is the person he now loves ... Maru knew from his own knowledge of himself that true purpose and direction are creative. Creative imagination he had in over-abundance. Moleka had none of that ferment, only an over-abundance of power. It was as though Moleka were split in two ... he had the

energy but someone else had the equivalent gift of Maru's kingdom: creative imagination. (P. 82).

Margaret is transformed by the experiences she has lived in her traumatic painful life; and through the generosity of her heart, she transforms those around her and, consequently, her society and mankind. A good example is Moleka's transformation which is irreversible and which deeply affects his psychic wholeness too. Moleka goes through a complete resurrection. He becomes aware of what he really is and now sees, like Maru, the extent of his power. "Something inside killed the old Moleka in flesh and, out of the dead one, arose in a flash, a new Moleka" (P.82). It is worthy to remember that before meeting Margaret, Moleka is described as the typical African male. He typifies Bessie Head's male who exerts absolute power over women and who uses it for evil:

At the end of a love affair, Moleka would smile in the way he smiled when he made people and goats jump out of his path, outrage in his eyes. There was nothing Moleka did not know about the female anatomy. It made him arrogant and violent. There was no woman who could resist the impact of his permanently boiling bloodstream... Moleka and women were like a volcanic explosion in a dark tunnel. Moleka was the only one to emerge, on each occasion, unhurt, smiling. (P. 20).

To another extent, Margaret's ability to open up to Moleka also transforms her and fortifies her in her resistance. Margaret is Maru's equal in soul power but, unfortunately, she lacks Moleka's self-confidence and abundant power. So, when she meets Moleka for the first time, she is also transformed by him:

...There was a trick to Moleka, some shocking unexpected magic. A moment ago he had been a hateful, arrogant man. Now, he had another face which made him seem the most beautiful person on earth. It was only his eyes, as though a stormy sky had cleared. What was behind was a rainbow of dazzling light. Though unaware of any feeling, something inside Margaret's chest went "bang". Her mouth silently shaped a word: "oh", and she raised a hand towards her heart. (P. 20).

Consequently, Moleka, like Dikeledi, gives Margaret a stature of equality and brings her peace in heart and mind. The physical and spiritual company these two offer her saves her from the solitary life she was doomed to live. Margaret is a perfect match for Maru because she

has an inner kingdom similar to Maru's and she possesses a certain quality of mystery which is part of Maru's make-up. These are qualities she gained from her British foster mother which uplift her soul to near perfection. For a change, she often felt quite drunk and mad with happiness and it was not unusual for her to walk around for the whole day with an ecstatic smile on her face.

So, like Elizabeth in *A Question of Power*, Margaret Cadmore in *Maru* is not crushed by the traumatic pain she goes through. On the contrary, her traumatic pain has a liberating effect on her. Like Elizabeth at the end, she makes a very liberating decision which makes her one with nature and enables her to live in harmony with those around her. Her growth is beneficial not only to her. She positively impacts the lives of those that have come in contact with her and is a model to those of us who have journeyed with her through her pain. We are schooled by her experience to understand that to shed off our pain for new horizons, we have to undergo transformation which entails letting go certain stances on issues and adopting new philosophies. We must not give in to pain which can only end up crushing us. Oppressors are also given a chance to see that transformation is possible for them as well. All they need to do is to humble themselves, descend from their high and superior pedestals and embrace the warmth and love emanating from the hearts of those they consider inferior, or oppressed unnecessarily. The transformation of Moleka and *Maru* who are blessed with the presence of and by their contact with Margaret is a teaching example. The colour of one's skin or his race should not be a deterring force in sharing true love and transforming lives and the world around you. The beautiful example of Margaret Cadmore senior stands out in *Maru* and beckons any racist to re-examine self and take a positive step towards change. For, the change of society begins with the change of individuals. Once you attain a new status like Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* and Margaret in *Maru*, you cannot but end up creating new worlds because you are new yourself. From the above, our take home point, therefore, is that we should never wage war against those we consider as inferior persons.

Buchi Emecheta, like Bessie Head, highlights the healing force of traumatic pain when resistance is rightly applied. This is the case with Ada in her novel *Second Class Citizen* just like Elizabeth in Head's *A Question of Power*. In Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, Adah comes up with a number of coping strategies to help her defy or resist traumatic pain, and even come out of it. The pain Adah has lived does not only strengthen her but equally gives her new force to fight back. The more she receives pain, the more her heart becomes hardened. For the most part, her maturity is proven not by getting out of trouble but by coping with trouble. While

coping with her traumatic pain, her mind is transformed into a machine at work. It works non-stop to come up with new strategies of how to overcome or transform her obstacles into assets. For example, the overt discrimination Adah experiences in her domestic space at a very tender age pushes her to reflect and to look deep into her situation in order to identify the cause of pain and build strategies on how to come out of it. As early as the outset of her pain, she realises that knowledge of what she is going through is a big asset to her liberation. She seeks to understand why she takes Boy, her younger brother, to school but has to stay at home. Not only is she envious of Boy but, also, she is frustrated by the attitude of her people. She cannot understand how her people accept that one's saviour from poverty and disease is education, yet they are ready to limit the education of the girl child to learning a few things and then sewing. Her hurt is the seed of liberation sown when she herself says:

It had begun like a dream. You know, that sort of dream which seems to have originated from nowhere, yet one was always aware of its existence, one could feel it: one could be directed by it; unconsciously at first, until it becomes a reality; a presence. (P. 7).

The reference to the dream here aptly summarises how the pain that settles and grows in Adah's heart each day she takes Boy to Ladi-Lak Preparatory School soon transforms itself into new values. Her dream of going to school is nudged, and disobedience sets in. She searches into the depths of her mind and finds no reason why she should be treated differently from Boy. Her quick analysis of the situation tells her that her mother is the cause of her not going to school. Knowledge of this fact is, therefore, very important to her. It immediately gives rise to a new code of behaviour towards Mama and society. Adah secretly takes joy in disobeying Mama and it forms the foundation of her resistance and rebellion.

Adah's first coping strategy, like Elizabeth's, is her ability to lie low and act only when the moment is ripe enough. She develops this survival instinct right in her infancy. This is what pain has done to her. She fights her own battles not by talking loud but by doing the right thing at the right time irrespective of whom she hurts. This is the typical attitude of a determined, rebellious person. This fulfills the general view that when you are bent on doing something, you see and make use of the opportunities that present themselves to you. Boiling with anger and feeling frustrated that she has not been sent to school, Adah holds back, waiting for the right moment to shake this off. The opportunity presents itself when Ma starts to undo her hair. Fate brought in one of her innumerable friends and they soon forget of Adah as they are immersed in their routine chit-chat. As the writer puts it: "One of Mama's innumerable friends

came for a visit, and the two were so engrossed in their chit-chat that they did not notice when Adah slipped past them” (P. 10). We notice from this incident that one successful act of bravery generates another. Though it was mid-day and the sun was hot, Adah sneaked out with added courage. The heat of the sun was rather in her favour. It was the right moment for her to dare as many people would be in indoors to keep away from the sun and none of Mama’s friends could see and send her back. This is intelligence and tact from one as young as Adah. This is what pain has produced in her. What this tells us is that inspiration should be followed by logical feasible plans. When you are bent on doing something, you must make use of the opportunities that present themselves to you. Adah does not go in for unattainable goals.

From the foregoing, one sees that someone who feels profoundly thinks profoundly and acts logically. Adah has a mission that must be accomplished. Hence, logical and critical thinking are very important. She knows her family situation when it comes to finances. So, she settles on a cheap school that can be affordable and goes out of her way to please her opponent. Adah’s success comes through diplomacy and self-sacrifice. She is quite certain that only education can take the pain off her chest and hence liberate her. So, “Head up” is very important for success. Adah learns quite early in life that fear or shame destroys hope. She is, therefore, not ashamed of her baggy gown which she has smartened up with a headscarf in order to set out for her mission to school. She is not even afraid of being thrown out of school because she is not in uniform. All she cares for is the mission on hand. Her thirst for knowledge is the source of her growth, and fear has to be done away with. Pain has brought her to a point of no return.

In a nutshell, we see that the spirit of searching for knowledge, as a liberating tool when in pain, is a working principle for Adah. Each time she is faced with an obstacle, we see that her homework of knowing who or what she is dealing with is always well done. A good example of this is her relationship with her mother-in-law. She shows a good understanding of who her mother-in-law is. She studies her carefully and has a good idea of her materialistic side. This then enables her to cajole her into accepting that they meet Francis in London by offering her their jewelries. In doing this, she is borrowing an idea of Kenyi Miya Zawa’s who says that when we meet traumatising events in life, we should not allow them to crush us; we should rather embrace such traumatic pain and burn it as fuel for our journey. To Adah, pain at this stage is transformational. It acts like fire solidifying gold as it makes her more resistant and more determined to attain her goal. Her success at this stage comes through diplomacy and self-sacrifice. Emecheta accords a longer story time to this episode so as to show the importance of the diplomatic handling of our stressors. The paradox or irony underlying her mother-in-law’s

act of preferring jewelery to her family exposes her materialistic nature. It also underscores the African platform of often strained relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. They often see their daughters-in-law as rivals who have come to deprive them of their son's love. Ironically, this gives way to greed for things that make her accept goods for a re-union of her son and his wife. Adah weighs her priorities and knows that giving up jewelry only means temporal lack as she would eventually get to London, get richer and buy more of them for herself and her daughter. She is diplomatic the way she goes about it – tempting her mother-in-law with her desires.

Another coping strategy for Adah is her ability to accommodate pain while silently building plans on how to move out of pain. She teaches a beautiful lesson by demonstrating that life does not need to come to a standstill when we are in pain. There are things that must be done if you have to keep moving until you arrive at the point that is most comfortable for you. This is seen when, despite what she is living, she moves on without complaining unnecessarily. No matter how hard the duty is, she would do it with all her heart. For example, she thinks that it would be very difficult for her to have her baby while facing the stresses and strains of a job, but she does not give-up. She rather accepts that it is her duty to earn money to feed her children. Although her husband is lazy and prefers maintaining his easy life, she does not mind as she knows that her children must survive. She does whatever she has to do in order to make a living for her family. It is not that she accepts it as the best life for herself. She has to do a lot of contemplation and planning before taking a decision or a move:

Looking back at that time, she still wondered why she never taught it odd that she should be doing all the worrying about what they were doing to live on, why she and she alone, always felt she was letting those she loves down if she stayed away from work, even for the sake of having a baby. The funniest thing was that she felt it was her duty to work, not her husband's. He was to have an easy life, the life of a mature student studying at his own pace. (P. 98).

Words and phrases like “worrying,” “her duty to work not her husband's” bring to the fore Adah's stressful conditions. The fact that she begins to understand it while envisioning how to move out of it shows that there is always a limit beyond which anyone faced with pressure can no longer go. When the “mature student” life was going on forever, other thoughts came to her mind. She started believing that a woman deserves a better life. She is not only bitter but she frowns at the treatment Igbo women get from their husbands. She realises this fact and does not want to live like these women. She thinks that women who live with their husbands

should rather be considered as partners and not just as a couple. To Adah, being a partner means that these women should still have the right to decide the future of their families. This is not well received even by some of the women who have been brainwashed by patriarchy. Adah is determined never to allow this to happen to her:

She would never, never in her life get married to any man rich or poor, to whom she would have to serve his food on bended knee: she would not consent to live with a husband whom she would have to treat as a master and refer to as "sir" even behind his back. She knew that all Igbo women did this, but she wasn't going to ... (P. 14).

Emphatic statements like "never, never in her life," "she would not give up," "she wasn't going to," all point to Adah sending across the message to society that she does not agree with the treatment reserved for women in society. She refuses to consider the man as the master of the woman like other women do. This forms the platform of her character and controls her subsequent behaviour. She, therefore, tries everything possible to attain what she wants. This makes her to stand out amongst black women, and she ends up being a model and an eye opener to others.

Adah's highly motivated spirits are also a tool for her resistance and breakthrough. She would do anything to get what she wants. This can be seen when she needs money to pay for her exams. She does not have the money and she has no idea how to get the money to pay for the exams. She has to lie to her cousin's wife when she is asked to buy a pound of steak from the market. She says that she has lost the money but her cousin's wife does not believe her. She realises that what she has done is wrong and that she is not a good liar. All the same, she believes that what she has done is for the sake of her fate.

She is really no good at lying. The wilderness in her eyes had a way of betraying her. If only she could have been all right; people would have believed her story. But she kept staring into her eyes and her face showed her up like a mirror. (P. 17).

Finally, Adah passes the exams, thereby confirming the fact that she is not only intelligent but also critical and daring as well. She becomes the best kid and qualifies for a full scholarship. All this goes a long way towards proving that Adah is able to manage her situation or traumas in order to achieve her goals. Critical thinking and risk bearing are proven as efficient tools for resistance and breakthrough in this instance:

She not only passed the entrance examination but she got a scholarship with full board. She never knew whether she came first or second or even third, but she was one of the best children of the year. (P. 18)

This led to letting her think that her intelligence qualified her for a better job than the job at the shirt factory, especially with her experience at the British Library:

She had part of the British Library Association Professional Certificate, to say nothing of the experience. Why should she go and work with her neighbours who were just learning to join their letters together instead of printing them. (P. 38).

All of the above description about Adah's behaviour proves that Adah can be considered a survivor, one who would not easily allow herself to be trampled upon like the others. She believes that her fate is not in the hands of other people. She goes the extra mile to prove that she is a woman capable of doing great things. Most of all, she proves that despite her status as a mother of children, she had no limitations whatsoever. In a nutshell, Adah's story motivates other women as her experiences are reminiscent of those of other women in society. Through her experience, especially her reaction to pain, she gives other women a sense of belonging and self-worth while making them effectual participants in human development.

Thus, in a powerful compelling voice, Adah is heralding unpleasant news for patriarchy: she confronts the dominance of male superiority, even condemning the highly repressive cultural beliefs and roles attached to them traditionally. She advocates the rights of women to work and earn money so as to get out of poverty, to end unhappy marriages and molestations; and to seek a comfortable liberated end. In the light of self-assertion and personal development, Adah sees education as a way out of poverty and a means of liberating self from the cultural norms and perceptions that "imprison" women. In addition to confrontation, Adah stands for outright rejection for the sake of survival. She never accepted the fact that she is a second class citizen in London. She challenged the laws governing black people, and went on to make acquaintances with known first class citizens in their company; and even wanted to have a better life for herself and her children. She even became more creative and more resourceful by writing a novel. Unfortunately, it was burnt by her husband, Francis. To assert herself fully as a comfortable liberated woman, she divorced Francis and assumed full responsibility over her children.

In the same vein, Emecheta develops an emotional, pathetic and moving story of an African woman in Europe with five children and no husband, no job and no future who categorically refuses to stay in the ditch until somebody pulls her out of it. Adah, Emecheta's fictional alter ego fights tooth and nail neither to be classified as "problem" family nor to be treated as sub-human. Life, therefore, becomes a daily rebellion and struggle for her to overcome. Though dependent on the welfare state that never gives them enough to live on, she looks around, runs around and stretches her imagination to come up with something that would improve their lives or liberate them from misery. She fights the horrible suffocating squalor life of the blacks with its smelly thick lavatory stink. The trash chutes that are blocked and overflowing are unfit for human habitation, and she makes sure she tells the authority to their faces:

This time it was her landlord. He had long given her notice to quit the premises with her five young children. But unfortunately for Adah, she was black, separated from her husband and with five kids all under six, there were few landlords who would dream of taking the likes of her into their houses. Her landlord, a Nigerian like herself, being aware of Adah's predicament, was of course, taking the best advantage of the situation. The rent he charged was double what was normally asked for rooms in such houses. (P.2).

Here is a typical situation of someone who does not feel for anybody and treats people as if they are animals fit only for the gutters. He cannot stand the fact that Adah, a woman, dares to point out these things to him:

He now wanted her to leave because she had the effrontery to ask him to do something about the rats, the cockroaches and the filth when he had failed to do anything about them. She had been to the Town Hall and because there was no other place for her to live just then, the council had stepped in. They had asked the landlord to do some repairs, and even asked him to give Adah a rent book. (P. 2).

Such small victories cannot be underlooked in the general battle for liberation. To change the world, it has to start with changing self and creating a positive impact on the environment around you. Adah refuses to go along with the masses; she breaks the silence and seeks the assistance of the higher authority for a better life. The likes of Adah's landlord are warned by this success of Adah's to be cautious in their treatment of others whom they think are desperate and are at their beck and call. Adah forces the landlord to see that damp and poorly heated apartments and cupboards which are all "carpeted" with mildew are unfit for human habitation.

Adah continually resists the limitations imposed on her by both Nigerians and the English. She moves on to point out early in her story that “people seldom separate from their husbands after the birth of five children”. Luckily for Adah, it is all happening in England “where anything could be tried, and even done. It’s a free country”. Sometimes she bows to authority only to gain time and get more focused. It does not take Adah long to realise that she is a lot less independent than she had hoped. Unfortunately, Carol, the estate’s on-site family adviser, immediately starts poking her nose into Adah’s life. She tells Adah that she cannot leave her children alone at home while she goes out to work, or to college at night (though it is in Carol’s power to arrange a babysitter to help Adah some evenings). Adah’s exasperation, tinged with gratitude, is surprisingly refreshing:

That was one of the things Adah did not like about these white-coated females who called themselves social officers. They were bloody well too patronizing. All right, she had pointed out that Adah was wrong in leaving her kids in the evenings. Why make a meal of it [...] Adah would have to swallow her pride as a woman, her dignity as a mother, and let Carol help her. She did not like to accept the help, but she had no choice. (P. 5).

Adah even goes the extra mile to regretfully give up her job as an administrator at the British Museum. She closes her middle-class chapter. This is being realistic and accommodating in the battle of survival. Sometimes you have to slow down in order to gather momentum to go faster. From then on, Adah belongs to no class at all. She could not claim to be working class because the working class have a code for daily living. She has none. She embraces joblessness in the Mansion and uses it as fuel to move on. Emecheta is bitter with life in the ditch. She is so frustrated by the violence dished out on women. Through her mouthpiece, Adah, the novelist, ignites the female to liberation by frowning at husbands who do not think twice about taking their frustration out on their wives. “The police could do little for a beaten wife”. She laments over the fact that it sometimes seemed like matrimony, apart from being a way of getting free sex when a man felt like it. This was also a legalised way of committing assault and getting away with it. Emecheta does not hesitate to point-out the double standards between the working class and the middle-classes:

How many middle-class women would welcome a penniless drunkard pouncing on her in bed, just like an animal, simply because he owned her? Adah asks astutely... She’ll be judged a shattern: Adah crawled into bed, not to rest but to worry! Call the doctor into a flat in this condition. The floor had not been swept for two days. Kids’ litter cluttered every corner [...]. She wished she had been

white and middle-class for then there would have been no need to worry – the doctor would have “quite understood”. (P. 70).

Another strategy used by Adah in order to resist pain so as to forge ahead is learning how to curb her desires rather than only conforming to societal demands, thereby beating them at their own game as well. This is a situation where “fancy men or boy friends” are not allowed in the dole house. If a woman is seen regularly with a man, the dole people start asking questions, assuming he’s helping her out with extra money which they then want to subtract from what they are giving her. As such, the women are not just poor; they are equally sex-starved. Their chances of marrying or remarrying are almost reduced to nil. Unwanted babies are discouraged but, as usual, the morals of a middle-class office secretary are not subject to the same scrutiny. With full knowledge of all these, Adah rather chooses to make an independent life for herself and her children as a survival strategy:

To most of these women, sex was like food. Love was dead, except the maternal love they naturally had for their kids. To be deprived sexually, especially for women in their twenties who had once been married, was probably one of the reasons why places like the Pussy Cat Mansions were usually a fertile ground for breeding hooligans and generations of unmarried mums ... People like Carol were employed to let them know their rights, but the trouble was that Carol handed them their rights, as if she was giving out charity. (P. 70).

Adah, as Emecheta’s alter ego, is a woman of unparalleled independence, drive and ambition who would not allow any man to tell her what she should or should not do. Her ability to see through Carol helps her in her independent and onward journey. Not only does she figure out what her rights are but, also, she goes all out of her way to fight for them. As such, Adah, an intelligent, hardworking woman fights against considerable odds to keep herself from being driven insane by the degrading welfare system. She does everything to maintain her pride and dignity as a welfare recipient as well as to sustain her keen desire for independence for herself and her children.

She knew that her problems were going to be many; for the Smalls seemed determined to add to the fact that she would have to worry about how to study and now worry about how to keep the kids quiet. If the Mansions’ tenants did not want her, well, she was going to be different. She was not going to be like the other separated mums. At the Mansions, women with kids and no husbands did not go out to work. It was just not done. If you were separated, you lived on the dole. “I am going to be different,” Adah said to herself in consolation (PP. 21-22).

Indeed, Adah ends up being different for survival purposes. She speaks out when others choose to be silent and confronts authority when her rights are grossly trampled upon. Adah advocates for live free of violence and poverty. She frowns on, insulting an oppressive charity. She has been conditioned by the rejection of all that can guarantee independence:

There was a Christmas party at Carol's. The children were loaded with more gifts and goodies. Adah did not go to the party, for it was one of those occasions when she felt fed up with being given things. She felt that her dignity as a human being was gradually being taken away from her. After all, they would move some time in the new year so she might as well start learning to live by herself, making her own decisions. (P. 88).

In such a way, she would be shedding off the enslavement existence where a few things are handed to you to keep you imprisoned. Rather than give them fish, Adah would prefer they empower her to fish by making society comfortable for the survival of all. Like any loving parent, she would love to give what she likes to her children or satisfy the children with what they love or desire on a day like this.

Furthermore, overcoming fear is integral to resistance and breaking through. As long as Adah and the other women live in fear, they would bear the brunt of austerity and would be excluded from decision-making to make life better for themselves and future generations. Adah is a silent voice leading other women to rebel from the horrible shit they are living at The Pussy Cat Mansions. She falls back on the strength of unity. They are, therefore, united in their demands for safety and economic well-being; they long to be part of decision-making, especially over the things that directly concern them. This is the reason for which they come together in a meeting and allow everyone to express their views so that they could reach solutions that would enable them to look in the same direction:

The meeting took place at seven o'clock in Carol's office, ironically. The small woman who was the secretary was very articulate ... "Carol calls us problem families" ... "I never go to her office for anything. She talks openly about people, and your secrets become known to everybody. "If she repeats what I had told her about myself to anybody else, I shall kill her", Mrs Cox thundered. Everybody seemed to have been winged ... "I don't go to her for anything", said Mrs Williams. (P. 96).

It is so painful when you are stabbed in the back by the one who pretends to be a friend and a protector. Mrs Cox's case is one amongst many and makes us truly sorry for the downtrodden:

"I really don't like all those busy body social officers. Most of them are unmarried idiots and know nothing about children. As soon as they put a white god forsaken raincoat, they think they can dictate to you how you ought to live. Mrs Williams "I am an honest-to-goodness hard-working person, not a bleeding problem family. They have problems, people who go about nosing into other people's business. When they grow old, who is going to look after them when they have no children of their own? (P. 96).

This is healthy comparison that is not only consoling to these trauma victims but also helps to boost their morale by letting them know that they have something that their oppressors do not have. This is the rich cultural background of the West Indians and Africans where children are considered a walking stick of the old. These victims look down on the oppressor's ideology of Old Homes where, when they grow old they go there. What this means is that they too are "problem" and should concentrate on solving their problems instead of calling others 'problem' families and treating them as such. The result of this meeting is that they are all determined to be treated better by the authorities that be:

The weather became milder? The inhabitants of the Mansion had survived another winter. A few of the sophisticated Mansion's aristocrats had put their potted plants out on the balconies. Everybody was determined not to spend another winter there. (P. 104).

Consequently, Adah and her likes are bent on supporting one another in this dungeon. They call for recognition of inherent dignity in one's self and all other human beings through the acceptance of identities different from one's own. To them, it would equally not be a bad idea if workload is shared, thereby creating safe environments for vulnerability to be freely expressed. As a means of survival or resistance to pain, everyone is called upon to get involved in community actions, educate one another for the general good; listen attentively to one another and seek to understand one another for the general good. The victims are also encouraged to share experiences and knowledge in order to grow in wisdom. Most importantly, everyone should seek to know his or her rights. This should always entail reciprocity in human relationships that extend to all humanity and beyond. Women should not be exempted from this because human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights. Women should, therefore, break the silence like Adah does and speaks out. They are entitled to safety, inclusion and fairness and will have them if they go out for them.

As Emecheta's mouthpiece in the novel, Adah advocates for calling to order the oppressive system of the British that allows inequities to continue. Policies and practices that disadvantage marginalised groups should not be promoted or encouraged. In this light, her actions encourage anyone who witnesses unfair or biased treatment to speak out. Prejudice and racism are learned behaviours and as such can be unlearned. The task becomes lighter and the road shorter when trauma victims bond, share resources and amplify the voices of the marginalised through a diversified method in order to collectively sail through.

Another survival tool for Adah is her ability to take pride in and celebrate her culture. This, indeed, is her source of strength because it helps the proud woman that she is to sail through the identity crises as well as through the discriminations meted out to her. Our cultures give us our values, i.e., our sense of self in history, our humour, our identities and our world view. This is why Adah frowns at her landlord for using the Igbo "juju" to frighten women instead of valorising for what it is: a cultural identity with so many beautiful ramifications. It should be noted that it is our culture that identifies us as a community, a reference point, a home and a place to get our bearings and remember what is important to us. For example, the discrimination that Adah has experienced and endured as a member of a cultural group has strengthened her. She has learned to survive, stand up for herself, be resourceful, have a sense of humour and bounce back. Celebrating her culture helps her to internalise oppression since it gives her a more accurate view of her culture than the one that her present society communicates to her.

From the above, we have seen that resisting traumatic pain is often a natural, and sometimes, spontaneous action taken by the body when faced with painful situations. The transformational effect of pain is very evident in the lives of our heroines. As shown above, pain pushes the heroines to acquire knowledge which is the first tool of resistance. You cannot resist that which you do not know. Thus you seek to know self and society better so as to be able to identify the source of trauma for better resistance. Knowledge as seen above has helped in creating awareness which pushes the heroines to develop coping strategies. This ties in with the selected tenets of the trauma theory as discussed earlier and with Kennedy's philosophy in his book *The pain of Being Human* when he says: "Mature people don't get out of trouble, they cope with it."

SOCIAL/POLITICAL EDUCATION

Although lonely and almost perennially traumatised by the dominant discourses in South Africa, Botswana, Nigeria and London, Head and Emecheta nevertheless discovered a sense of worth when they were displaced from their respective homelands. Refusing to accept the conventional demarcations of space for men and women, both writers examine the nature of both social and political relationships in their novels. The growth of the heroines in all the four selected novels is largely as a result of social/political education. Such education provides the platform for coping with pain. Coping with pain, therefore, enables the transformation of self, society and human kind. The pain that does not kill one contributes to one's development. Consequently, successful people are not those who have never failed nor never known pain but those who pick up the pieces, gather strength and bounce back with a force like that of the jumbo jet. The height of one's success depends on the depth of one's pain and the steam gathered in the pit of pain.

In Head's *A Question of Power* and *Maru*, both heroines – Elizabeth and Margaret – epitomise the human being. They have known the worst form of pain any human being can be subjected to. Elizabeth is rejected first by her family which feels ashamed of her because her father is a black stable boy. Secondly, she is rejected by a husband who treats her like an object that has no emotions. Thirdly, she is rejected by Dan and Sello who simply seek to use her for their own soul satisfaction. And lastly, she is rejected by society which fails to see her as a human being who needs to be loved, cherished and cared for. She even leaves her own country with a never to return visa. Looking at her life and all these difficult relationships, one might be tempted to comfortably conclude that difficult social relationships break even the strongest.

More painfully, Elizabeth's exterior life has a way of painfully coinciding with her inner torments. For example, the pain on the faces of children at school in Motabeng mirrors the pain of her heart. The aridity of Motabeng symbolises the aridity of Africans who are deprived of the cool and reviving power of knowledge. The children even abandon school for the hills to take care of their cows. Unfortunately, the one-seeing person in the society of the blind is termed the blind one. Ironically, Elizabeth who should be the voice of education and reason for the development of society is dismissed by the Principal on grounds that they were not sure of her sanity. Paradoxically, the principal could be concerned about her sanity but not about the pitiful state of the children she taught; they were "stark, gaunt, and thin like the twisted thorn-bush". Yet, as can be seen from the following words, hope was not lost, and the tables would certainly

turn despite such pain: ‘Pain was not only pain. It was a blinding daze of agony piling on all sides. The only same centre of purposeful, expanding and hopeful activity in this desolation was the Motabeng School’ (P. 68).

The story of Margaret in *Maru* is not different from that of Elizabeth in *A Question of Power*. There is such a total break in social relationships that not only is Margaret’s mother abandoned to herself in childbirth but also her corpse is abandoned and was only touched at the behest of a total stranger, the white Margaret Cadmore. Margaret knows some love not from her kin but from the white lady. It is even more traumatising when she is discriminated against not by the foreigner but by her fellow Africans. She is a Masawa, a Bushman who should not mingle with the “blue blood”.

Resistance from both Elizabeth and Margaret is chained up with education for a great social and political breakthrough. Education cuts across all fields and the downtrodden end up being the voice of reason and an eye opener for society. Elizabeth’s transformation comes with the realisation that “God is the totality of all great souls”. Her encounter with Eugene is very significant. In Eugene’s company, she sees the blue sky for the first time. She quickly sees the difference between Eugene and the other oppressive Whites of South Africa. Eugene breaks the walls of her social and political isolation with these words: “Too much isolation isn’t good for anyone” (P. 47). He does not only teach by word; he also teaches by the example. Thus, practical education starts with Eugene digging up the thorn bushes and wild scrub grass and replacing them with fruit trees, vegetable gardens, chicken houses and fields of corn. Elizabeth partners with Eugene in this process of rebuilding self, society and Mankind. His school upholds these principles, a school where inventions and improvisations of all sorts appeared because someone from another land always had a new solution to offer:

He put down his cup and returned to his writings. She looked out of the window at the sprawling arrangement of low, whitewashed buildings. It was a vast empire... They had dug out the thorn bushes and wild scrub-grass and replaced them with fruit trees, vegetable gardens, chicken houses and in the distance, gently swaying fields of corn. It was a school where inventions and improvisations of all sorts appeared because someone from another land always had a new solution to offer to any problem which arose. (P. 57).

The statement below upholds the principles of the universal brotherhood of man preached by Head:

Words like skill, work, fullest development of personality and intellect recurred again and again in the pamphlets the man Eugene wrote, but in those fluid, swiftly-written papers circulated among all teachers they quivered on the pages with a life all their own. They conjured up in the minds of the poor good food; roast chicken, roast potatoes, boiled carrots, rice and puddings. (P. 57).

This, indeed, is education that breaks social and political barriers so as to bring economic empowerment and comfort to a suffering and marginalised people. Food, clothes and opportunities are made available to everyone. This is definitely not the situation in South Africa where it was said that the Blackman was naturally dull, stupid, and inferior; but ironically, they were bent on depriving him of education which develops personality, intellect and skills.

Consequently, the digging up of the bushes and wild scrubs symbolises the uprooting of pain and the planting of fruit trees which signify the implantation of love for one another. Elizabeth's pain thus subsides as she joins this profession-based school which stems from a desire to give meaning to life. It is an indication that her life has undergone some transformation which she would like to share with mankind through education. She is fertile ground on which things that can be of benefit to society can be nurtured. For, a fertile mind generates fertile ideas that transform the world. Traumatic pain has thus enabled Elizabeth to see the difference in people while guiding her to join the right company. She opts for a project that would give meaning to life. New joy and logic are found in various departments of the school. The Youth Development Work Groups of the school train people to acquire skills in painting, building, carpentry, electricity, printing, shoe-making, farming and textile work. New social relationships are developed and it forms the basis for local industry for the poor illiterate villagers. Eugene turns people's attention to their natural environment. Survival strategies are implemented and people become productive as they produce mats, blankets, baskets, wooden bowls and spoons and handbags from rough woven strings. Eugene invites Elizabeth to join the vegetable garden project which thus becomes the link between the educated rich and the poor illiterate.

In the same light, Margaret Cadmore junior encounters Margaret Cadmore senior. Her education – under the adopted patronage of the white missionary – forms the platform of her transformation. She acquires intellectual and social knowledge and coaching that empower and help her to overcome persecutions from society, thus setting the pace by her educative example. The pain of being termed a Bushman of second class status does not kill her. She has been well schooled into valuing who she is; and she boldly walks with her head high up proclaiming and confirming to anyone who cares to know that she is a Bushman. She stands-up for herself and

ends up being an attraction for many. Great social relationships are broken and new ones formed through her silent but loud teaching presence. Her endurance as a Masarwa/Bushman helps her to gain strength and admiration even from top ranking personalities like Dilepe, Maru and Moleka:

Yet there were half suns glowing on the horizons of her heart. It was Moleka. Now and then she would pass him in the village. She could quite clearly see that he made a secret of the matter but his eyes glowed like the early morning sunrise when he glanced at her briefly. The strange thing was that the love aroused no violent emotions but blended in with the flow and rhythm of life in Dilepe. It was something to be accepted, painlessly, because there was no question of who loved whom. (P. 69).

The statement below clearly reveals how societal constraints can frustrate and kill natural love that flows from the heart:

She thought: "He will never approach me, because I am Marsarwa". And it was something her whole way of life had prepared her for. Love and happiness had always been a little bit far away from life as other people lived it. There could have been no better training ground than that of Margaret Cadmore senior, whose own heart continually muddled her and who had been a woman who lived without love ... (P. 69).

Elizabeth and Margaret, as can be seen from the above, take part in the transformation between people of different classes and different status. Elizabeth thinks that Eugene's movements and gestures are too African; Margaret on the other hand is marveled at Moleka's ability to eat at table with his Masarwa servants. Both Eugene and Moleka eat at table with their employees as a humble and transformational gesture. These human gestures from Eugene and the other people of Motabeng totally transform Elizabeth. Margaret is equally transformed by Moleka's actions. The heroines have come from far and at this stage in their lives they are no longer dejected and sorrow-stricken persons. The little girl who interacts with Elizabeth does not only confirm this view but beautifully expresses it when she says of Motabeng:

They make you feel like a queen. Your every need is catered for and attentively watched over. There is little but it is shared beautifully, so that even an offer of a glass of water seems to be an offer of the most expensive champagne. People here are kings and queens to each other. (P. 72).

Motabeng is an eye opener to Elizabeth. She finally realises that God is not a magical formula as some people thought. Her speech to Brigitte is a sign of this development:

God isn't a magical formula for me. God isn't a switched-on mysterious unknown ... I can turn to and by so doing feel secure in my own mobility. It's you I feel secure about, strangely; as though we will encounter each other again in some other life and nothing would have shaken your nobility but mine. (P. 85).

A statement of assessment like this from Elizabeth shows total rejection and departure from a world that preaches God but does not act like God. An example of this is her South Africa where capitalists came in cassocks preaching God but acting the devil. Ironically, it was not from them that she experiences true human love. It took the Kenosis or the down-trodden of Motabeng to transform her. Just like it took the staunch chief – who had molested Margaret to the point of taking back the bed that was offered to her by Moleka – to transform Margaret with his show of love.

Kenosi works with the wool-spinning and weaving group. She is the sort of woman who would simply bend might and main in order to clear work in front of her – in silence and with concentration – unlike the exploitative relationships she, Elizabeth, lived in the loveless South Africa. Elizabeth is transformed in Kenosi's company. Pain is killed and forgotten as Elizabeth concentrates on pinning poles for the shop's fences with Kenosi. The fence fences out pain and fences in love and communal spirit develops from rich social relationships.

Sello has undergone the same transformational process as Elizabeth. He had been dominated by an evil woman, Medusa, but no more. He had diagnosed the evil, isolated it, and ended it. Elizabeth celebrates his victory by immediately taking stock of the situation: "Who could sit and look at their own pus-oozing sores for so long? And he hasn't only the record of darkness in him. He created light as well. (P.41)

The realisation that there are good and bad Whites and Blacks accelerates the transformation of Elizabeth and Margaret. Margaret will not forget the goodness of Margaret Cadmore senior and Dikeledi. God has been personified through these good people that Elizabeth and Margaret have encountered. Love binds souls with chains that shatter death, physical distances or any other obstacle as expressed here below:

Eli had been forcefully thrown into a state of death alongside Sello, battered and smashed about, but she instantly sprang to life again, laughed and flung her hands into the air with a bounding sense of liberation. (P. 41).

The heroines have come a long way. It could only be the reaction of people who have gone through the mill and have come out healed instead of being crushed. Life has taught them lessons and they have learned their lessons well. They are liberated and united with nature. Elizabeth cries out: “May I never contribute to creating dead worlds; only new worlds”.

In the light of Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*, social and political education shouts out loud. Emecheta pays a lot of attention to family relationships: parents/children, husband/wife, siblings and in-laws. She moves out to relationships of cultural ties, social relationships with the poor and the rich, the educated and the uneducated; professional relationships with the employer and the employee; political relationships with the governing and the governed. She directly and subtly educates the characters and the reader on the positive results of the proper handling of these relationships. As such, she frowns on the Europeans who saw themselves as being divinely ordained by God to civilise “the heart of darkness,” i.e., referring to Africans. They promoted their civilising mission so as to hide their actual economic and exploitative intentions towards Africa and Africans. The spirit of the civilising mission is indeed enshrined in the belief that some people or races are naturally “civilised” and “superior” whereas others are believed to be “uncivilised” and “inferior”. Any belief or practice which is different from such a cultural locus is denigrated and considered “primitive” or “harmful”. Elizabeth, a black woman, in Europe, where Eurocentrism is the norm, is the subject of various stereotyping and discriminating behaviours vis-a-vis herself and others just on the basis of her colour. The protagonist of her selected works, Adah, also experiences the same stereotypical treatment by the English. The platform of civilised/uncivilised beings – on which the social relationship between the Blacks and the Whites is built – is porous and bound to eventually collapse. The myopic stand of the Whites in thinking that the Blacks are inferior to them is ridiculed through their inhumane treatment of Mr Noble in *Second Class Citizen*. By asking Mr Noble to put down his pants so that they can examine if he has a tail, they bring out their limitations and contradictions. It is hard to reconcile their religious stand when they claim that we are the same-brothers/sisters with their idea of treating Noble less than they would treat an animal:

On one occasion, he was asked to remove his trousers, his mates wanted to see whether Africans had tails or not because that was the story they were told during the war. Adah remembered her father telling some of his friends

something like that, but she had been too young to understand. When she heard of Mr Noble's case, she knew that such stories really were told. (P. 84).

More humiliating and pathetic is the fact that Noble allows himself to be subjected to such inhuman treatment. The name 'Noble' is sarcastic given how it has been earned:

In any case, Mr Noble removed his trousers for a pint of beer. It was then that he became so popular and generous enough to be given the name "Noble". He was such a noble man that he would do anything for his mate, even taking his trousers off. (P. 84).

It is quite ironical for them to call him noble after performing such an act. What this actually means is that they are sarcastically considering him as a "noble savage". This reaction of the whites is not only limited to Mr Noble. Adah also sees and experiences the coldness of the English people because she is first a woman and then an African:

England gave Adah a cold welcome... If Adah had been Jesus, she would have passed England by Liverpool was grey, smoky and looked uninhabited by humans. It reminded Adah of the locayard where her Pahad once worked as a moulder. In facts the architectural designs were the same. But if as people said, there was plenty of money in England, why then did the natives give their visitors this poor cold welcome? Well, it was too late to moan, it was too late to change her mind. (P. 33).

This is an instance of subtle satire on the social relationship between the British and the Africans. By hitting them under the belt, Emecheta hopes to prick their conscience with the view to transforming them. They have forgotten all too soon the warmth with which Africans welcome them each time they set foot on the African soil. Unfortunately, Adah has not been welcome into the British community despite her level of education. The British society is a phallocentrically capitalist society that judges and classifies people into castes according to gender, race and economic power. Some jobs are destined for black people or women while certain other lucrative jobs are reserved for white males only. Through the voice of the omniscient narrator, the novelist directly or indirectly tries to reveal how the issue of colour and gender can affect the life of any coloured woman.

Politics is intermingled with social discrimination. European women were denied some of their basic rights such as the right to education, job and universal suffrage. Being black makes matters worse for Adah who, like other African women, becomes a victim of her own gender, especially as she is also coming from a race that encourages and maintains some male

phallogocentric ideologies and values. Emecheta does not only lament over this state of affairs, but she also goes out of her way to expose them in order to let the sun shine on them for positive change:

What worried her most was the description "second-class". Francis had become so conditioned by this phrase that he was not only living up to it but enjoying it too. He kept pressing Adah to get a job in a shirt factory. Working in a factory was the last taking she would do. After all, she had several "O" and "A" levels and she had part of the British Library Professional Certificate [...] why should she go and work with her neighbours who were just learning to join their letters together instead of printing them? (P. 38).

Adah wonders why it is agreed that Blacks in general should play a secondary role everywhere. In this instance, Emecheta educates by raising the awareness of the reader about the various stereotypical assumptions associated with the issue of race and subalternity. She equally explains the existence of a world of diversity and difference. Through the voice of the narrator she throws up the issue of cultural difference as an established barrier between cultures and races and indirectly pushes for the harmonisation and dialogue of cultures where some cultures and races would not be considered superior vis-a-vis others. All of this simply means that, generally speaking, it is not easy to be a woman, let alone a person of colour. The education advanced here by the novelist through her mouthpiece, Adah, is that it is good and possible to go beyond polarities and oppositions between cultures, races and sexes with a view to giving way to a third space for the downtrodden to enunciate. Adah becomes a model as she integrates into the English society.

Consequently, the role that Adah plays in her family clearly demonstrates how women are useful in society while being complementary with men. Women are known to help in their families. Such is the case of Adah in *Second Class Citizen*. That is, women should not be regarded as inferior and useless in society, nor should they be seen simply as a mere means of solving one's financial difficulties. In addition to all these, good social relationships are encouraged. For example, the friendly relationship that Adah develops with the other white characters in the novel, especially with the girls of the library and with Janet, is just to attest to this sense of complementarity between the white and black races. Adah also comes to comprehend that White people are just like Blacks through her relationship with Trudy. The

preconceived idea that the Whites are superior to the Blacks ends up being unfounded as the narrator confirms:

She babbled all the way home, telling Adah her whole life history and the history of her parents and grand-parents. But Adah could not stop thinking about her discovery that the whites were just as fallible as everyone else. There were bad whites just as there were bad blacks and good blacks why then did them claim to be superior? (P. 52).

In terms of intelligence, feelings, creativity and civilisation, the Blacks are not different from the Whites. This is meant to act as caution and education to the postcolonial Africans who, unfortunately, accept their subalternity and inferiority before the White Man. Mr Noble's situation stands out here. This is education meant to get the oppressed to shake off their yoke of inferiority: *'From that day on, no boy ever volunteered to back Adah up any more, but that incident gave her a nickname which she never lived down the tigris'.* (P.52)

In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah, therefore, upholds strong social and political values that are meant to educate and encourage the downtrodden to defend their self-worth and never give up when the world around them decides to break them down. Thus, the problems that Adah faces while in the displaced society of London as a woman – and one with a black skin – do not crush her. She never abandons her goals as she fights tooth and nail for her social ascension in this foreign land. She is not only convinced but she is determined to overcome the horrors of the patriarchal attitudes of her husband towards her. Emecheta creates a character that is the voice and model of the people. Adah is not just a dynamic and an all round character; she is also a strong and self-conscious character who believes in herself and her capability to succeed where her husband and her other countrymen have failed.

For this reason, Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is considered as a didactic novel because it teaches people that the issue of race and gender is purely an ideological concept that gives birth to mechanisms of oppression such as racism and sexism. What this means is that, if black people who have migrated to Western countries want to be recognised as full human beings with all their rights, they should never give up the fight. The empowerment of the black woman lies in education that would give her economic autonomy. This is Emecheta's stand on feminist thought which has its roots in the feminism of Marxism.

Furthermore, Emecheta confirms in *In The Ditch* that people have identities and are mobilised politically around those identities. As such, there is no other way to do politics than

to do identity politics. Subsequently, Adah fights against considerable odds to keep away from being driven insane by the degrading welfare system. Adah fights the government's policy of housing the poor in squalors in the name of a social system scheme. Social relationships are down to zero and need to be addressed before things totally get out of hand. It is regrettable that hierarchy plays out entrenched attitudes and expectations. Armed with her coat of survival, Adah quickly learns the characteristics of the culture of ditch-dwelling; forced employment, dependency, lack of initiative, dole lines, hopelessness and overbreeding in an unhealthy community of unloved, neglected single mums. Even commonplace practices like taking care of your neighbour's children was not condoned in the squalors. When Adah's neighbours, the Smalls, breathe down her neck about the noise her children make, Adah devices new methods of maintaining an acceptable social relationship with them.

Adah knew that to quarrel with their type would be useless; so she decided to be friends. But how did one become friends with someone who believed himself to be superior, richer and made of better clay? Still, she was determined to try: *Her opportunity came the next day. It had been very wet, and she was realising how damp it could be in the Mansion flats.* (P. 20).

In trying to get assistance from the Smalls on how to light coalite, Adah hopes to build new relationships with them. We see an Adah with a determined character, ready to go the extra mile to get out of a bad situation. She makes an effort to treat people better than how they treat her. This is teaching by example:

Adah knew that her problems were going to be many, for the Smalls seemed determined to add to the fact that she would have to worry about keeping her job, worry about how to study, and now worry how to keep the kids quiet. If the Mansion's tenants did not want her well, she was going to be different. She was not going to be like the other separated mums.... If you were separated, you lived on the dole, "I am going to be different". (PP. 21-22).

Adah learns quite early enough that she would not only have to conform to certain things for survival but that for the sake of peace, she would have to belong. She had to belong, socialise, and participate in the goings on. Despite all of this, she still frowns at the poorly managed human relationships that only help to build misery and depression:

Yes, though Adah, "these things do happen. Why do certain people feel it right to put labels on others? A brown person is labeled "black". A poor family is labeled "problem". A lad who decides to wear his hair long is called a "long-

haired lay about". Another boy who decides to wear his hair short is labeled a "skinhead"; a traditionalist is "square" and a modern thinker is "Bohemian". The world is beautiful, but its inhabitants create problems for themselves. (P. 97).

Despite her short comings, Adah appreciates Carol as a friend who made living in the ditch bearable. These are the exemplary trails that Emecheta encourages and promotes. The change or transformation of society has to begin with individual change or transformation. She moves on to educate Carol on the positive change that would make her a lovable person:

That was a dilemma. It was probably difficult for Carol to part with them. Why did she not break down and cry, and let people know that she cared? After all, whether she made jokes about Adah or not, Adah would always remember her as a friend who made living in the ditch bearable. "When I move, I'll avoid you as much as I can", she decided. "you are a kind person, but until you stop talking down to your fellow human beings, you'll find it difficult to get loyal friends and your kindness will come to nothing. (P. 126).

Definitely, this is a lesson not only for Carol, but one that is directed towards all of us. For talking down to people does not only make you unpopular but it also makes you to lose loyal friends as well. Adah leaves the ditch and is very happy with her new home which enables her to live amongst writers that act as a muse to her. She equally joins the others to play big.

Adah liked her new maisonette flat very much indeed. She occupied two whole floors and central heating was installed. She was drunk with joy over the district, just in front of the famous Regent's Park. It smelt of money and real wealth. Her own working-class council estate was cheek by jowl with expensive houses and flats belonging to successful writers and actors. (P. 128).

From the above, we see that Head and Emecheta advocate the transformation of self so as to bring a positive impact not only on society but also on Mankind. This calls for a union of positive-thinking-people of the world. This can be seen in the rapid economic development project of Eugene in Head's *A Question of Power*, the impacting educational schemes of Margaret in *Maru*, the determined moves of Adah in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and the union with the writers of Adah in *In the Ditch*, Eugene who, for example, is the initiator of the project; Tom, the American man of arts who diverts from dishing out coca cola to people to contributing to rapid economic development; Gunner, a White who designs an irrigation scheme; and Small Boy who comes up with inventions to build the project, all put their "Know-

Know” together and succeed in the project. Elizabeth and Kenosi fit into this project/scheme because it is for the good of self, society and Mankind. Together, both heroines denounce exclusive brotherhoods, whether they are for Blacks or for Whites since such exclusive brotherhoods would never bring everybody into the fold; for example, molatoes like her or the Masarwas like Margaret would always be left out. Thus, in response to Tom’s question, Elizabeth has this to say:

Just what is wrong with you? Why do you have to go opposite to everyone? Why do you sound different? Ali: I’ve got my concentration elsewhere. It’s on Mankind in general, and black people fit there, not as special freaks and oddities outside the scheme of things with labels like Black Power or any other rubbish of that kind. (P. 133).

Only one who has gone through the mill of pain like Elizabeth, Margaret and Adah, and who has come out successfully, can take such a stand. They have known the pain of discrimination and would not want anyone to be bitten by it anymore. Elizabeth, for example, is emphatic when she tells Tom: “Tom, once you make yourself a freak and special, any bastard starts to use you”. This is what she sees around her and in Africa. Elizabeth is seen as the mouthpiece of Head as she describes what is happening in Africa which has made it a freak and the bastards of the world are using it:

That is half of the fierce fight in Africa. The politicians first jump on the bandwagon of past sufferings. They are African nationalists and sweep the crowd away by weeping and wailing about the past. Then why do they steal and cheat? (P. 133).

The heroines caution the characters and mankind that we should not think along lines of I, mine, myself because it is death. This resolution is a pointer that Elizabeth, Margaret and Adah have gone through pain and come out different persons. Consequently, painful situations lived by right thinking and pro-active persons should move them a step ahead and should equally impact the lives of those around them. The “I”, “my”, “mine”, “myself” syndrome has never developed any person nor any nation. Dictators and oppressors, like the kind we have seen in our texts, are those who think “I”, “my”, “me”, “mine” and “myself”. The Medusas, Dans, Sellors, Francises, Marus, Molekas of the world care for nobody at all. They surround themselves with bastards who give them just what they want for their egoistic appetites in order to get what they want. This becomes a vicious cycle, they pull the blanket to their side for their

sole comfort and nobody really cares what other people think or feel. The likes of Francis in the world become even worse as their heartlessness is oriented towards the family. For any meaningful change of society, we must come out of our selfish selves and, like our heroines, identify with Mankind and work for the common good.

Pain, therefore, is another opportunity for growth; another provocation to mature one's character, one's vision of the world. For people with severe and chronic pain, the magnitude of their success is measured by the depth of their pain. By changing the context, we can, on a larger scale, be able to orientate our life experiences in such a way that they can be of benefit to self, society and the world at large.

In a nutshell, it can be said that by reliving the stories of Elizabeth, Margaret and Adah, we come to the conclusion that we can set right the things that went wrong and map out new destinations for ourselves. These life's stories, therefore, are pointers to us that for any meaningful change to take place in our lives, we, like these characters, must first of all know who we are and where we are coming from before we can start mapping out where we want to go to. Thus, any change in society begins with full knowledge of what is happening within the society. It is only after this that the change of self can take place. Life's problems are, therefore, the price we pay for progress. We must die to self in order to generate a new life that is bright and warm enough to light and brighten the world of others around us. The love for self would then generate love for the community and love for mankind.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRAUMA AND AUTHORIAL VISION

This chapter lays emphasis on the trauma lived by each of the novelists through their works, and how in releasing their often complex thoughts, they, through their vision, provide effective sources of grounding and stress release for themselves and the reader. The vision of a novelist is highlighted through the ideas and ideals expressed in his or her work. It signals the urge to search for something meaningful, a general longing to create something of value. The vision of a writer consolidates an intimate relationship between the writer and the reader. Attention is also paid to how the novelists communicate their ideas to reflect the way they perceive the world. The autobiographical element is exploited for authenticity and for demonstration that the characters are, to a larger extent, the voice of the novelists. The flittered perspectives from which Head and Emecheta present the characters in their works is made up of a set of values and ethics, traits, background, economic situation, old injuries, physical, spiritual and emotional influences that constitute what would make readers to identify with the characters and even make them use their experiences to improve on their own lives. The characters are created from the writers' memories, world-view and emotions with the intention of x-raying, educating, warning, cautioning or giving the reader a chance to avoid the things they, the writers, have gone through or seek to improve on in society. By this, we are saying that the authors' lives are hidden under the mask worn by the characters. It is good to note that within every writer there exists an artist's heart and the spirit to share that heart with the world. This is done through the vision created. After pouring out one's soul into what one has created, one looks forward to providing something of value that would impact the world. Thus, when the reader begins scanning the words of the writer, they open the door for the endless potentials in this new found relationship. This bond is strengthened by the genuine content and the convincing vision of the author that is worthy of being shared.

Secondly, this chapter dwells on the literary aesthetics in these selected works. That is, the inclusion of references to artistic elements or expressions that helps in communicating the vision of novelists to the reader. Emphasis is laid on how the writers use these to promote or educate readers on artistic expressions in society that go a long way to impacting our lives. These are sentiments, imaginations, thoughts, music and style. Sentiments provide artistic immortality, imagination acts as the vehicle that carries sentiments. Thoughts hidden in the folds of the great literary work help it to bloom against all decadence, music or the magic of

language and vigor to the other elements of style. Every author has his own style which helps to distinguish his work.

In line with Freud's Psychoanalytic theory that lays emphasis on the past affecting and influencing the present and the future, these novelists draw from their past traumas to write fiction in order to improve on the present and positively influence the future. Turning their traumas into novels enable them to render their life stories more vividly, interestingly, readably, and authentically while maintaining the original premise, theme and message they want to send across for the benefit of others as well.

Through the stories of the characters, Head and Emecheta buttress the point that life does not end when we undergo painful and traumatic experiences. Trauma might persist for a while but there is always the need to overcome it and feel safe again. These novelists write to encourage and speed up recovery if, like the characters, one finds one's self in similar traumatic circumstances. Their experiences and conclusions are meant to act like a lamp to the feet of trauma victims whose sense of security has been shattered, making them helpless in their predicaments so that, instead of nursing, cajoling and hanging onto their own upsetting emotions, memories and anxieties that would not go away, they should cling to ideologies that work as life jackets to help them sail through their own troubled waters.

Through the selected novels, Head and Emecheta, therefore, hold that each and every human being feels pain or undergoes traumatic events at one moment or another. To them, what is important is not what one has gone through but the direction one takes when one is in pain or is traumatised. Sometimes, one's nervous system might be stressed to a point of leaving one jumpy. Head and Emecheta have even demonstrated – still through the selected works – that some people even feel disconnected and numb. This, they hold, often happens when the victim finds it difficult to accept the reality of what has happened. Fear might even lead these victims into believing that whatever traumatised them would keep happening again and again. They might even be pushed by fear to lose control over the situation or to totally breakdown. Some other people, they hold, become vulnerable and helpless in the face of situations that might only help to trigger anxiety or depression. Some feel angry with family, friends, governments and even God, and this often leads to emotional outbursts. Others are pushed to the limit, feeling ashamed of self.

Head and Emecheta further highlight physical symptoms of trauma with a view to implanting their opinions in trauma victims. These symptoms include feeling dizzy or faint,

walking around with tightened, churning feelings and undergoing excessive sweating and trembling. Shaking is visibly noticed in others. This group of victims often experiences cold sweats with a lump in the throat or a feeling of choking up. For some, it is rapid breathing with a pounding heart and sometimes chest pain or difficult breathing. Racing thoughts push some to keep pacing around with difficulty concentrating on anything. Sometimes, it can even result in memory problems or confusion. For yet some other persons, there is a change in their sleeping patterns. Some victims undergo unexplained aches and pains, including persistent headaches and changes in sexual functions. For some other persons, it could be a loss or increase in appetite, or excessive consumption of alcohol or drugs.

Head and Emecheta, therefore, associate autobiographical elements with themes to foster their visions. From the above premise, it is very important to identify the visions of Head in *A Question of Power* and *Maru*, and those of Emecheta in *In the Ditch*. The first conclusion to draw is that the stories of these novelists have a bearing on their own lives and both of them have a burning desire to share their stories with the global society. After surviving terrible traumas and after learning how to thrive, they believe that through their creative works, they could be helping others to do the same. For, they feel, such others might be gripped by the fear and shame of putting their life stories out for the world to see, the fear of embarrassing their families, and the fear of legal proceedings being instituted against them by unforeseen persons. Thus, the urge to protect self, family and loved ones becoming very high, would push them to put their thoughts into creative works. Consequently, the above cited works are creative ways of finding solutions or contributing to change without stepping on the toes of anyone, or without unnecessarily exposing anyone to unnecessary danger.

From subsequent analysis in this chapter we will see how by turning their traumas into novels, Head and Emecheta make their stories more interesting and readable while maintaining the original premise, theme and message they want the readers and those who have gone through similar experiences to benefit from. They have also made maximum use of all the creativity flowing from their veins to create realism which helps us to see, touch, hear, feel and interact with the characters when we meet them in human persons in our society. Furthermore, presenting the stories as fiction affords them opportunities to protect self, family and the people they write about.

On the other hand, Head and Emecheta feared that their messages in these novels would be less impactful if people saw them simply as fiction. They resolved this concern by

incorporating elements of their lives in the stories. To begin with, authenticity is achieved by focusing on the main events that animated their lives. This gives credibility to the stories and cause readers to not only identify with the story but to also easily see and value the points of view of the novelists who build their stories on factual situations that have animated their lives. As novels, each of these stories clearly has a beginning, middle and an end. Head and Emecheta are careful to include only those portions of their lives that help them to develop the vision they hold for society. In the above selected novels, we see just the inclusion of the portions of the novelists' lives that clearly convey the themes that are most important to the development of their visions and the reinforcement of the didactic elements of their works.

For example, In *a Question of Power*, Head includes portions of her life story that go a long way towards developing the themes that highlight her vision of "A society that aims at establishing a just order free of all prejudices and barriers that do not only prevent human comfort but also plunge many into unimaginable levels of trauma." This vision is well crafted around the themes of "Power, fear, racism, madness, discrimination, hallucination" just to name a few. The universal and timeless natures of these themes leave nobody indifferent to the practice in *A Question of Power*. Readers, like Head, wonder aloud how a family can disown their daughter to the point of allowing her to die of depression simply because she had a love relationship with a black stable boy. Unfortunately, the irony stares all of us in the face when we come to think that this is coming from a people who preach the gospel that all human beings were created by God in his own image and likeness and that they are supposed to love one another as Jesus whom the Father sent to come and die for their salvation. Elizabeth is created in the image of Head who, in real life, actually lived this dehumanising and traumatising treatment from her racist white family. She satirises the inability of this white family to see and appreciate the love between her mother and the stable black boy that goes beyond the colour of the skin. Ironically, instead of being hailed for being the true disciples of love as preached by the Creator, they are condemned by a perverse society. In this novel, therefore, Head seeks to fight a society riddled with racial inequalities through the power of her pen. She is the voice of the voiceless through her heroine, Elizabeth, who champions the cause of the oppressed. Her vision is to see the marginalised overcome this challenge and be able to express their right to comfort in a society free for all. This is seen in her dramatic use of contrast where the powerful are pitted against the powerless. Paradoxically, the "powerless" carry the day because love ends up overcoming hate and the light ends up clearing out the darkness. The theme of power is revoked as Head questions what truly holds power. The colonialist, who is in the minority, is

exposed as a hardhearted stranger who does not only abuse the fraternity of the host who warmly welcomes him into his own land. but becomes so evil to the extent of sending the said host out of his own house so as to own and live in the comfort of it. Such discrimination and outright oppression leads to the theme of madness. Elizabeth moves from a series of hallucinations to madness. Pathos is efficiently used here by Head to draw our sympathy to this unfortunate victim of trauma. Come to think of it, this is a creative replica of Head's life not only in South Africa but also in Botswana where she eventually moved to with a visa of no return. The same South Africa that shamelessly issued this visa of no return to her joyfully recognised her as her heroine when she came to fame and even gave her a medal of recognition for her artistic achievements. This is the achievement that exposes the ills of racism to the world and speedily helps in eradicating racism, thus making her a prophetic writer.

The situation is not different with *Maru*. Head's vision in *Maru* is to create, "A better society free of all prejudices and barriers, especially racial barriers that aggrieve humanity". Her bitterness is not only directed towards white or colonial racists but equally towards fellow Africans who also practice this ill in their own set-ups. The novel, *Maru* clarifies the tension towards the idea of a perfect human society through its protagonist, Maru, who is personally aware of his moral duty of favouring the liberation of the Masarwa tribe.

Through Maru, Head envisages and longs for a time when her political project of pulling down the old hierarchical structure and ultimately bridging the gap between "superior" and "inferior" tribes will be a reality. In accomplishing this in *Maru*, assurance is given. The marriage between Maru – a prince and one who had once looked down on the Masarwas – and Margaret – a Masarwa girl of lower status around whom the narration is unfolding – is a pace-setter. In Head's idealistic perspective, love is the force that would break the barriers of race in the region. This union highlights interpersonal relationships as the depository of the impulsive change needed for the transformation of society. In other words, it is worth noting here that individual actions constitute the real drivers of history in as much as they influence, directly, the behavioural patterns followed by the masses:

When people of the Masarwa tribe heard about Maru's marriage to one of their own, a door silently opened on the small, dark airless room in which their souls had been shut for a long time [...] As they breathed in the fresh, clear air their humanity awakened. (P. 126).

Nevertheless, the spiritual awakening of the Masarwas through this union, is not the culminating point for Maru and the novelist's utopian vision. It is rather the inception of an irreversible process, prearranged also by the elimination of the political factors that promoted racial segregation. Here, we are talking about the banishing of Seth, Pete and Morafi who are the symbols of oppressive authorities in the novel. The novel, *Maru*, thus ends with the awareness that creating a new human society is a long and perilous path, but that it is something that cannot be undone. This is so because the population's recognition of its own humanity is a much stronger force than the ideological tools the oppressors deploy to deny it. This ties in with Elizabeth's advocacy for the universal brotherhood of man at the end of *A Question of Power* that brings freedom to captive souls and liberation to an oppressed people. Head advocates a world in which everyone should have the feeling of security, a common shelter for all and in which nobody has the right to disturb the life system of other people or of other creatures. It should be a world in which everyone should rise above the boundaries of caste, colour, religion, language and nation. When this shall have been done we shall have freed the world from useless power fights, from wars and hatred; we shall have ascertained increased cooperation and empathy; we shall have ensured peace in the world, thereby stamping out social, religious and racial discrimination.

This thematic approach of developing authorial vision is not limited to Head. Emecheta, through the themes developed in *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* equally uses the main ideas or themes that animate these novels to foster her world vision. To begin with, her main vision in the selected works is to use her novels to fulfill the urge for women to speak for themselves. In *Second Class Citizen* and *In The Ditch*, Emecheta highlights the importance of courage, inventiveness and resilience in the face of adversity. Her readers watch with admiration as Adah, the heroine of both novels, fights like a lioness through the challenging and depressing circumstances of her life. Emecheta skillfully uplifts from society those things that are a hindrance to the progress of both the girl-child and the woman, and coins them into themes reflecting the challenges plaguing the life of Adah in both novels. Such themes include racism, patriarchy, prejudice, gender roles, misogyny, motherhood, immigration, marriage, discrimination, oppression, just to name a few. In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah is not only neighed down by the Igbo patriarchal system but also lives gender inequality in its worst form at the level of her family and at the level of marriage life. Her younger brother, Boy, is sent to school while she is left at home to be doing house chores. She gets married but, contrary to what she thought marriage with Francis would bring to her, she still has to give up her education

in order to meet up with the many obstacles faced in Francis's house. The racism of the Whiteman who treats her and her likes as second class citizens does not help out at all. The gender roles assigned to a woman, even in a Whiteman's society further compound her situation. She, unlike Francis, has to give up school and even work to take care of the children. The prejudice of the other Blackwomen, who look down on her for insisting to keep and bring up her own children in a society where they have given up theirs only adds more pain to her aching heart.

It is within this background that Emecheta created an Adah who is not only determined but also stands tall amongst her people and fights on. Her success is not meant just to be for her self-satisfaction but also to be an eye opener to other women, thereby telling them that freedom is a battle they can win if they are committed for the course. Adah mirrors the vision of Emecheta who, throughout her life and in her endeavours, privileged the liberation of the girl child. Readers of this moving story bedaubed with true, timeless and universal themes are bound to share in Adah's triumph which, in a positive and universal sense, represents the triumph of human will. African readers are also bound to appreciate Emecheta's occasional darts at some of our cultural excesses and irrationalities. The paucity of men's humanism is healed when Maru lets go of tribal inhibitions for his heart's desire by getting married to Margaret. This could not have come true if Margaret, like other Masarwas, had allowed herself to be trampled upon or be condemned as the underdog of the world.

At this juncture, Emecheta highlights the view that freedom is not given to the oppressed on a platter of gold. They fight for it and it becomes precious and sweeter when earned by hard work and determination. From the careful handling and integration of these true-to-life themes, Emecheta does not only achieve realism or give authenticity to her works but also beautifully develops her vision of freedom. Freedom and lasting peace, according to the development of the themes, reside in an individual's free will. Emecheta, through the selected novels, convinces the reader that freedom from any problematic situation does not emerge from a pool of tears but rather from bold and decisive actions that break fetters.

Apart from using the thematic approach in developing, strengthening and selling their points of view or visions, Head and Emecheta also tell their own stories to fortify their visions. Besides transforming or writing autobiographies, they, nevertheless, make use of autobiographical elements for authenticity. For example, looking more critically at Head, we cannot fail to notice a striking resemblance between her and her heroine, Elizabeth. What makes

A Question of Power an outstanding piece of work is the resemblance Elizabeth bears to Head's. In fact, the story sounds like a fictionalised autobiography. Head even admits this when she says:

I think that my whole life has been shaped by my South African experience and I will never really fall in the category of a writer who produces high entertainment for people ... What we are mainly bothered about has been the dehumanisation of black people. (P. 18).

This autobiographical stylistic device renders the story authentic and believable. The heroine, Elizabeth, is the product of a relationship between a White Lady and a Black stable Boy.. She, like Head, leaves South Africa for Botswana with a visa of "no return", a son and no husband. She also becomes mad and later on regains sanity through the acceptance of certain hard facts about her destiny. Head draws from her painful world to enrich the story of the texts. The successes of Elizabeth and Margaret which mirror that of Head's motivate and lead the reader on lit paths to success. In a letter to Roudolphvigne, Head says:

It is pretty terrible, I tell you, for a woman to be alone in Africa. Men treat women as the cheapest commodity ... there must be people in South Africa like me whose birth or beginning are filled with calamity and disaster, the sort of person who is a skeleton in the cupboard or the dark and fearful person swept under the carpet. (P. 2).

Consequently, the process of writing oneself is also the process of re-writing the collective self. The essential is not what the character has been through but rather how he/she has ended up. The vision of the author seen through that of her characters becomes the end of the road for the readers' pain. Today's South Africa hails Head as a prophetic and committed writer who foresaw the end of racism in the land. What this tells us, the readers, is that anybody who positively reflects on the vision of Elizabeth/Head when traumatised should be hopeful and trust that he or she can also make it.

The autobiographical element also works well for Emecheta. She draws a parallel between herself and the fictional Adah. The autobiographical elements integrated into *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* portrays a correlation between fiction and the reality of her life and actions. Like Emecheta, Adah has a difficult childhood when she moves to Britain and ends up with a very difficult marriage life. Emecheta – like Head – makes use of this story of her life to lend authenticity and credibility to the story. It is not only her story that motivates but what she finally becomes in life is a source of inspiration to frustrated, depressed and lonely women

the world over. Through their stories, Head and Emecheta have debunked the myths that have perpetrated gender bias and inaccurate pictures of the African womanhood. Gender becomes the interesting point between the heroine's educational aspirations and the roles assigned to her by tradition. Like Emecheta, many women in our traditional societies did not enjoy comparable educational opportunities. She, Emecheta, was kept at home for her brother to go to school. What was good for her by traditional standards was basic education that barely had to qualify her for marriage so that her bride price could be used for Boy's education. Her breaking away from this situation in order to go to school by her personal efforts liberates the girl child – just like that of Margaret that liberates the Masarwas – in *In the Ditch*. Today, women in their thousands are going to school, thanks to their exemplary actions.

Thus, Head and Emecheta – through their works – are eye-openers to those who might otherwise fold their arms only to be crushed by cultures that could keep them away from freedom and happiness. Education is critical to female independence. It keeps women beyond the reach of traditional shackles. Emecheta has contributed immensely to this awareness through her works and her life. In South Africa, Head has equally broken away from laid-down systems and beliefs, thus making a huge unforgettable impact on society. She combines myths and politics to discuss social situations in South Africa. She drifts around in fast changing and confused groups of real or imagined images that unfold around her. She captures this through Elizabeth, her mouthpiece.

The myth of the African super woman is captured in Medusa. In her fantasy world, Elizabeth keeps a sexual relationship with Medusa and makes her unapproachable to men in the real world. Her thunderbolts explode her head, leaving her sprawling on the floor helpless. The wild-eyed Medusa exhibits traits of that African spirit which Head thinks must be wiped out like apartheid, failing which they would be transformed like Maru and Moleka in *Maru*. Head equally uses the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis depicting the eternal struggle between good and evil. Osiris who is fearless, self-sacrificing, gentle and a benefactor to Mankind has been shattered into a thousand fragments by Medusa's thunderbolts. Elizabeth, like Isis has been shattered, but has to be reconstructed. Head's world view comes out when she thinks that the protagonist has a mortal body and ideas just like any man; she will be restored through magic and love. She journeys through hell, obtains knowledge by overcoming obstacles and regains sanity. This is a reflection of Head's life in South Africa. Her difficult life was not in vain as she emerges from it a renowned and prominent writer like Emecheta whose pain also propels her to success. The success of the heroines – Elizabeth, Margaret and Adah in the

selected works – therefore, mirrors the success of the two novelists. This success is intended to motivate, encourage and strengthen the readers not to give up when crushed by the wheel of pain because there is always a small window that brings in fresh air which, combined with inner strength and determination, helps one to bounce back, thereby propelling self to the pinnacle of success.

Thirdly, the narrative points of view used by Head and Emecheta in telling the stories of the selected novels go a long way towards highlighting their visions as well as fortifying the relationships the narrators have with the characters and the lessons the novelists want to send across. Head beautifully creates a touching, moving and controlled description of the mental instability of a traumatised woman in *A Question of Power*. The novel alternates narrative and descriptive passages of village life with vivid scenes from Elizabeth's hallucinations and dreams. Head switches between the first person point of view and third person narrative point of view in order to enable us to understand her authorial intent or purpose for dwelling on trauma narrative. This helps enormously in enabling the reader to understand the texts and all of its components in order to make good use of the didactic elements at the end.

Through the first person narrative, therefore, Elizabeth and Adah exploit their personal pains, with each of them stamping her signature on human existence through the lives of the characters. Their unique experiences become the great memorable change for others. For example, what Elizabeth lives in South Africa and Motabeng is personal; what she suffers under racist South Africa is personal; what she goes through in the hands of Sello and Dan is also personal. Others like her also suffer oppression and discrimination but their experiences might not exactly be hers. Similar situations of life get to different persons differently and at varying degrees. In *Maru*, Margaret also experiences pain and rejection but her experience is also unique and personal. Her experiences with Margaret Cadmore Senior are personal; the humiliations faced in the hands of Maru, Moleka and the Principal are all personal too. Furthermore, Adah's pain in *Second Class Citizen* is also personal. Her experiences with Ma and Pa were very personal even if they are in line with what obtains in society for other young girls. In addition, the painful inhuman treatment endured from Francis during their marriage is also personal. The pain of walking in the valley of death, in the shadows of the Whites in a much-dreamed-of London is also personal. Adah in *In the Ditch* also lives unique and personal pain: her experience in the dole house is personal. The pain of a single mother and a Black in a foreign land is also personal.

In a nutshell, the pain that these characters live is so personal and so profound that they all sit up as individuals and crave for change. The novelists emphasise – through these characters – that traumatising pain succeeds in pushing victims to the point of saying that enough is enough. What is curious about all of them is that they avoid the obsessive reliving of the pain they have gone through. This helps the victims to move on as repetitive thinking or the resurrecting of horrific images can overwhelm their nervous systems, making it difficult for them to move on. They rather actively take part in an activity that keeps them occupied and takes them off dedicating their energy and attention to traumatic events. They structure their minds with activities that help in uplifting their emotions. The use of the first person narrative renders their different experiences authentic and gives them a strong element of realism that pushes others to identify themselves with them. The use of the third person object enriches the narrative with the experiences of others. This helps in creating a balance and takes the stories off a single story point of view.

In this light, the characters all profit from their pain to imprint their signatures on human existence. They put an end to the isolationism into which society had pushed them. For example, in *A Question of Power*, Elizabeth embraces the segregation offered by the Blacks. She then rises above her pain and leaves her footprints on the sand of time through her advocacy for the universal brotherhood of humankind. She sees through the smoke screen and her vision for the world is the promotion of what is beautiful and attractive and which is nothing other than love for self and love for one another. As quoted in *A Question of Power*, it is love that makes Elizabeth to be seen as God to her fellowman, as she herself confirms that she is God's prophet – the prophet of true love for one another:

There is only one God and his name is Man and Elizabeth is his prophet. These themes of love clung about her. A peaceful meditative privacy settled on her mind. Her painful, broken nerve-end quietly knit together. She put shorty to bed and for the first time in three years embraced the solitude of the night with joy. (P. 206).

Another strategy used by Head and Emecheta in furthering their authorial vision in a traumatic set-up is that of fully engaging their readers. This is beautifully done through the creation of engaging and challenging tension, and anticipated conflict which keeps readers focused until the didactic element is delivered for possible transformation. There is the use of vivid and appropriate vocabulary that passionately and intellectually tickles and engages

readers in main stream action. For example, suspense is created to keep the fire burning till the last page is turned. Head and Emecheta draw pathos from the reader by creating cliffhangers along the line that are an embodiment of the above tools. Each cliffhanger pays off at the end so that the readers should not be cheated. The stories are weaved in such a way as to blend reality and fiction in a fast moving narrative. The readers' senses of smell, taste, sound, sight and touch are fully engaged to make them part of the story. In this way, the readers do not only live the story as they read but also become part of the novelist's vision.

For example, nobody can fail to take note of the contrast between the racist, loveless South Africa and the love filled Motabeng. This is the case with the true love Elizabeth shares with Eugene, Tom, Thoko, Kenosi and Boy. Such true love, unlike what she lived in South Africa, attracts and unites kindred spirits who are ambassadors of true change and development. The reader, through this contrast, does not need to go too far to see that when faced with a loveless existence – like Head in South Africa – one should spurn it like the heroine, Elizabeth, spurns the feigned love of racist South Africa for the genuine and accommodating love of Motabeng. She trades the egocentric love of Dan and Sello for a higher and unifying love of the brotherhood. Such powerful diction of “universal brotherhood”, for example, richly sells the vision of Head for a more loving world. We equally see, touch, embrace and appreciate the deviant Sello who is not only transformed but who also ends up building a better world than the one he met. The deviant is thus turned into a better person capable of contributing to the enhancement of societal harmony. This is the beauty of Head's diversified characterisation. It is no surprise, therefore, when her works contribute to the realisation of her vision for South Africa. She ends up not as the downtrodden culprit who left South Africa with a never-to-return visa but as a desired contributor whose writings helped a lot in the abolition of apartheid in South Africa.

Elizabeth's love story is not different from that of Margaret in *Maru*. Head beautifully creates a cliffhanger that gets us immersed in the exciting, intriguing and challenging love affair between Margaret and her admirers, Maru and Moleka. The envy and love of Dikeledi comes in to spice the tension. The readers do not only admire Margaret with the novelist, but are also proud of her for her achievements. Despite the humiliation, and mockery of others, she stands her grounds and does not compromise her Masarwa origin. She is not only proud of whom she is but breaks protocol and declares it in public. Her self-confidence and pride in who she is yields positive results as it ends up attracting the others not only to herself but also to other Marsawas hitherto considered as slaves and underdogs. Moleka even goes as far as dining on

the same table with her Masarwa slaves. Margaret ends up as the wife of a member of the cream of society, the highest personality, Maru. This is the same person who initially humiliated and rejected her. The liberation of her people comes through her. The vision fostered by Head here is that no one should ever minimise the strength of positive individual action. When such action comes after a long period of pain and trauma, it is like a bomb that explodes, shattering negative status while bringing about a new order. It is encouraging and inspirational as the readers go away with the lesson that an individual action can cause enormous change in society.

Emecheta shares in this vision of Head's when, in *Second Class Citizen* and *In The Ditch*, she creates her own cliffhangers that equally immerse readers in the uplifting conviction that to cause change, one does not need to rally people – who feel like him/her – for an uprising. One can rather use personal painful moments and experiences to write his/her existence in order to mark his/her footsteps on the sands of time. This is the case of Adah in these two novels. At every point in the journey of her life, she covers a milestone and makes an impression on someone. It is this impression that breaks barriers for her and for others. Through the use of suspense, Emecheta makes us one with the characters in our anticipations. For example, anxiety is high – and it is with admiration that the mocking voices of the pupils are viewed by the teacher – when Adah makes a sudden appearance in school. She even transforms the pain of Vincent's 103 strokes of the whip into peace and gains the admiration of the Headmaster when she turns up with her examination fees. The applause is even loud from the readers when the Headmaster goes ahead to declare her as “the only mystery the Good Lord ever created”. Through fiction, Emecheta has succeeded to create a model for the girl-child who is faced with similar challenges. The lesson learned here is that we should be prepared to make sacrifices and to undergo pain in order to achieve what we want. Not only does Adah pass the examination with flying colours, but she also successfully goes through her education.

The above action of Adah's fosters Emecheta's authorial vision. One reads into this, her take on positivism. One would say that she holds strong to the ideology that egoism, fear and negativism destroy the world while selflessness, courage and positivism do not only save it but make it a better place for everyone. This is further confirmed when Adah earns even the admiration of whites through her hard work. She turns down charity at work and would rather take a walk, during break, in order to avoid her colleague's charity. Little do they know that Adah is walking around with pain and a vacuum within that can be filled only by her constant journeys to God whenever her spirit is very low. She draws her inspiration from the biblical Lazarus (P. 58). This accounts for her success in bringing up her children in the dole house

single handedly. Emecheta hereby advocates a life that finds fulfillment in God or whoever we consider to be our creator and with whom we share a special relationship.

Both novelists draw from the Bible to further enrich their visions. This is done through the image of the clay in the hands of the potter as borrowed from, *The Pain of Being Human*:

As great and graceful pottery emerges from fire, our best selves come out only when we experience the truth about our inescapable frustrations and longings. We dig deep for the meaning of faith and hope, virtue that comes to life when we are keenly aware of our incomplete and struggling situations. (P.15).

Head and Emecheta could not have done it better than this. They remind us that only the truth can set us free. This critical perspective is drawn from the premise that our best selves come out only when we experience the truth. We see this in the worlds of our heroines, who grope in the dark and can walk only when they come into contact with the light of the truth. Like them, we often endure pain when we grope in the dark and refuse to face the truth of our situation; or accept that the truth be hidden from us. Truth brings about change and truth in pain often propels achievers to higher heights because it puts them on the slope which warrants them to look up in the thick clouds as they climb. This kind of truth helps us to get rid of those who promise to build bridges where there are no rivers. Like Elizabeth, Margaret Cadmore only succeeds to break barriers and build bridges by accepting the truth of who she is. Growth comes at a point when reality dawns on one and one ends up seeing things as they really are. Consequently, we are taking home the novelist's vision that the scales must first fall off one's eyes for one to be able to see and forge ahead.

For example, it is this truth told in a flashback that takes Elizabeth out of the doldrums of oppression in South Africa to liberty in Motabeng in *A Question of Power*. She experiences the inescapable frustration of being rejected by her blood relations on grounds of colour prejudices. Head beautifully blends internal and external focalisation here by focusing on her thoughts and emotions, and by externally highlighting the actions and behaviour of society towards Elizabeth. This helps us to see how society victimises Elizabeth and how Elizabeth comes out of it. The beautiful pottery that emerges from this is the Elizabeth who seeks to fight a war of Hearts and not of colours. She advocates universal brotherhood that shows love. This enables her to even see through the smoke screen of African leaders and pretentious power hungry missionaries who are far from living what they preach. She decries the sad story of

Africa which is shut in. It has a strong theme of power worship, a combination of power people who need small, narrow, shut-in-worlds.

With all the above skills well applied by the novelists, it is therefore easy for readers to live their visions, especially with the help of powerful authorial intrusions like the one below:

Power people never felt secure in the big wide flexible universe where there were too many cross currents of opposing thoughts ... People who have suffered from the wanton cruelty of others prefer the truth at all times no matter what it might cost them. (P. 38).

Like Margaret in *Maru*, the truth does not only promote her to the position of adviser and counselor. Any assumption to greatness leads to a dog-eat-dog fight and incurs suffering. The exemplary world preached and foreseen by the novelist is lived in *A Question of Power* in Eugene's local industry project. Happiness is not achieved through the assumption of greatness, it is rather the humility of service that raises people to greatness. This is seen from the birth of a local industry from humble minds put at the service of society. The novelist's vision buried in the take-home message here is that, if Africa were to put together individual skills, talents and energy, beautiful pottery would emerge therefrom for us to showcase. The story would even be a sweeter one if nations were to come together to produce this pottery instead of staying apart in different colour spheres. Faith and hope will carry us through when – aware of our incomplete struggling situation – we seek to complete it with others, for nobody is a human island.

From the point of view of language, Head and Emecheta skillfully use language to fully engage readers in their visions. Language as a medium of communication helps them to express and convey their thoughts, feelings and even their emotions as well as those of others. Language, therefore, becomes a prime tool in communicating their visions. A critical view of the texts shows how Head and Emecheta skillfully use language in creating compelling fiction. For example, the first person pronoun is skillfully used by Head in satirising the egoistic nature of Africans. It is even made more frightening when she manipulates it in *A Question of Power* to show the terrible consequences of self-centeredness.

We cannot miss out on her authorial vision of the world as a jungle. She intimates that the world will remain a jungle as long as we hold on to the “I”, “my”, “me” and “mine” syndrome. It will only be when we shall have succeeded in giving up this syndrome that we shall embark on the path to transforming the world into a haven for everyone. This means that it is only by coming together and sharing talents that we can succeed as a people. For example,

it is only by coming together and sharing talents under the loving leadership of Eugene that the cooperative becomes a success story in Motabeng.

Furthermore, the appropriate use of diction in *Maru* paves the path to transformation for Margaret. She is an agent of transformation because not only does she change the mentality of the people towards the Masarwas but she also succeeds in transforming the hardcore opponents of the Masarwas into supporters of the very Masarwas. Through a well-developed metaphor in the text, we come to think of Moleka as a sun, powerful on its own and as a thunderstorm, but one that needs a cloud from which to draw rain. The cloud is Maru, who represents the heart that Moleka lacks. If Moleka had a cloud, a heart of his own, he would be complete and could, therefore, combine sunshine with rainfall to produce a rainbow. Though Head's comment is delivered at personal level in *Maru*, it purports a solution to the racism suffered by the Masarwa people. Through language wit, the novel traces the symbolic change of Dilepe – by extension Africa – effected by a single Masarwa woman who can read and write.

From Margaret's interactions, Head reinforces the vision that racism, no matter its origin, is perpetuated by individuals and individuals can decide to reject any measure that runs counter to what they consider right. Head insinuates that human beings are capable of racism because, over time, their hearts have come to live separately from themselves. Just as Moleka, the main character has taken his heart out of his body and hidden it in some secret place (P. 26). Thus, the people without hearts to guide them can believe in ideas without considering their inhuman implications. Through this beautiful interplay of language-metaphor, Head advocates that if one could unite the head with the heart in these people, perhaps racism would seem unreasonable. Margaret becomes the impetus for the change noticed at the end as she symbolically re-unites Moleka with his heart. By her efforts, "the wind of freedom enters the space of the Masarwa tribe, the dark airless room in which their souls had been shut for a long time" (P. 126). Head's language strengthens her vision when the relationship of dependence is emphasised in the local language. In Setswana, Maru means a cloud that is unable to "release its beneficial downpour. Maru as a cloud fails to produce rain like the chief who fails to relieve the distress of his people. Another instance of the beautiful use of language is when the narrator talks to us overtly about Moleka's "body that felt like a living pulsating sun; that Moleka was sun around which spun a billion satellites (P. 58); that his eyes were two yellow orbs of light that he felt the sun in his own heart (P. 57)". Ironically, Moleka is incomplete, a bright cloudless sky that holds no promise. Maru is the source with whom Moleka must negotiate to combine his sun with water. While Moleka is a "living dynamo" (P. 70) the future king of the "African

continent,” Maru, is the greatest manipulator. To understand Maru’s character we must understand the novels symbolism as analysed above.

Apart from language, other stylistic devices like conflict animate the tension in Emecheta’s selected works. It is merged with suspense which peaks the listener’s curiosity. Not everything is revealed at once in the course of the narrative. Emecheta, through the above techniques, builds anticipation and keeps readers away from wanting to discover more. Such is the story of Adah who – face to face with the truth that she is only a girl child, one who was even born when everybody else was expecting a boy child – immediately falls back on. She is directed by her dreams and she hangs onto the truths preached by her people that “one’s saviour from poverty and disease was education”. She is, therefore, bent on having such education as would set her free. Tension heightens as such hope enables her to set higher goals for herself. She equally walks on a steep climb like Elizabeth. Physical pain is just an obstacle on her path to education. The lack of money and beatings received from Cousin Vincent could not break her as seen earlier; she has only suffered a tiny dent. There is also the effective use of language that successfully conveys the views of the narrator/novelist when she says: “The dream had by now assumed an image in her mind, it seemed to take life, to breathe and to smile at her (P. 19)”. The personification of her dream breathing and smiling upholds the importance of dreams to every person and society at large. It also lays emphasis on the fact that there is always the place of God in our lives; and this is very important in the realisation of dreams. Thus, the novelist buttresses the fact that what the heroines have gone through – and their reactions thereto – are teaching lessons to Man. We, like Adah, are called upon to say special prayers to God each time we are confronted with difficulties. For example, Adah prays asking God to make her father-in-law to agree with their plans to go to the land of their dreams, the UK. Conscious of the fact that God would not grant her heart’s desire in the manner in which manna fell from heaven to the Israelites in the desert, she made a last try. She is quite aware that God needs her cooperation for his will to be done in her life. In this regard, she works as if all depends on her and also prays as if all depends only on her God. In a bid to assert her breakthrough, “Adah trains herself; she learns very early in life how to let her common sense guide her. She has the markings of a woman who would think before she acts” (P. 28). This is what helps her not only to cope but also to survive in London, bringing up her children almost single handedly as well as supporting Francis. She does not collapse and die in the process of doing this as many people thought she would. She rather comes out of it successful and becomes the envy of others. She is victimised for enjoying the company of her children. Francis, her

husband, equally victimises her for succeeding where he failed. Contrary to what he had earlier prescribed, Adah is not trampled upon nor destroyed for being a second class citizen. She instead earns a good salary working with Whites, and is even respected for her intelligence when they read through her manuscript. This is too much for the mean spirited Francis to bear; he can only burn the manuscript, her brain child. Adah cries over it but what is exemplary – and which the novelist wants us to hold onto – is that she cries over it but keeps moving on. Like a true achiever, Adah cries over this incident but allows a new self to form from the resulting ashes of her manuscript. The act by itself becomes the last drop of water that makes her cup of pain to overflow. She checks out of the pain-filled marriage and opts for another steep climb: to bring up her children and give them values that would make them live life differently and more happily than she did.

If we see Adah as Emecheta's mouthpiece, then this forms a skillful transportation of autobiographical elements through appropriate and well slanted language and vocabulary to a destined purpose which is the novelist's vision. To crown it all, her mother's prophetic words for her come true as they are echoed to us: "To school you must go until you are grey." In the world of *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*, Adah teaches herself the art of writing. She has indeed emerged like that pottery from the fire of humiliation, denial, segregation and outright pain. This helps to build a beautiful hierarchical relationship between trauma and success. What this means, according to the novelist's vision, is that suffering and dying are not enemies but necessary conditions for real living. Nobody wants to bury themselves in the hateful company of an enemy. As conditions of life, we see them as those things that we cannot avoid but which we can turn around for our good when we decide to leave them.

Consequently, Elizabeth, Margaret and Adah turn their sufferings about. They do not see suffering as an enemy to be avoided; they rather help in establishing the ideology that it is in suffering that we build strategies that would enable us to move away from suffering. Dying is both literary and figurative; It could mean the death of certain aspects of one's life in order to enable a new life to spring up or the temporal death of freedom like Elizabeth sacrificing her South African citizenship for a new life in Motabeng or even giving up love of individuals for love of Mankind.

The tilt towards God's saving grace mentioned above is spirit bound. The novelist does not only engage us physically but also spiritually. This spirit-bound authorial vision holds that if we live in the spirit, we are redeemed and then we can redeem others. The gifts and the fruits

are those of truth and honesty. These should be accompanied by a true God fearing conscience. This definitely is not the “God” of egoistic power hungry rulers who think only of self; nor is it the God of Francis’ born again that is quoted only when he works in one’s favour and ignored when one thinks that he is against him/her. Adah – like Elizabeth and Margaret – sees this spirit as a God who is a combination of all great souls. The love of this God has redeemed the likes of Eugene and Margaret Cadmore from the racism of the Whites, and they in turn have redeemed the likes of Elizabeth, Thoko, Kenosi, Boy, Margaret Cadmore Junior of the African world who would have continued to bury themselves in ignorance, poverty and isolation. Elizabeth offers to be the prophet of this God and this is not just the take-home or didactic message of the text but equally the vision projected by the novelist. By this, she calls on us to be true to God and to one another. We should love one another as God loves us. Adah believes that there is a man upstairs who cares for everybody including her. This man is the person the “Presence” conveys to her, the one who consoles, comforts and liberates. She shuns Jehovah, the God of Francis, who gets involved in anything only for selfish interest:

Somebody, held would come from somewhere. She had been groping for that help as if she were in the dark. Someday, her fingers would touch something solid that would help her pull out. She was becoming aware of that presence again, the presence that had directed her through childhood. She went nearer to it in her prayers. (P. 150).

It is in this light that Adah acknowledges that London killed her congregational God and then created a personal God who lives in her relationship with others.

London having then killed Adah’s congregational God, created instead a personal God who loomed large and really alive. She did not have to go to church to see this one. He was always there ... She grew nearer to him, to the people with whom she worked, but away from Francis. (P. 151).

By this attitude of Adah’s, the novelist is calling upon us to retain that the strength drawn from God enables us to walk to freedom with nothing but our self-determination. Adah does so with nothing but five babies, her new job and a bow of rags. She now knows that Francis would never tolerate an intelligent woman. Francis has built and accepted failures like him. But unfortunately, for him, Adah has found solid ground on the wings of a caring, protective and liberating God who would see her to victory.

Thus, Adah – like Elizabeth – can confidently say that when we live in the spirit we are redeemed and can redeem others through an active acceptance of everything that an ordinary human life entails. It is all about undergoing small deaths to ourselves at every turn of the road to help generate life in us that is bright and warm enough to give life to others. When we reach this point, pain would not keep us from reaching out to others just because we have been hurt in the first place. Adah cried out for herself, her children and for Africa. Through her, the novelist advocates truths that should encourage hard work. Their efforts remain the pillars on which the development of self, society and Mankind lean. Head and Emecheta are thus seen as nation builders.

Through these actions, Head and Emecheta uphold a vision that our pains grow less as our hearts grow larger. The largeness of the heart is determined by the person's degree of understanding and accommodating pain and suppressing it by reaching out for brighter goals and mapping out new paths for self. From the resistance of the characters, this entails conquering the slow death of pain by a full try at life. The encouragement at this point is that one needs to assemble all painful moments, put them in a bottle, cork them up and dash out for happiness like Elizabeth. She would then sing David's Song with the Psalmist: "David's song arose in her heart once more and from the degradation and destruction of her life arose a still lofty serenity of soul nothing could shake." She acknowledges that she has gone through the valley of the shadow of death, but fears no evil. She is very confident that she shall dwell in the house of the Lord (P. 202). This action of Elizabeth's is worth emulating. She is a model as she throws out the packet of her tablets through the window and joins the team of Eugene where people are always going up and never down. Her end ties with A.D.H. Lawrence's poem: "Song of A Man who has come through" (P. 204). Shorty's poem about things that can fly beautifully wraps up this new state of mind. People's souls and powers can fly like birds and airplanes. At this point, Elizabeth confidently says: "There is only one God and his name is Man and his prophet is Elizabeth". For the first time in three years, she embraces the quietness of the night with joy. She places one hand over the other as a sign of belonging. Her pain has surely grown less as her heart grows larger.

Adah also reaches this point when she could no longer bear the pain of the things she had always endured. She does not hesitate any longer to even put into writing some of the things she would not have done before: He tells her to write down the statement that she would not feel him anymore. She had three children to think about and soon there would be four (P. 16).

Adah shuts Francis and his sad face out of her mind and goes after life. This is Emecheta's prescription for us, we are the sole authors of our happiness. The company we keep therefore matters. If you are constantly in the company of a sad and bitter person, in the long run, you will be sad and bitter too and will end up creating a sad and bitter world around you. The lead to happiness should be taken from Adah who buys her own flowers instead of being miserable because Francis would not buy them for her. With this determination, she walks to freedom. This is because her heart has grown bigger as her pain grows less. She has at last conquered the slow death of pain by making a full try at life. The flowers signify love and buying them for herself signifies her personal effort to go for love, the kind that links souls – the universal brotherhood of man that Elizabeth preaches in *A Question of Power*.

Another thing to retain here is that happiness is not passive, it is filled with paradox. To have it, you must forget trying to grasp it directly. It arises as a by-product of our getting absorbed in something outside us. Passivity and withdrawal attract pain. Happy persons must actively engage in life despite its difficulties. There is no demilitarised zone of disengagement where happiness descends free of every human encumbrance. Happiness is bound up with effort and struggle. For example, Adah's efforts and struggles to improve her situation bring her closer to happiness. She defeats the Ibuza culture not by resigning her fate to it but by convincing those around her through her actions that school is also meant for her. At times, she even downplays the biggest things in life in the hope that her uneasy laughter would hide her deep longing and enable her to get the things she wants out of life. We see this when she smiles at Francis's flirtatious passes at Mr. Noble's wife in the hope that she would influence her husband to give them the house. She equally smiles back at the happy mothers in the maternity ward in order to cover up her hurt and emptiness. By so doing, she derives some happiness for herself. She lives true to the principle that happy persons must be actively engaged in life despite its difficulties. Abraham Maslow, a psychologist, in line with the above statement says that life has peak moments. That they quietly and quickly dissolve and a more routine kind of feeling sets in and happiness cannot be acquired once more. This is the vision projected by our two novelists, the story of Elizabeth and Adah teaches us that there is a heightened feeling of contentment after major accomplishments. This equally yields to a new line of tasks and set goals. Persons who realise this are not easily frustrated by any situation because a deeper wisdom tells them that happiness is never lost forever. Happiness returns as we recommit ourselves to the fresh challenges of life. Our heroines exhibit this when they keep forging ahead despite the obstacles they encounter. Each turn of the road registers a milestone covered.

Consequently, the relay baton is handed to us who are reading these works as a caution for us to live by these principles so that the universal brotherhood of Man that inexorably results from love for one another may be attained someday. In this light, the writers never die. They live on as mankind forges ahead, profiting by their principles and visions to weather any and every situation in life regardless of how difficult they may be. The novelists see this as an assurance of making the world a better place for all.

The icing on the cake from the perspective of the novelists is that man should overcome fear and dare. This great call is for us to reduce fear and anxiety to minimum and to increase confidence and education to maximum in order to overcome the darkness of our lives. Unfortunately, what many people do not realise is that fear and anxiety have more power to aggravate pain than any other emotional state. Acquiring knowledge and perspective is then a superb treatment for this. A confident and happy brain amplifies danger signals less than would an anxious miserable brain. Pain does not need to be driven by easily diagnosed tissue damage to be real and serious. We should, therefore, create pleasant and safe sensory experiences in our bodily systems. This would require our positive inputs. Vivid examples from the selected texts include Adah writing her own greeting cards, buying a few things for herself instead of waiting for someone else to do these for her. If one's brain feels that one is safe, pain goes down. We should, therefore, fix the flexible things of our lives that we can fix. Some difficult problems can be fixed with hard work, faith and believe in change. For example, Elizabeth's faith in the garden and cooperative keeps her off trouble. Her mind is preoccupied with positive thoughts which drive away the negative thoughts which used to haunt her life. This confirms the view that an idle mind is the devil's workshop.

This logically takes us to the gender responsive vision of society upheld by Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta in the works selected for this study. These works form an artistic continuum in which the quest for justice and equality overrules. Head and Emecheta take into consideration the view that women characters in the past have been the major focus of literary critical injury. They then advocate for gender justice which stands out as a prerequisite for women's advancement in society. This idea ties in with the Feminist framework which supports the trauma theory by saying that any analyses of the nature and causes of women's oppression without suggesting ways of ending it would not be in keeping with the desired commitment to improving the situation of women. In this light, equality and social justice take central stage in all attempts to liberate the woman. The novelists under study stand for the view that the creation of a new moral framework in which justice for all – that is to say, for men and women – is

upheld should be a precautionary principle. Literature to them should not be propaganda for furthering sexists' ideology. In saying so, they support Danevan's philosophy which holds that:

Feminist criticism is moral because it sees more than one central problem ... Women are not human beings. They are objects which are used to facilitate, to explain or redeem the projects of men. (P. 267).

On the contrary, Head and Emecheta hold, through their works, that in contrast to history which strives for a neutral and objective stance from which the past is narrated, literature can be considered as being multi-functional when it comes to traumatic history. It should be healing in that it seeks to restore meaning where it has been destroyed; subversive in that it tells counter-histories of the master narrative; complimentary in that it integrates suppressed voices and painful experiences into the collective memory; disturbing and mind pricking in that it narrates trauma as a persisting condition that continues into the present.

Head and Emecheta engage in gender analysis in the selected works in order to rectify the relationship between historical trauma and the collective memory of society as well as to demonstrate the way in which memory relates to the past and the extent to which memory shapes the collective identity of the present for the woman. It is all about recognising that society is made up of women and men and that the socio-political, cultural and economic space is inhabited equitably by both sexes. Both authors seek to foster the vision that there is need to promote a narrative in which the male and female can closely identify. This is guided by the maxim that there is need for a new frame of reference based on principles of equality. Thus, equality and social justice should come in to liberate women. Through their works, Head and Emecheta defend the view that gender justice can bring about sensitive changes in society that can only lead to the development of the same society. Consequently, this can help women to "reclaim" the space that had been "snatched" from them by men.

In this light, both novelists are very authentic in their creative works. They are vulnerable and intimate with their readers. This is seen when they let the readers in on secrets which they might otherwise not tell anyone in an open conversation. Head, for example, reveals things about her life, through Elizabeth, that she might have found it very difficult to recount to anyone else: her experiences with her flirtatious husband and the sexual assaults on her by the likes of Dan and Medusa. The more vulnerable and authentic these novelists are with their readers, the more they resonate with them and cause them to be hooked by the stories they

narrate. It makes them to care about the authors as they feel for the characters; this creates a bond between them and the authors. For example, one cannot help but cry with Adah when Francis shamelessly disowns her and his children in court.

Their readers, therefore, become one with them in their vision of education. To begin with, education which is seen as a tool of empowerment and liberation of the girl child is unfortunately not very accessible to her. The novelists are by this saying that there is still a lot of injustice between the sexes because women still have less access to education than men. The outright refusal to send Adah to school in *Second Class Citizen* is proof of the fact that society is practicing injustice against the girl child. By making Adah not only to succeed to go to school but also to succeed where the male child fails is Emecheta's own way of fighting injustice by educating the same society on the benefits of allowing every child to make maximum use of his or her God given talents. Contrast and irony are well applied here to satirise societal mentality. It is ironical that Boy and Francis, the privileged male children, end up depending on Adah the underprivileged girl-child for their livelihood. The didactic element here is very powerful and forceful. Society is bound to learn from this that it is good to appreciate both the abilities and the sex of every individual, male and female. What this means is that, for society to grow, equal opportunities should be accorded to both male and female child. When girls are not educated at the same level as boys, it has a huge negative effect not only on their future but also on that of society at large. This compromises the kinds of opportunities they would have had and the development they would have brought to society.

Head and Emecheta frown at this while pointing out subtly that if women have access to the opportunities reserved only for men, they would contribute enormously to making life comfortable not only for the home but also for society at large. That is, if employment becomes a more even playing field, it would have a positive domino effect on other areas prone to gender inequality. Proof of this is the fact that both Head and Emecheta open up the writer's world to their heroines, a world previously reserved only for men. Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* and Adah in *Second Class Citizen* break the myth that women are not good writers. Even Francis's attempt at killing Adah's brain child by burning her maiden manuscript does not deter her from producing other works. Again, level headed Eugene and Tom achieve greater results in the Garden Cooperative when they open up opportunities to everyone, male/female. The lesson being sent across here by Head is that when priority is given to different talents that people have and not to their sex, success is not only guaranteed but it moves in leaps and bounds. To these novelists, women should not still be seen in the light of people whose sole job should be to take

care of the kitchen, give birth to children and bring them up alone. From the experiences of Adah, it is proven that women are multi-faceted, capable of handling multi-tasks. Head and Emecheta succeed in breaking the myth that men are better equipped for handling certain jobs which, very often, are the best paying ones. The heroines break through this status quo by fighting to have access to what they can do best. They no longer content themselves with lower paying jobs, nor with the possibility of men dictating the pace to them.

Another area in which the novelists frown at injustice and inequality is that of security. They frown at the lack of legal protection for women. As seen in the novels, women have no legal protection against domestic and economic violence. Both have a significant impact on Women's ability to thrive and live in freedom. Adah as a woman, for example, has no right to turn down the sexual demands of her lazy husband when she is drained out by the day's heavy work load. She even has to stay silent when Francis, her husband, cheats on her with another woman to satisfy his huge sexual appetite. More degrading is the fact that he uses her hard earned money for sex with other women to the detriment of her children and herself. She is not only frustrated but also abandoned to herself as there are no legal structures for her to turn to for this situation to be redressed. After all, to society, she is just a woman made for the sexual pleasure of a man. Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* lives the same pain when she has to watch her ex-convict of a husband in the beds of her neighbours for sexual adventures.

By walking out on their husbands, the heroines uphold the vision of the writers that there is a point at which the woman cannot take it anymore. When pushed to the wall, they resolve the problems in their own way, given that society has abandoned them to themselves. It is painful to even see that they end up giving up on sex in order to achieve their freedom. The lesson here is that sacrifices are made when we badly need something in life. It is in this light that these characters are seen as role models by those who read their stories. Head and Emecheta, therefore, draw from society to create fiction which, in turn, enables us to draw from it to impact the world.

These novelists also cry out against society's failure to protect women against harassment at their workplaces and even in public. Women are harassed and traumatised in schools by their male colleagues and learners; and nobody comes to their rescue. Such is the fate of Margaret in *Maru*. Her colleagues team up with learners to insult her about her Marsawa identity. Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* even loses her head with the sexual harassments of

Dan and the attacks from her principal to the point of hallucinating. Nobody comes to her rescue; she is rather reminded of her past, and how she is mad just like her mother.

Luckily for Margaret in *Maru*, Dikeledi, her female colleague, comes to her rescue. She assists her to fight back the children set up against her by the principal. With places being unsafe and without protection, these women frequently have to make decisions that limit or slow the processes they would want to follow: Elizabeth leaves the school and has to start it all over.

Head and Emecheta also use grounding techniques in cataloguing the challenges of the girl child in a way that pathos from the reader's end is the resulting emotion. This is the situation in their lamentation for the lack of body autonomy in the novels; this is another horrible form of injustice and inequality perpetrated against the girl child. It is a shame that women do not have authority even over their bodies, especially when they are parents. For example, accessing birth control is frequently very difficult for them. This is the case of Adah in *Second Class Citizen*. Adah, out of frustration and the inability to continue to singlehandedly take care of the children that come one on the heels of another, she thinks she can bypass Francis and go for contraceptives. To her embarrassment and humiliation, she is told that she is not the authority to command that this be done. The medical officer in charge says that they must have the consent of her husband before placing her on contraceptives.

Ironically, her husband does not need her consent to keep making babies one on the heels of another, and nobody cares how she is to bring up these children. Francis even shamelessly stands in court and disowns these children and his word is taken for gospel truth because he is a man. Nobody cares to find out how she would bring up the children alone or who "their supposed real father" is. She is inhumanly abandoned to herself with the responsibility of bringing up five children all alone. This is an aspect of social injustice since such acts against women are allowed to go through unchecked. Adah swallows her pride and dignity and becomes financially dependent on the state and eats from the dole house which does everything to let her know that she and her children are second class citizens. Such ongoing conditions hinder Adah and her likes from forging ahead at the pace they would have liked.

In addition to limited access to contraception, women, in general, receive lower quality medical care than men. From the vivid presentations in the novels, the majority of women operate in the poverty bracket. They are less likely to afford good health care for themselves. A good example is the case of Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* when she falls sick and has to be taken care of by others in a sub-standard health unit. The story is worse with Adah who

cannot even afford to pay for health services rendered. Some other women even experience discrimination from their doctors, thereby broadening the gender gap in healthcare quality. Such is the case, in *Maru*, for Margaret's biological mother who is abandoned to herself and in the street during child birth. Even upon death, nobody wants to willingly touch her body because she is not only a Marsawa but also a woman. In making her daughter – the fruit of this sacrifice – to succeed, Head ushers in a new era wherein attention is paid to the dignity of the woman. Pathos is efficiently used in this situation to get the readers fully involved in the vision of the novelist. The readers do not only sympathise with the characters struggling to face their overwhelming odds and challenges but they also applaud and cheer anyone who stands up to a bully whoever oppresses women. It is in this light that the readers applaud even the heroines who do not spend time navel-gazing about the events that traumatised them. They, on the contrary, show appropriate coping mechanisms applied to help them get out of trauma.

The writer further laments over the poor political representation and racism that further inflame inequality and injustice against the woman because women are not represented in politics and are not policy makers. Certain issues such as violence against women, health and education – just to name a few – are neglected. Even though women are discriminated against, the white woman still lords it over the black woman who ends up as the underdog of society. Both novelists frown at this, and Head goes ahead to project the black woman or the coloured woman as rich in values that the white woman does not have. For example, Elizabeth who is abandoned by her white family is brought up by the coloured Head Cotes.

In conclusion, through their works, Head and Emecheta advocate for the enhancement of women's status in all aspects of life. This would go a long way towards enacting radical changes in the perception of women in various and diverse fields. Society, therefore, needs to support the empowerment of women and capitalise on their capabilities and great potentials, especially in the area of political openness. Women and men should be encouraged to be jointly involved in sustainable development ventures at all levels. When women are empowered, the benefits are perceived by the entire community. Gender equality stresses that equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, and equal sharing of care and family responsibilities by men and women contribute enormously to the wellbeing of families and the development of society. Equality here simply means that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. After reading the novels and sharing in the vision of the novelists as expressed through their characters, we, the readers, are called upon to be honest in our efforts

and work to change the social attitude towards women. Any society that values women and men as equals is safer and healthier.

At this juncture, Head and Emecheta still insist on overcoming gender bias through sisterhood. It works on the premise that if we have to reduce female trauma that stems from gender bias, then women who are victimised need to work together to reduce home violence, workplace oppression, sexism, racism and all other forms of discrimination against the woman. They believe that the task would be lighter and easier if women are connected to one another. We can see a positive example of this in the selected works of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta. These works demonstrate the true value of sisterhood, female bonding and friendship when it comes to facing life's challenges and overcoming trauma. Isolation is not the answer as it very often worsens the traumatic experience and pain. As seen in the selected works, women bond with other women to overcome trauma. This is when, together, they forge a path to a better future. Very often, these bonds afford them room to acquire skills that empower them to become emotionally, spiritually and financially secure. They also end up earning incomes that enable them to improve on their health and wellbeing, and even form support networks with other women. These programmes are often diverse and each holds their own struggles and triumphs. The women, however, share supportive friendships and support systems built with one another. Consequently, they build sisterhoods that uplift them and help them to heal from their traumas.

For example, sisterhood bonding can be seen at the level of strengthening family ties and staying involved in the lives of trauma victims because when trauma victims bond, they find comfort in one another since they understand what they have gone through. They easily rely on one another for survival, for confiding in one another and for peace. Very often, this bonding is the attachment an abused person feels for their abuser. Together, they take measures to free themselves and also heal from the aftermath of the abusive relationships they have lived. This whole scenario of loneliness, isolation or bonding is beautifully captured by Head in *A Question of Power*. When Elizabeth is told the bitter truth about how her family abandoned her in an orphanage, she abandons herself in the library where she lives in pain, reflecting during her lonely moments. At the end of her reflections, she falls back on her foster mother, Meli Head Cote, for consolation and renewed strength to move ahead. It is only when she cries out her frustration in her arms and listens to her soothing words of encouragement that she resolves to move on with her head high in the sky. Her foster mother provides support for her in this bonding and makes a big difference just by lending an ear to her and encouraging her to be strong in picking up the pieces so as to forge ahead. This attitude of Head Cote contrasts with

that of Adah's mother – in *Second Class Citizen* – who is rather an instrument of trauma. For, she thinks that the right place for Adah is instead at home, and that all that Adah needs in the form of education is to learn how to sew and cook for her future family. This accounts for her happiness when Mama, her mother, is punished at the Police Station to drink garri for her negligence. What this means is that when women stand up for one another, there is no obstacle that they cannot overcome.

Furthermore, Elizabeth finds healing in bonding with Kenosi in the garden project. Though taken on board by Eugene and Tom, she finds relief in the special relationship she shares with Kenosi who becomes her close friend and confidante. In this relationship, Elizabeth drops her guard and allows the beauty within her to blossom. This beautiful crafting of character traits by Head is meant to highlight the importance of positive values from others in the process of one's liberation from trauma.

In *Maru*, Bessie Head further expands sisterhood bonding to include inter-race bonding. Margaret Cadmore Junior, survives, thanks to the sisterly concerns of Margaret Cadmore Senior, a Scottish missionary who takes her from birth – after the death of her mother – and names her after herself. She raises young Margaret within the mission environment where she receives fair treatment, kindness and good education. This bonding enables young Margaret to acquire excellent education which eventually earns her a teaching degree. It is thus a teaching job that earns her a position of respect within the Botswana society. Head explores the interactions between race, gender and class through the juxtaposition of Margaret's ethnicity with her position.

The positives of sisterly bonding do not end with Margaret Cadmore Senior. Margaret's relationship with Dikeledi is a perfect example of sisterly bonding with deep lessons to be learned. Dikeledi who is a colleague to Margaret at school and sister to the future Paramount Chief, Maru, becomes Margaret's best friend and counselor. She faces the reality of Margaret's humanity, integrity and intelligence. She is a guardian angel and a friend indeed as she makes sure that nobody treats Margaret as sub-human because of her ethnicity. Through her friendship and love for Margaret, both Moleka and Maru vie for Margaret's hand in marriage. These three highly placed figures influence the rest of the village and defy the ancient beliefs concerning the inherent inferiority of the Masarwas. Margaret's patent humble dignity, honesty and bravery in revealing her true heritage, and the way she conducts herself, is admired by Dikeledi and represents the crumbling of racial prejudice within the Botswana society. What this

signifies, once more, is that when women stand up for women, they form a force that cannot be defeated even by the strongest of men. Head – like her character, Margaret – is a model for other women to follow. Her fight is not so much a fight for self as it is one for the liberation of man. Thus, this woman to woman bonding is very central to this fight:

It never stopped the tin cans rattling, but it kept the victim of the tin cans sane. No one by shouting could un-bushman her. There was only one thing left to find out, how Bushmen were going to stay alive on earth, because no one wanted them to except perhaps as the slaves and downtrodden dogs of the Botswana. That half she would be left alone to solve. (P. 11).

It is not yet a very beautiful story but it is a step towards it. An underlying theme of acceptance surrounds the relationship between Margaret and Dikeledi. Though Margaret becomes the pawn of two powerful chiefs in the company of Dikeledi, she draws inspiration from her bonding with Dikeledi to make the best of both worlds for herself. Though she is not accepted, she is not killed either. Also, the fact that Dikeledi had cautioned her about this empowers her not to give up.

Sisterly bonding in *In the Ditch* also helps Adah to become emotionally, spiritually and financially strong. While in the dole house, Adah quickly realises that she had to shed her preconceptions and insecurity at the door and approach every interaction as an opportunity to learn from the diversity of skills and life-styles in the dole house. She goes out of her way to connect with other women in order to build strong survival relationships. In nourishing relationships with other women, she becomes more empathetic and ends up forgiving and building other bonds that help her to move ahead despite her pain/trauma. In their misery, the women in the dole house lean on one another for survival. This goes a long way towards confirming the point that there is incredible value in women when they come together as a collective, creative, social, moral and emotional whole for the general good.

In addition to the above, Emecheta in *In the Ditch* settles for the view that nothing replaces face to face connections in the resolution of trauma. Thus, Adah bonds with the other women in the dole house to overcome her emotional, spiritual, financial and health challenges. Even though she is not happy with Carol for calling them “problem families” she still recognises the point that she remains her best bet for some balanced life. By bonding with Carol, she succeeds to get some help that keeps her head above water. This sisterly bonding helps in strengthening both of them to keep forging on:

The intensity of the whole atmosphere frightened Adah. Everybody seemed to have been wronged somehow. Poor Carol – she was employed to help people at the Pussy, and she did her work well. But somehow along the line, she had betrayed people's trust, or that of the beaurucratic institutions she represented. Carol was a fine woman. Many liked her as a person, but few could be sure how much of a real friend she was and how far she was "The law". (P. 96).

From this passage, a lot is insinuated. Carol is a good person but the system she works for is bad. By recognising her goodness and limitations, Adah helps in uplifting her spirits. This is what happens when sisters bond. They prevent a bad structure from crushing them. This is the situation when Adah left work and was desperate. She had begged for a nursery space for her kids so that she could have the day free to do her studies at the senate house. Her appeal was refused by a Doctor from the children's department on the grounds that she was not gainfully employed. An unnecessary problem was created for her by the said Doctor. It took another woman, the Matron, to understand her and come to her rescue. Luckily this kind hearted matron and caring mother knew why Adah wanted her children in a nursery. She caused the social worker who came visiting to listen to Adah and to resolve her problem. This is to confirm the fact that when women bond in their traumas, things become lighter and they move on a little bit more comfortably. Proof of this is the fact that in her ill health, it is still Adah that comes to her rescue.

In conclusion, one would need to go beyond the texts under study to see the validity of the arguments raised in this work. From every indication, Head and Emecheta have gone beyond doubt to prove that pain, when viewed positively, projects one to success. This is seen from the lives the novelists have lived, the society from which they have drawn their ideas and the myths they have demystified. This is why at this level, we would logically focus our attention on the place of realism, as seen earlier, and reinforce the autobiographical perspectives of the novels. In the arts, when the subject matter is faithfully represented with neither artificiality nor the avoidance of artistic conventions, we say that realism has been achieved. In these instances, as is the case in the novels, the subject matter is painted from everyday life in a naturalistic manner. The main idea here is to honestly represent the world through fiction either by X-raying, criticising, correcting or appreciating it. With this in mind, we can confidently say that Head and Emecheta have successfully taken the reader along, because they have faithfully represented the realities of their respective societies in their works. They objectively draw from the said societies to build fiction. The readers in turn draw from this fiction to impact society.

For example, going through Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* is like taking a walk through Nigeria, nay, through other African societies, encountering and interacting with people. One can actually feel the pain of the said people, especially as they suffer from racism in the hands of their colonial masters. The bitterness of being treated as a second class citizen in Britain by the British who are looked upon as lords in your own country, further exacerbates the situation. The Adahs of the world are numerous, and this is what makes the story realistic. We get bitter with the Francis of our lives, and follow with anger what Adah goes through in his company because it is similar to what we live.

Consequently, for sharing in her pain, we are also part of the solution. Many are those who give a sigh of relief when she resolves to pack out with her children after being pushed to the wall by Francis, a father who disowns his children in public. This makes her story that of many. She, therefore, becomes a voice of the voiceless and a light to those in darkness. Many who are entangled in intricate relationships with mothers-in-law cannot lose sight of the successful diplomacy of Adah with her mothers-in-law. She stoops to conquer and even flatters and gives up what is precious to her at a certain moment in order to have what is more precious – jewelry for education. The text is not a historical inventory of facts but we can turn our look off the pages of the texts and see true-to-life characters that mirror the characters in the texts treated.

This type of approach is not limited to Emecheta, for in *A Question of Power* and *Maru* by Bessie Head, the novelist equally uses the mechanism of truthfully representing the subject matter to advantage. Any person who lived or has read about apartheid in South Africa would easily testify to the fact that the issues raised by Head in the texts are a faithful representation of apartheid as lived in South Africa and ethnicity as lived in Botswana. Head actually felt isolated and lonely in South Africa and so is Elizabeth her heroine in the following quotation from emerging perspectives on Bessie Head. We hear her saying:

Wherever I go, I shall leave a chunk of myself [there] because I think of myself as a woman of Southern Africa not a Black Woman but as an ordinary, wryly humble woman ... I am like everyone else, perplexed, bewildered and desperate.
(P. 21).

Though bitter with apartheid, Head did not just fold her arms and allow the system to crush her. She maintained the view that “willpower” could change natural conditions and the social environment that conditions human life. However difficult it may be, determination ends

up pushing one to overcome one's difficulties. Head, therefore, stands out as a model because she is considered as one of the prophets that prophesied the end of apartheid through her works. She wrote in many forms: fiction, stories and letters, all of which became a source of self-evaluation. In most of her texts, the female characters overcome their difficulties and commit themselves to social reforms. They end up creating new value systems. They find value in their lives. The realities of these assessments come from the fact that despite what she went through, Head found value in her life, and this is the vision she is communicating. Not only does she sell the story of South Africa, she equally documents events in the pages of her works of art. Elizabeth's success in the economic development of Botswana mirrors Head's success in life. Reading through *A Question of Power* is reliving realities of life in racist South Africa as seen through the likes of Head. Such great experiences inspire and motivate others to dare and take meaningful decisions that would take them out of pain. Keiko Kusanose in her article on Head confirms this when she says:

Until I read Bessie Head's works, I could not understand why my life was so painful and suffocating and why women suffer and feel oppressed... The struggle to restore myself to being whole was instructed by the recognition that this is precisely what Bessie Head did as a woman and a writer. Writing a critical biography of Bessie Head meant that I had to locate my own identity as a woman by following Head's mental growth as she lived her difficult life in Botswana and I lived mine in Japan. (P. 12).

Kusanose is not drawing from the life of the writer. This is confirming the view that the life of the writer and her life experiences are intrinsically linked to ideas raised in the text. This mental growth highly copied is visible in the text through the mental freedom of Elizabeth. As such, the validity of the arguments raised so far go beyond the text to the realistic presentation of the views of Head. She holds and maintains the view that willpower can change the natural conditions and social environment that usually determine human life. She laments and captures her frustration in her works. In one of her articles, she says:

When human beings are duped by power device...old conventions and establishing sense of value, preconceived ideas take over resulting in a fall to the bottom of the abyss of despair. However, Head believes that a strong human with mental independence could overcome all kinds of power structures and could be used by individuals who were essentially good and wanted to change their social environment. This could be the fundamental relationship between human beings and society. (P. 24).

One other thing that enables the readers of these selected texts to see beyond fiction is the autobiographical element of both writers. Looking more specifically at Head, we cannot fail noticing a striking resemblance between the novelist and the heroine. What makes *A Question of Power* an outstanding piece of work is the resemblance Elizabeth bears with Head as mentioned earlier. In fact, the story sounds like a fictionalised autobiography. Head admits this herself when she says:

I think that my whole life has been shaped by my South African experience and I will never really fall in the category of writers who produce light entertainment for people ... What we are bothered about has been the dehumanisation of black people. (P. 18).

This autobiographical stylistic device renders the story authentic and believable. The heroine, Elizabeth, is the product of a relationship between a White Lady and a Black stable boy, like Head. She, like Head, leaves South Africa for Botswana with a visa of “no return”, a son and no husband. She becomes mad and later on gains sanity through the acceptance of certain hard facts about her destiny. If one finds it hard to believe the story of Elizabeth, a reading of the biography of Head would put that to rest. The things the heroine lived had been lived by Head. She draws from her painful world to enrich the story of the text. The success of Elizabeth, which mirrors that of Head’s, should motivate and lead us to our own paths to success. In a letter to Roudolph vigne, Head says:

It is pretty terrible, I tell you, for a woman to be alone in Africa. Men treat women as the cheapest commodity ... There must be people in South Africa like me whose birth or beginning are filled with calamity and disaster, the sort of person who is a skeleton in the cupboard or the dark and fearful person swept under the carpet. (P. 29).

The process of writing about oneself is also the process of re-writing the collective self. The essential is not what the character has been through, but how she ended up. It is not surprising at all that today’s South Africa hails Head as one of their prominent writers; this is the same Head who left the same South Africa with a visa of no return. Head, by this, is telling us that if she, who was rejected, can make it, anybody who also walks in the valley of darkness should be hopeful and determined to make it. She made it without any family under the sun, so we who are blessed with one should be patient, hopeful and hardworking, and we shall make it.

Head and Emecheta have also succeeded in debunking the myths that have perpetrated gender bias and inaccurate pictures of the African womanhood. Gender becomes the interesting point between the heroine's educational aspirations and the roles assigned to her by tradition. It is common knowledge that women in our traditional society – Emecheta not exempted – did not enjoy comparable educational opportunities to those of men. She was kept at home for Boy, her brother, to be educated. She had to acquire basic knowledge and move on to marriage so her bride price could be used for Boy's education. Her breaking away from this situation through her own effort to go to school liberates the girl child, like that of Margaret in liberating Masarwas in *Maru*. Today, women in their thousands are going to school, thanks to their emancipation through acts like Emecheta's.

In a nutshell, Emecheta breaks gender-imposed limitations on women through her personal acts reflected in her characters. Through the prism of childhood, she has explored the dilemma faced by many African girls. Her text becomes an eye-opener to those who would have otherwise folded their arms to be crushed by cultures that keep them away from the classroom. Education is critical to female independence. It keeps women beyond the reach of traditional shackles. Emecheta has contributed immensely to this awareness through her works and life. In South Africa, Head has equally broken away from laid-down systems and beliefs, making a huge unforgettable impact on society. She combines myth with politics to discuss social situations in South Africa. She drifts around in the fast changing and confused group of real or imagined images that unfold around her. She captures this through the life of Elizabeth, her mouthpiece. The myth of the African super woman is captured in Medusa. In her fantasy world, Elizabeth keeps a sexual relationship with Medusa and makes her unapproachable to men in the real world. Her thunderbolts explode her head, leaving her sprawling on the floor helpless. The wild-eyed Medusa exhibits traits of the African spirit which, Head thinks, must be wiped out like apartheid. Failing which they should be transformed like Maru and Moleka. Head equally uses the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis, depicting the eternal struggle between good and evil. Osiris, who is fearless, self-sacrificing, gentle and a benefactor to mankind, has been shattered into a thousand fragments by Medusa's thunderbolts. Elizabeth, like Isis, has been shattered but has to be reconstructed. Head's world view comes out where she thinks that the protagonist has a mortal body and dies like any other man; she will be restored through magic and love. She journeys through hell, obtains knowledge by overcoming obstacles and regains sanity. This is a reflection of Head's life in South Africa. Her difficult life was not in vain as she emerges from it a renowned and prominent writer – like Emecheta whose pain has

propelled her to success. The success of the heroines does not only mirror that of the novelists but is equally intended to motivate, encourage and strengthen the readers not to give up when crushed by the wheel of pain. There is always a small window that brings in fresh air to one, and, combined with inner strength and determination, helps one to bounce back to be propelled to the higher heights of success.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research endeavour titled, *African Female Trauma Fiction: A Study of selected works of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta*, was to demonstrate that the traumatic experiences in the lives of individuals could be transformed into success stories. This has been achieved through a series of steps. This was done by first showing the intersection between literature and trauma from the selected works of the chosen novelists. In this light, the work analysed the relationship between the traumatic experiences in the lives of the novelists and how they used them as the muse for their creative works. Trauma to them formed the catalyst that pushed them up the ladder of success and the intension is that it should impact, in like manner, those who go through this research work.

The work focused on the traumatised African Woman whose faith has been analysed and appreciated to show how – through the characters in the selected novels – she has turned her traumatic experiences into success stories. It demonstrated how the success stories of the main characters have not been limited only to them but have gone beyond that to show how they have risen above social, cultural, historical, environmental, political and psychological challenges to liberation, thereby being models to others.

Based on the analysis carried out in this work, it was seen that the selected works of the writers were very rich resource material for the arguments raised because they mirrored the respective society of each novelist by highlighting its ills with a view to correcting them. As such, they corroborated the view that literature is an imitation of human actions, a picture of what people think, say and do in society. This was substantiated through the characters that Head and Emecheta crafted and built up stories to mimic human life. This tied in with Duban Roshni's views that it is impossible to find a work of literature that excludes the attitudes, morale and values of society. The research problem was adequately addressed as logical evidence was drawn to establish the link between what the African woman has gone through and her creative works. This justified the analysis made on the lives of the novelists and the background of their respective societies. The analyses threw more light on the assumption that the novelists made good use of their painful lives to produce beautiful healing art works. An analysis of the female characters and their trials and tribulations in the selected works confirmed the view that the characters turned their traumatic experiences into hard works of success. They did not allow the negative experiences they had gone through to destroy them. From the analysis of the background of the novelists, it was clearly evident that there is a profound relationship

between the cry for the emancipation of the African woman from what she has been living. A liberated African Woman would, therefore, be an asset in the development of the continent. This is why she should not be abandoned to the forces that seek to crush her on a daily basis.

The research questions were, therefore, found to be relevant pointers in the right direction for material that would meet the aims of the research. The findings validated the point that it was necessary to know the relationships between the female characters and their respective societies, the effect of the said relationships, how they caused trauma, how the characters prevented trauma from destroying them, how their traumatic minds worked and the ideological visions of the novelists as seen through the characters.

After answering these questions, it was seen that this research endeavour could be beneficial to a number of professionals and persons who would take time to go through it. As earlier stated, since writers draw from society to create literature, literature could be exploited by anyone to improve on society. The scholarly could make use of the work, students of research could find useful material from it and it could equally inform or inspire policy makers. It could inform action to improve theory, build knowledge and facilitate learning. Since trauma is related to health, even the medical world could benefit from some of the findings of this work. Generally, it could simply improve on the way people think, the relationships they build and an overall improvement of the physical and mental health of society. Those in “talking cure” and counselors also stand to benefit from this endeavour.

The structure of this work furthered the systematic development of the arguments put forth to prove the hypothesis that the traumatising situations of the characters, just like those of the novelists, have propelled them to success and liberty rather than destroy them. It brought out facts at different levels to demonstrate that the characters developed inner survival instincts that enabled them to fight for their liberty and success.

After capturing the introduction above, there is clear evidence that chapter one which is focused on the theoretical framework and review of literature played a central role in this research endeavour. On the whole, the trauma theory enabled a broad appreciation of the selected texts. The different tenets of the trauma theory used herein gave a sound scientific basis to demonstrate the ideas drawn from the texts in order to justify the assumptions made. This is because they gave an orientation or focus on the way the actions of the characters were perceived and the themes analysed. This went a long way towards shaping how the relationship between the novelists and their works was perceived. Through the lens of the theory, the

researcher went beyond the authors into studying the situations, circumstances and the overall cultures in which the works were written: the culture of apartheid South Africa and that of gender-biased patriarchal Nigeria. These in no way made the researcher a slave to the views of theorists or other critics as there was still room and liberty for the researcher to challenge some of the views and inject personal opinion where necessary. What this meant was that the theories only helped the researcher to convincingly interpret, explain and generalise from his or her own findings. That is, the theory went a long way towards enabling the researcher to intellectually move from simply describing a phenomenon observed in the texts to generalising about various aspects of that phenomenon that helped in proving/supporting the hypothesis. The theory also helped to identify the limit to the generalisations made.

For example, the Trauma Theory, which anchored this work, threw more light on the mental illness of Head's main character, Elizabeth. It supported and enabled the researcher to see how the external events in the text affected and influenced the psychology of the characters and their subsequent behaviours in relation to other characters. The way the characters behaved in the texts cannot be detached from psychoanalysis; the reason why a link was drawn to Trauma and Freud's psychoanalysis. Freud's Trauma tenet threw more light on the functionality of literature in a violent and repressive world like that of apartheid South Africa exploited by Head.

Furthermore, the impact of external events on the characters confirmed the importance of the trauma lens as seen by Zuhmboshi, who holds that the Trauma Theory forms an excellent lens in analysing literary texts as they help to show how external events are incorporated into the minds of victims. Van Der Kolk's views helped in these analyses as it was seen that traumatisation often occurred when both internal and external resources were inadequate for the characters to cope with external threats. And such meaning was made of the characters' unique efforts of coping with trauma. The Trauma Theory also paid attention to the way each character's evolution affected him/her. The "fair-play" tenet of the theory highlighted analysis on the evolution of justice systems and the need for revenge by trauma victims. The "fight-or-flight response" tenet validated the characters urge to self protection where it propagates that when man senses or identifies that he is in danger, his body makes a massive response that affects all his organ systems. The researcher also made use of the "thinking-under stress" Trauma tenet to make meaning of the times the characters acted before thinking when faced with threatening danger. It confirmed that it is sometimes better to take decisive action than any complicated mental processing when an action is needed to save life. This justifies Adah's

prompt actions of leaving the sour marriage with her children when her irresponsible husband, Francis, disowned them in court. Though she was sad in pain and traumatised, she had to take decisive action for the safety of her children. Elizabeth, in Head's *A Question of Power*, also stumps out of the school without any job security when the Principal instigated the children to turn against her. The environment was no longer conducive for her. The decisions of both characters at this level were based on impulse and experience in the need to protect self. This was seen as very relatable to the readers who find this a common practice or need to overcome some of their very difficult daily challenges. "Remembering under stress" was another vital tenet of the Trauma Theory that elucidated analyses in this work. It is true that when under stress one easily loses the capacity to remember things. However, this tenet provided the assurance of the "emotional memory" that is often difficult or impossible to erase. It is with the help of this that Adah remembers the pains of her childhood and hangs on the "presence" that had always accompanied her all along. What this proved was that if the victim cannot remember, he/she cannot learn from the experience and it becomes life threatening.

Still elucidated by the Trauma Theory were the notions of "Trauma-bonding". It states that people who have been traumatised need to learn how to create relationships that are not based on terror and abuse of power. Such is the case of Elizabeth, Tom and the Garden workers. The "Traumatic Reenactment" tenet helped us to understand that traumatised persons cannot easily heal themselves alone. So, when the characters repeatedly told their stories in very overt or highly disguised ways we saw it as a desire to get help. As seen in the texts, these victims, like Elizabeth and Adah, communicated their "call for help" mostly through nonverbal messages and they were indicating for us to help them through the verbal messages or resolutions taken to address their non-verbal messages.

By dint of the interdisciplinary nature of the "Trauma Theory," this work could not but borrow relevant tenets from Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory that address trauma in order to enrich the analyses carried out herein. Furthermore, this work also availed itself of Freud's lens of "Defense Mechanism," a process whereby the ego consciously keeps threatening any unacceptable material; it was indeed vital in moving the work forward for example.

The work also viewed through Freud's lens of "defense mechanism" which is a process where the ego keeps threatening an unacceptable material out of consciousness. For example, Adah shoves memories of Francis away behind her in order to survive with her children. The "Reaction formation" tenet, still from Freud's theory, also consolidated the analyses where

trauma victims were seen to be expressing an unacceptable feeling or idea by consciously expressing its exact opposite. This is the case with Adah who could find rest in her rat infested room only upon accepting the rats as respectable visitors. Consequently, the identified trait of Freud's psychoanalytical theory boosted the Trauma Theory used and was capital to the understanding of the selected texts. The "id" motive helped in identifying and highlighting the traits of characters, what they desired and what they were not getting that caused trauma. From the "eyes" motive we saw how much the attainment of their needs was controlled by society. The "superego" came in to set the moral code of conduct on which the analyses were based.

This work also benefitted from the trauma tenets found in Sociocriticism Theory. The antagonistic tensions among social classes were viewed and analysed through the lens of sociocriticism tenets. They enabled the researcher to specify the nature of the impact which the narratives of the selected texts could have on the readers. This helped in shaping the resolutions and conclusions made about the validity of this work. It helped the researcher to bring out the relationship that exists between the structures of the literary works chosen and the structures of the societies in which the works are deeply rooted. For example, it will be practically impossible to separate the apartheid racist history from the unfolding of Head's *A Question of Power*. The researcher, through the sociocriticism tenets delved into the texts remembering that though there is a relationship between the infrastructure and the superstructure it is neither direct nor automatic.

Tenets of the Post-colonial Theory were also used in reading the texts. The "Chronicling collective trauma" tenet of this theory was very valid in the analyses of the texts. The "solidarity" notion was very relevant when analysing the traumatic concerns in the work. It reflected the communal life value of the Africans as well. The tenets of this theory drew a link between post-colonialism and trauma. They are both anchored on pain, frustration, disappointments and traumatic experiences.

From the title of this thesis, one immediately sees that this work is intricately linked to feminism which is a response or set of responses to the oppression of women in all its forms. This research work could not have fully engaged in the analyses thereof without first exploiting related strands or tenets of feminism to enrich it. The borrowed tenets went a long way towards helping to address the needs of the abused. It helped the researcher to buttress the point that although women are biologically different from men, it should not be mistaken or misinterpreted to mean that they are inferior to men and deserve a peripheral or marginalised

position. These tenets helped a lot in emphasising the fact that traumatised women have the commitment to share feminist values that implicitly or explicitly frame the questions they ask in their pain and the implications they draw from the answers. Also, the tenets helped in developing the ideology that the world can develop faster if there is greater unity, agreement and collaboration among men and women in society. This development would be better achieved if the causes of female trauma are well addressed as advocated for in this work.

From the above facts about trauma and trauma related tenets from other theories, one would say that the theoretical framework was a square peg in a square hole in the analyses of material from the texts. Thus, the tenets helped by enabling a better understanding of what the characters have gone through and a better understanding of their determination to overcome and excel.

The review of related literature handled in chapter one proved to be very relevant for a number of reasons. It helped the researcher to gain a better understanding of the existing body of knowledge on this research topic. As such, it helped in the formulation of the research question. The literature review also helped the researcher to evaluate the research that has been conducted on this topic. This helped in avoiding duplication and also enabled the researcher to develop a clear understanding of the current state of knowledge on the topic. In other words, it put the research into perspective and showed how it relates to what has been done before. It also helped in showing the rationale of the study and helped the researcher to compare and contrast existing research on this topic. It helped to point out some existing problems and enabled the researcher to address related problems in the work. The map for future areas of research presented at the end was guided by the awareness of what has already been done in this field by reviewing existing literature.

From a thorough review of existing literature, this research successfully handled trauma from a different perspective. Thus, it was established that the Head/Emecheta blend gave the work a force different from that carried out hitherto by other critics. From the analyses, it was also seen that the South African and Nigerian experiences of trauma were uniquely contextualised; hence, making the findings richer and varied. It was concluded that when lessons are well drawn from existing stock of knowledge and when determination remains life's guarding principles, then the final destination is success.

Chapter two, titled "The African Woman in Trauma Literature: Historical Perspectives", just like chapter one, went a long way towards validating the hypothesis of the research work.

Giving this work a historical perspective confirmed the fact that analyses, resolutions and conclusions were not made in the void. It drew inspiration from the forgone life experiences. This historical perspective immediately established the fact that pain/trauma is a universal and timeless theme. What this meant for this research was that Africans are not spared from pain/trauma and that the African woman has had her fair share of trauma from time immemorial. It confirmed, therefore, that the African woman has suffered the worst forms of human rights violation from different classes of oppressors and has undergone ethnic and civil conflicts. She has also suffered from diseases and epidemics and lived conditions of poverty and trauma in all its forms. To understand this work better, the evolution of trauma lived by the African Woman was traced. Hence, it was discovered that the way the African Woman of today thinks, learns, remembers things, feels about self and others and reacts to situations is greatly tied to her history. It was also discovered that, unfortunately, colonisation did not only introduce a new culture but also transformed the African man into the boss of the woman, an attitude unknown to both in pre-colonial days.

This chapter also revealed that women of pre-colonial Africa also knew pain but this pain was of a different nature. Unlike the postcolonial African woman, this historical tracing revealed that the pre-colonial African woman was neither static nor relegated to the domestic sphere. From these findings, it was established that in contesting, negotiating, complementing and transforming their societies through their diverse roles in the political, social, religious and economic spheres, the pre-colonial African woman also knew pain and lived traumatic experiences. It was interesting to note that though some pre-colonial African societies valued women, this did not totally take off trauma, given some of the repressive systems that prevailed at the time. It was also noticed that the pre-colonial woman was the economic powerhouse of society and was highly respected for this. It was very uplifting to discover, through this historical tracing back, that the pre-colonial African woman was in charge of fire, water and the earth. This meant that she could cook, fetch water and plant the earth but not own land. These were highlighted from the texts below.

Trauma in the pre-colonial society is captured in *The Concubine* by Elechi Amadi and *The God's Are Not To Blame* by Ola Rotimi. The analysis of these two novels confirmed the view that extreme experiences cultivate multiple responses and values. Trauma caused a disruption and reorientation of consciousness. From the texts, individual trauma was connected to cultural or historical trauma. Such was the case of Ihuomo, the most beautiful girl in the village of Omokachi, even though she was from Omigwe. Unknown to Ihuoma, her trauma and

pain was tied to who she was. She was married to a sea-king who in his jealousy did not want her to get married to any man on earth. Her trauma, therefore, was connected to the cultural and historical background of her people who did not just believe in the gods but dreaded the vengeance of these gods when they were offended. Through the lens of the “Learned helplessness” of the trauma theory, it was easily understood when her helplessness remained her major problem and that of the villagers as they found it very difficult to master the situation of danger surrounding her. More frustrating was the near impossibility of running away from it. Pathos was well brought out here as this action underlined the helplessness of the people in the hands of their gods.

This only proved that trauma is a timeless concern, and that reflections on it should not be done in isolation. The stressor may change but the phenomenon brought along remains the same. The events surrounding Ihuoma’s life brought to mind a lot of traumatic concerns. Nothing explains or justifies the fact that Ihuoma – the most beautiful girl in the village of Omigwe, with an ant-hill complexion and a body so smooth that anyone who saw her for the first time could not resist the urge to fall in love with her – should go through what she had been living.

In Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the supernatural is also at the centre of trauma and the woman once more is at the centre of trauma. Odewale is cursed at birth to kill his father and marry his mother. All attempts by the parents to avert this curse failed. This gave room for this research to evaluate and appreciate the African culture of the pre-colonial era wherein a child’s destiny could be foretold by a diety right from his birth. Gender inequality is at its peak during the colonial period. Looking back at this period, this researcher garnered insights into the roots of gender bias and patriarchy that did not only reinforce pain but also contributed to taking trauma to a most frustrating level. This threw more light on the understanding and a better analysis of the presence of Whites in both South Africa and Nigeria in the selected texts and their impact on these societies. During this period, Africans were gripped by the fear of the Whiteman and his new way of life as seen in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. It is during this period that the Blackman was terrorised by the unknown that took different forms in different societies but centred principally on the premise that the mighty and the magical world of the Whiteman could neither be perceived nor be easily comprehended. This persisted on the post-colonial South Africa and Nigeria and this researcher comfortably concluded that the longevity of the torture of the Blacks by the Whites in their own land accounted for the bitterness, lamentation and pathos seen in the texts. The world of the women

was most affected and this sowed the seed of feminism as was noticed in the analyses. With this background work, the researcher already saw a kind of solid foundation being laid for the kind of trauma lived by Adah and Elizabeth in *Second Class Citizen* and *A Question of Power* respectively. It was quite bitter to note that besides annulling the pre-colonial privileges granted to women it was expected that women should still dance to the whims and caprices of the men. There was no doubt then that the Blacks became tired and fed up with the oppressive rule of the Whites as seen in Head's *A Question of Power*. When – as seen from the historical tracing Freedom Fighters championed the transition for change – the ensuing increased pain and trauma lived by the oppressed was exteriorised through violence.

The post-colonial period took a turn for the worst as revealed by the analysis. A new kind of pain was experienced and expressed in post-colonial society. Unfortunately, after independence, most African leaders took a turn for the worse as they were greedy and egoistic. Worst of all, they were more corrupt, exploitative, materialistic, oppressive, suppressive, extravagant, ostentatious, unjust and inhuman than the colonial masters themselves. It was from this analysis that the researcher could easily understand what paved the way for continuous suffering, decadence, pessimism, disillusionment and frustration for the masses as seen in the chosen novels. This is the same scenario decried by Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* which focuses on the problem of Nigeria after independence.

It is from the above that the researcher could easily tie the content of the texts with historical facts to conclude that the African Woman of the post-colonial era is no longer the African Woman of pre-colonial and colonial Africa. Having been pushed to the limit, she could and can no longer submissively give in to the forces of oppression. Even though the drive for change proved not to be easy, she prepared to embrace the odds so as to move to freedom. This is the case with Adah and Elizabeth.

Thus, trauma studies through these texts illuminated the process and helped the reader to understand the mental state of the people who were victims of the catastrophic cultural contact with western invaders. Matching this evolution in society with what obtains in the texts, one would not fail to see that literature is a reflection of society; and great and wise leaders often read the signs of the times from literary works. It validates the conclusion that writers are the mouthpiece of the downtrodden.

Chapter two, therefore, provided answers to the research questions seeking to find out the historical context of this research and the relationship between the characters and their

respective societies. As mentioned above, it did this by tracing the evolution of trauma as it has been lived by the African woman. Thus, what Head and Emecheta lived in their biased and violent societies was proven to be a continuation of what the African Woman had lived before. It is from this informed background that it was confirmed that everyone has their own traumas, and our traumas make of us the persons that we are. The traumatic experiences of the women helped in shaping their coherent selves; and this is why their experiences were exploited to put an end to trauma or to sensitise society more on the ills of trauma, especially with our African women. It is hoped that their stories would move readers and cause them to undergo some behavioural shifts in this regard.

By making a comparative analysis between what the African Woman went through during the pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial periods, the research afforded a better understanding of the plight of the African Woman and, therefore, arrived at informed conclusions or resolutions believed to go a long way towards improving the lot of the traumatised African Woman.

Chapter three titled, “Towards Constructing the African Woman”, gave the character’s personality, depth and motivation that made them relatable to the reader. It portrayed how the characters identified setbacks and challenges and how they evolved by overcoming them in the course of the story. It also focused on how the life experiences of Bessi Head and Buchi Emecheta were mirrored by their characters in the different novels and acted as rich opportunities to place the identity of women in Africa. This chapter answered the research questions as to how trauma is manifested in the texts and to which extent, what the characters are doing not to allow themselves to be destroyed by these traumatic experiences. By revealing how characters got to know one another and by providing a back story to the characters, the researcher was helped into figuring what made the characters tick and what informed their decisions. From this point, a more valid and more realistic image of the characters was envisioned and used to demonstrate how it led to a more realistic and logical journey in the construction of the African Woman.

Also, by tracing the sources of trauma in this chapter, it tied with the proverb that “a problem well identified is a problem half solved. Every problem has a specific solution and since man responds to stimulus based on the level of the threat that the stimulus represents, paying particular attention to this enabled the researcher to make valid conclusions.

For example, trauma was traced to gender bias as men were given more importance in the novelists' patriarchal societies; this was used by the researchers to buttress the point that the development of any country is slowed down when women are discriminated against. This was seen when, despite all her talents, Adah was relegated to the background by Francis's family which ended up losing the opportunity for her to use these talents to build and develop the family. The exposition of trauma through gender bias directed the pen of satire to societal norms and caused a change. Adah ends up as a writer out of Francis's house. Political discrimination was also identified as the cause of trauma. In addressing or attacking this, both novelists became prophetic and the abolition of apartheid or the empowerment of the girl child owes part of its success to them. Through this, the novelists effectively showed the seriousness of the negative acts imposed on man by man.

The sexual abuse of the woman was also seen as a source of trauma. The research showed that men saw women as objects of their pleasure; that women were there for men to use and discard of the way they wanted. This was used to caution women that to succeed in their quest for freedom, they should resist being used by men. It is only when this can be done that the road to reconstructing women would be tarred and strewn with roses. The readers of this would likely see through that women succeed. They should bond with one another, empathise and uplift relationships that should work both ways. The conclusion that one should always think before taking decisions when under stress was validated from this background. It was also cautioned that women should not be brainwashed into aspiring for some second positions by attaching themselves to men of "importance".

Deprivation of women from formal education was another source of trauma. It was used by the researcher to expose the hypocrisy of the colonial master who saw education as a tool of liberation and freedom, yet deprived women from such a tool. For example, it was seen as wrong that Adah's brother, Boy, was sent to school while Adah was sent into marriage so that her bride-price would be used in paying Boy's school fees. Elizabeth's injustice was also seen as another source of trauma. From being her father's bank account from which he could withdraw money to pay Boy's school fees, Adah moved into marriage where she was the hen that had to lay the golden egg for her in-laws. Margaret Cadmore was not treated any better by her admirers. Even Elizabeth in Head's *A Question of Power* received similar treatment from her ex-convict of a husband. All these enabled the researcher to expose the pain-inflicting aspects of society upon the woman with the hope that it would reawaken the collective conscience to see that what was being done was wrong. This, to say the least, would be

achieving the purpose for which the texts were selected for this research to expose the wrongs of society as well as to educate society for correction.

The focus of this chapter was, therefore, on the identification of sources of trauma, the setbacks faced by the characters and the strategies put in place by trauma victims with a view to overcoming these setbacks so as to move on to freedom. This was intricately linked to the novelists' style of handling their different subject matters. It was also seen that the tone of the writers was well chosen to convey their message to the reader. This made it easier for the researcher to live the painful stories of the characters, sympathise with them and come up with critical and valid analysis and resolutions believed to make things better in the future. The tone of lamentation over the wrong things and attitudes exhibited could not be missed out. At one moment it was a tone of sympathy for what the victims were going through and at another moment it was the tone of anger towards those inflicting pain on others. These did not only enrich the arguments but it also facilitated the analyses. By using recognisable character traits for the characters, action was extended to the reader who is seen as a potential beneficiary of the research. The characters were endowed with positive proactive traits that helped in revealing their traumas. For example, Elizabeth's intelligence plus self determination towards the end propelled hers out of hallucination. This was used by the researcher to demonstrate that if Elizabeth could sail through pain by her own efforts, we too could do same. Margaret Cadmore in Head's *Maru*, comes to terms with her emotions and does not only liberate herself alone but also liberate her loved ones, most especially the Masarwas. This was used to demonstrate how, sometimes, the trick is not in trying to change others but in changing oneself. After all, it is easier to change self than to change others.

Adah in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* swallows the bitter pill by accepting the fact that Francis is truly a bad person, one who openly disowned his wife and children in court. With this realisation, she picked up courage and moved out of her marital home of many years with her kids and some rags to a hopeful future. From this, the conclusion was drawn that some situations would only change when the scales fall off our eyes. Change and freedom also come only when we have the courage to leave our "comfort" zones.

In the same vein, Adah in Emecheta's *In the Ditch* also stands her grounds to be treated as a human being and is moved from the Dole house to better living quarters. In this more comfortable and conducive environment, she is able to continue with her creative works. From the analyses in this chapter, the characters chosen by Head and Emecheta critically mirrored

what people had lived in society. A number of lessons or didactic elements are passed across here through the stories of these characters who have overcome trauma by accepting their situations, building new strategies so as not to be brokenhearted again; allowing the scales to fall off our eyes so that we can see situations for what they truly are; or bonding and taking the risk to move out into the unknown with the hope that things would be better. Again, it teaches the value of persistence and faith in what we do for freedom so that we do not abandon and rush back to the original stressor.

Chapter four titled, “Resisting the Margin/Domestic Space”, dwelled on the characters’ resistance to pain/trauma. It demonstrated in many ways how the characters created access to healing from their traumas. Though the pain of trauma victims hardly ever leaves them, this chapter showed in many ways how by telling their stories, the victims, upon achieving consciousness from what they had gone through, assess their inner skills and qualities, and this ends up by helping them to resist pain. The chapter also focused on how the victims narrated traumatic experiences as a starting point for resistance/rebellion which leads to healing.

Findings in this chapter validated the hypothesis that the traumatising situations of the characters propelled them to success and liberty rather than destroying them. This was seen when the characters resisted trauma by developing inner survival instincts that enabled them to fight for their liberty and success. Their actions validated the view that self-protection and avoidance of pain is often the first reaction for anyone in pain or traumatised. It was seen and concluded from the actions of these characters, who are victims of trauma, that man is biologically equipped to protect self from harm as best as he/she can. It was advised at this point that a safe environment should be created to counteract the long-term effects of chronic stress. The feminist view that female victims of trauma need to tell their stories in order to survive was very true going by the experiences lived by the characters in the selected texts.

The beautiful process of healing from traumatic pain was also traced in this chapter. The philosophy of embracing pain and burning it as fuel for the journey of healing was equally found to be true for the selected works. What this meant was that, to recover from traumatic pain, the victim must first embrace pain and then resist it by either sharing or leaning on others or a Divine being-served. The message was effectively passed across from this analysis that, pain is to man as fire is to gold and that people do not grow from their comfort zones, rather they grow from the challenges they face. It was concluded that endurance is not just about bearing the hard things of life but also turning them into glory.

From the above, it is very interesting to note that the analyses in this chapter proved beyond doubt that the characters of the selected works went the extra mile to resist the margin and fight for liberation. They did this by first doing everything to liberate the domestic space of trauma in order to gain sanity. For example, Elizabeth in Head's *A Question of Power* withdraws from the environment of pain – South Africa – and moves to Motabeng with the hope of having a better grasp of her trauma, before looking for solutions. Adah, in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, also checks out of a long time marriage in order to be relieved of her wounding experiences before taking decisions that would make her forge ahead. The strategies and processes adopted by the characters to move out of pain were found to be very good and worth emulating.

For example, Elizabeth does not only narrate and explain what she was going through but equally interprets, infers and predicts what would happen. This was seen as drawing inner strength to bear on the challenges for positive results. This process of reflecting on her pain and then mapping out new paths for liberating self were not only validated by the researcher but were also recommended as worthy acts to be emulated by other victims of pain/trauma, thereby transforming and making them useful for self and the community. The lesson taught by Elizabeth in this chapter is that life's broken pieces sometimes need to be patched to enable onward movement or the formation of new shapes that could enable total movement out of the zone of pain.

It was retained that Elizabeth teaches us hard lessons of life through practical examples when she undergoes the full process of liberation guided by a meticulous chain of careful analyses in which inferences are made from facts; synthesis made to enable new whole structures to be built from diverse parts put together; evaluation made involving the act of making judgment about the values of ideas or materials that come in to support the implementation of certain resolutions. The craftsmanship of the novelist in her attempt to re-create and reflect reality here was highly appreciated. It demonstrated an apt use of imagery, symbolism and narrative technique. For example, the omniscient narrator delves into the mind of Elizabeth and enables the reader to have full knowledge of the happenings in the text. What this meant to this research is that like Elizabeth and Margaret Cadmore, when faced with traumatic pain we should be pushed by it to examine all hell; for an examination of inner hell is meant to end all hells because it helps one to get rid of a pain-torn conscience. In the deepest of our cries, we can stumble on sources of goodness like Elizabeth did when she encountered the Poor of Africa.

Further confirmation of the above view was seen in Margaret Cadmore's process in Head's *Maru*. She has gone through in order to attain psychic wholeness. She does all to the best of her ability in order to find inner peace and the necessary mental balance she needs for her happiness. Margaret's good character constitutes her strength in resisting the margin and belonging. The help she receives from Dikeledi when victimised by the student – under the influence of the principal – is as a result of her good relationship with her.

Like Margaret, we were exalted to allow ourselves to be transformed by the experiences we have lived. The generosity of her heart transformed those around her and, consequently, the society and mankind as projected in the hypothesis of this work. The resolution taken here was that, like Elizabeth and Margaret, we should not allow ourselves to be crushed by the traumatic pain we go through. These characters should be models to the reader because by their experiences, we should learn to shed off our pain for new horizons by letting go certain stances on issues and adopting new philosophies to help us move on.

Buchi Emecheta, like Bessie Head, highlights the healing force of traumatic pain when resistance is rightly carried out. This view was confirmed with the experiences of Adah in *Second Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*. It was noted that Adah's maturity was not proven by getting out of trouble but by coping with it. Her mind comes up with strategies on how to transform her obstacles into assets. Her first strategy is always to lie low and act only when the moment is ripe enough – a survival instinct she developed right in her infancy in order to break through the walls raised on her way by her parents and society. Adah is a determined rebellious woman who fights her own battles not by talking loud but by doing the right thing at the right time irrespective of whom she hurts. Even her determination to go to school is a survival strategy since she sees education as a liberating tool when in pain.

In a nutshell, it was seen that there is a powerful compelling voice when Adah confronts the male superiority dominance even in the face of a highly repressive cultural belief system. Adah, as Emecheta's alter ego, is therefore a woman of unparalleled independence, drive and ambition who would not allow any man to tell her what she should do or not do. It is this ability or attitude of hers that was retained as a model to women in trauma situations. Overcoming fear is integral to resistance and breakthrough; and this work equally validated it as an attribute of Adah's which is worth retaining and applying when under traumatic pain. Taking pride in and celebrating her culture was also seen as a teaching lesson to the thousands of women in trauma situations. Our cultures often give us our values and the sense of ourselves in history, our

humour, our identities and our world views. This is why Adah frowns at her African Landlord for using the Igbo “juju” to frighten women instead of valorising it for what it is – a cultural identity with so many ramifications. The point that was buttressed from the above is that we should always depend on our cultures to provide us a community, a reference point, a home and a place to get our bearings, thereby remembering what is important to us.

From the above highlights, it was seen that resisting pain is often a natural and sometimes spontaneous action taken by the body when faced with painful situations. The transformational effect of pain evident in the lives of the characters stems from knowledge which is the first tool of resistance and this research work sought to encourage this. As such, a trauma victim should seek to know self better and society as well so as to be able to identify the sources of trauma for better resistance. Thus, this chapter gave highlights on how the characters moved out of traumatic experiences. It provided room for readers to emulate the positive attitudes of the characters who have undergone healing by recounting their traumatic experiences and by assessing their inner skills and qualities which should help them to resist and come out of traumatic pain.

In This process, we were also informed of the importance of knowledge, the diplomatic handling of situations, courage to face the truth when it has to be faced, the importance of silence and even how to let go when the time is appropriate as a tool for resisting and overcoming trauma. The spirit of determination and prayer, as exhibited by the characters, was not overlooked. It was noted that when all these are appropriately applied, traumatic pain can be accommodated, overlooked, overcome or ignored in order to move on. These motivate the spirit for resistance as well.

Chapter five wrapped up the analysis and discussions by laying emphasis on the ideas and ideals of trauma, especially those that form the basis of economic, political and social theories and policies. It focused on the beliefs, principles, doctrine and teaching dogma to be retained. It also highlighted relevant choices that emerged from an interaction between three elements: reader, context and text. In conclusion, it was seen that instead of nursing, cajoling and hanging on to upsetting emotions, memories and anxieties that would not go away easily, trauma victims should cling onto the ideologies that work as life jackets to help them sail through troubled waters.

The first ideology stipulated that pain is personal and through it, each person stamps, in his own way, his/her signature on human existence. Like the characters, therefore, our unique

experiences should be allowed to be the triggered for great memorable changes for us. The hypothesis was validated as it was seen from this point that traumatising pain of the characters pushed them to sitting up, saying enough is enough as individuals and looking for change. Pain pushes individuals to see through smoke screens to embracing love that makes them advocates of the universal brotherhood of Mankind.

The second ideology stated that fear, negativism and egoism destroy the world while selflessness, courage and positivism do not only save it but also make it a better place for everyone.

The third came up on the heels of the second to state that our best selves come out when we confront the truth in pain/trauma. It confirmed the view that the truth sets one free; like Margaret Cadmore accepting who she is before fighting to change opinions towards Bushmen. It brought out another nuance that happiness is not achieved through the assumption of greatness but rather through the humility of service that raises people to greatness. Thus, coming together and sharing talents moves victims to success. The fourth held that it is in suffering that we build strategies that would enable us to move away from suffering. The take home message was that if you resign yourself to suffering it can kill you.

The fifth ideology stated that our pains will grow less as our hearts grow larger. What is to be retained here is that, happiness is not passive – it is filled with paradoxes. We are to always remember that though life has its ups and downs, it also has peak moments. Happiness is never lost forever. The last one called on us to reduce fear and anxiety to a minimum and increase confidence and education in particular.

In conclusion, this research established an intersection between literature and trauma and presented the relationship between the characters and their respective socio-cultural and political contexts. The result confirmed the view that traumatic experiences in the lives of individuals could be transformed to a success story and shared with others through creative works for motivation. Thus, trauma victims can emulate the exemplary lives of the characters and turn their traumatic experiences into success stories. If they do this, they would not only end up as achievers but also as models, motivating others to make breakthroughs from their own traumas so as to move to the next levels of success in their lives. In other words, the research findings demonstrated that traumatic experiences can function as catalysts that propel victims to success.

Furthermore, this research clearly presented a variety of methods which trauma victims used to overcome their social, cultural, historical, environmental, political and psychological challenges in order to attain freedom. It advised that positivism should remain the watch word as it is considered a sign-board to liberation and success. This message is meant for anyone suffering from trauma, for it was also confirmed that trauma is a timeless and universal phenomenon. The narrative sustained in the selected texts confirmed that the young or the old, poor or rich, educated or uneducated, commoners or kings/queens have tasted the venom of traumatic pain at one moment or another in their lives. However, the point was buttressed that success or development can still be achieved after great traumatic experiences depending on the victim's attitude. The hopeful concluding note was that, no matter what one is going through in life, there comes a point in life when the sense of goodness awakens one from pain to liberation and happiness.

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