CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The African continent is a society that has experienced patriarchy, colonialism and racial segregation and these reflect in African literature. The intrusion of Europe into the African continent in the 19th century brought about the upturning of lives and activities of Africans. The colonizers trampled upon Africa and her people. The people's way of life was distorted, almost abolished because of the claims of the colonial masters that it was barbaric. According to Ifeyinwa Ogbazi:

> … to the colonialists it was an unhealthy environment with a lot of disease, and an environment that was immersed in crises and civil strife. For them, it was life strangulating and with nothing positive to offer to the world. The peoples of Africa were perceived as primitive, hunger-stricken, impoverished, untamed and evil savages who only howl and bark. (*History* 3-4)

To make matters worse, the continent was divided as a cake among the colonial masters: Anglophone Africa, Lusophone Africa and Francophone Africa leaving no part for Africans. Colonialism as a major theme influenced African Literature where most writers tried to debunk the derogatory image given to Africa. These gave rise to negritude literature which portrayed love for Africa. Negritude literature was developed mainly by Francophone writers like Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, David Diop and Leonard Sainville. They sought to examine, portray and uphold unique African cultural heritage. African literature took another positive turn when Chinua Achebe came into the scene with *Things Fall Apart* (1958) where he made a move to portray life as it is lived in Africa; how the people ruled, their

checks and balances, the legal system, the value system and their daily preoccupations. Achebe understood that there was an urgent need to assert the humanity and dignity of Africans. "Precisely, and very significantly, it was the defence of the humanity of Africans that triggered off the bulk of the initial literary works by early Africans" (Ogbazi *History* 13). Although the colonial experience was central to the African continent, the experience varied from region to region.

The coming of independence in African countries saw the emergence of new social, political, and moral consequences like corruption, tribalism, religious conflicts, selfish governance and civil wars. These and the other continuing experiences of the African people in former colonies, have been continuously examined by post-colonial literary writers including the writers of the selected novels in this research. The effects of colonialism, civil wars, armed conflicts and racial clashes have been represented in the literature of different regions of Africa giving rise to the question of trauma especially for the female folk who were already subjected to the trauma of patriarchy and are the worst hit because the situation turned out to be double colonization. Civil wars and conflicts in Africa rose as a result of inequality, injustice, rivalry and tribalism. During war times there are anti-human activities like rape, lawlessness, bestiality and serious hostility leading to deaths, pains, insecurity, different forms and levels of trauma experienced by the people; especially by women and children.

In African literature, traumatic effects of patriarchy, colonialism, racial segregation, oppression and wars reflect in the works of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Buchi Emecheta, Bessie Head, Dennis Brutus, Tess Onwueme, Isidore Okpewho, Yvonne Vera, Nawal El Saadawi, Nadine Gordimer, Chimamanda Adichie, and many others. These writers have created characters that are adversely affected by devastating historical and personal events. The history of the African female who has gone through patriarchy, colonization and racism is that of the subjugated; pushed into a certain class and position. She is therefore

faced with fragmentation, alienation, filled with despair and loneliness and these adversely affect her personality. As such, patriarchy, oppression, armed conflicts, racial segregation and wars which produce unhealthy environment that leads to psychological and emotional trauma for the female are evident in the novels under study.

The segregation of Blacks in South Africa is another social dilemma that attracted global attention. Apartheid was a system of racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa between 1948 and 1991. As a policy, apartheid was embraced by the South African government shortly after the ascension of The National Party (NP) during the 1948 general elections leading to serious segregation with regards to public facilities, social events, housing, employment opportunities and pass laws. Two prominent apartheid laws were the Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950. These laws made it illegal for most South Africans to marry or have sexual relations across race. The Population Registration Act of 1950 divided South Africans into Black, White, Coloured and Indian. This division resulted in the forceful movement of non-white South Africans into segregated neighborhoods (Clarkn and Worger). These laws are part of the oppressive political ideology of the apartheid era, and Bessie Head uses her novels to explicate the consequent political problems and the horrible experiences of South Africans who were caught in the midst of apartheid laws. According to Helaly Mohamed, "*A Question of Power* can be seen as an indictment of the governing system in South Africa. It is a system that governs people not as ordinary human beings but according to the color of their skin" (101). Apartheid may not be there in today's South Africa but xenophobia is very much around that area. The level of violence meted out against fellow humans in the name of xenophobia calls for the attention of literary writers to create more awareness about the dangers of such inhuman actions drawing lessons, of course, from past similar experiences like apartheid.

Similar to apartheid is the issue of Rwandan genocide where human beings were killed or allowed to live depending on their height and the shape of their nose. In this case, it is not just a matter of the color of the skin only but the shape of the nose such that Tutsi children from childhood try different methods to change the shape of their noses. Chishugi states that "sometimes we slept with plugs of cotton wool up our nostrils in the hope of widening our noses" (14). These people were embarrassed in the public places time and again before the eventual massacre of 6th April 1994.

The various consequences of colonization, racism and the struggles of Africans for independence are documented by literary writers and scholars. However, most of these experiences are told by male writers from their perspectives but African female writers have contributed in no mean measure to portray the plight and experiences of African females. This informs the selection of texts written by female writers. These texts can be described as trauma narratives as they portray painful experiences and the psychological consequences. They equally reflect some of the life experiences of the authors who are all post-colonial writers.

Literature which serves as a source of entertainment to the society appeals to the intellectual side of the society and youths are a larger part of this. Therefore, the accessibility of these fictional narratives in the academic field is appreciated more than documentaries, news bulletins and heroic adventures but the critical analysis of these narratives based on the trauma theory is poor. In pursuing the call for women liberation and the fair treatment of women by the men with much emphasis on the men "letting the women go" a good attention ought to be given to the society as a whole: male, female, religious, cultural and political organizations. The causes, contributors, events and situations which lead to the horrible experiences of the female and the aftermath effects on her mind as portrayed by literary writers are highlighted in this research.

Therefore, this study focuses on the sufferings of black women which, as portrayed in the selected novels, adversely affect their psyche. The novels selected portray what Laura Brown calls the "private, secret, insidious traumas" (102) "that are often experienced by women, girls, and people of color and which result from ongoing humiliation and degradation in interpersonal relationships rather than from a single extraordinary event" (Kennedy 89). In this study, some socio-cultural factors and characters are examined to establish trauma as well as responses to traumatic experiences. There is also an exploration of trauma in the study of the relationship of language, the psyche, and behaviour through an in-depth journey into the consciousness and subconciousness of the protagonists and some other female characters. Some of the traumatic experiences portrayed in the selected novels under study take place in childhood, as such there is the need to examine the nature of the trauma the victims go through in order to evaluate the impact on their personality bearing in mind that "repeated trauma in adult life erodes the structure of personality already formed, but repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms personality . . ." (Herman 96).

Thus, this research discusses patriarchy and identity crisis as concepts relevant to the study, but trauma and identity crisis are portrayed as resultant effects of patriarchal, social and political inhibitions. Psychoanalytic, trauma and feminist theories are employed for the critical analyses of the selected texts. These theories examine what informs the behaviour of the characters in relation to their social, cultural, political and economic contexts. The various forms of entrapment as portrayed in the selected texts are highlighted and their devastating effects on the psyche of the female are equally analysed using the chosen literary theories. The study also delineates the methods adopted by the female characters in breaking free in order to evolve a new identity. One important aspect of this study is the analysis of the various styles and techniques adopted by the writers of the selected novels. The relationship between the styles and the themes of the novels is established.

It is important to point out that each of the writers of the selected texts provides her protagonist the opportunity to explore memories, process traumatic events and form a new identity. In the course of reviewing her past, each protagonist strives to develop and maintain her female identity. Since literary texts "cultivate a wide variety of values that reveal individual and cultural understandings of the self, memory, and society" (Balaev *Contemporary* 8) this study draws upon literary texts from different authors and different regions of Africa to ensure fair analysis of how the female is caught up in and is almost destroyed by family and public disasters. Examining the experiences and conditions of some female characters in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way From Paradise*, and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*, the research reveals that the female is a casualty of society's structures, policies and organisations.

Statement of the Problem

A careful examination of some works of literary writers and scholars which portray the experiences of the African female shows that they are more concerned with the rights of women and the concept of equality with men. The traumatic effects of these devastating experiences on the mind and character of the female are not given enough attention. The problem of this study is that as far as I know, literary works on the selected novels have not treated the causes and effects of trauma and different ways of healing based on modern trauma theory. This study therefore, investigates the devastating experiences of the female in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise* and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* in order to establish the traumatic effects of physical or oral battering, rape, sexual assault, racial and gender

discrimination, corruption, civil and tribal wars on the mind and character of the female who is usually at the receiving end of unhealthy social conditions.

Purpose of the Study

This study:

- investigates the female characters' experiences as depicted by the writers of the selected novels,
- interrogates the impacts of the traumatic experiences on the female characters,
- examines the different ways the characters react to the experiences, and
- highlights and interprets the stylistic features adopted by the writers which reinforce the themes of their stories.

Significance of the Study

It is believed that this research further captures the attention of writers, scholars and critics in the literary field concerning socio-political laws, structures and conditions portrayed in literary works that restrict the peaceful existence of the female in a society and lead to trauma. Writers and critics may need to apply more of the acknowledged creativity and vision of literature to examine these unpleasant conditions and circumstances portrayed in literature in order to establish what can be avoided.

Methodology

This study adopts the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method produces findings and highlights trends in thoughts and opinions using non-numerical data or statistics. Its analysis is based on individual interpretation. It enables the analysis of meanings, symbols, concepts and characters. In this study, the researcher carries out an in-depth content analysis of the selected texts in order to provide a detailed interpretation of trauma and

identity crisis. To this end, books, journals, magazines, newspapers and encyclopedias are consulted. The internet is also explored for wider perspectives.

Biography of Authors

Bessie Head

Bessie Head was born on 6 July, 1937 in Pietermaritzburg by a wealthy white South African woman and a black servant boy. She never knew her real parents. Her mother was an unstable white woman who was a patient at the Fort Napier Mental Hospital, Pietermaritzburg and her father an unknown black man. Born and raised in apartheid South Africa during the period when interracial marital relationship was illegal, Head suffered so much gender discrimination, poverty and racial segregation. As an infant, Head was first given to a white family for adoption, but as soon as they realised that she was not 'white' they returned her. She was then raised by Nellie and George Heathcote, a "coloured" couple (Guruswamy 15). She left Heathcote's home at the age of twelve for St Monica, a boarding school for coloured girls near Durban, and at the age of fourteen, she found out that the Heathcotes were not her parents, and she was not allowed to visit Nellie.

After qualifying as a teacher, she taught in Clairwood coloured school for two and a half years before travelling to Cape Town where she became a journalist working as a freelance reporter for the *Golden City Post* and later for the weekend magazine *Home Post* in Johannesburg. Head picked up certain writing skills while on this job. Given the political tension of South Africa coupled with the question of her identity, Head got attracted to Hinduism and became a Hindu. She joined the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960 but after the Sharpeville massacre, she was arrested for her PAC activities. On 1 September 1961

she married Harold Head, a journalist, but the marriage failed three years later. In 1964, Head with the help of a writer friend, Patrick Cullinan, bought a one-way exit permit to Serowe where she had secured a teaching appointment. She began writing seriously in 1965 and published a number of works including *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1968), *Maru* (1971), and *A Question of Power* (1973). In 1971 Bessie became seriously ill with depression and delusions and landed in a mental hospital in Lobatse. Bessie Head died on 17 April 1986 in Serowe at a point where she was starting to achieve recognition as a writer (Guruswamy 20). *A Question of Power* is considered as her autobiographical novel.

Nawal El Saadawi

Saadawi's childhood experience of genital mutilation and interaction with girls and women as a medical doctor influences her writings. She is the second child in a family of nine children. She was born in Kafr Tahla, Egypt on 27 October, 1931 and was circumcised at the age of six. Early in life Saadawi's desire for the arts showed as she described her father's house as a place beside the Nile River and beautiful green trees with lots of space to walk and think creatively. Her father was a government official in the Ministry of Education so he insisted that his children be educated. However, her parents were opposed to her becoming an artist so she attended Cairo University and graduated in 1955 as a medical doctor. Saadawi's father had taught his daughter self-respect and to speak her mind. Therefore, having undergone the process of female genital mutilation early in life, Saadawi criticized it in many of her works.

Also, her practice in the medical field exposed her to the physical and psychological challenges of women as well as the hardships and inequalities that they face. In the course of time, she established a connection between these and the oppressive patriarchal and cultural practices; she therefore invested her energy into writing and talking about the injustices against women. She married Ahmed Helmi in 1955 but divorced him two years later and

married Sherif Hatata in 1964. In 1972, she published *Woman and Sex* which became a foundational text of the second-wave feminism. Her political activities coupled with her contributions towards the publication of *Confrontation,* a feminist magazine in 1981 led to her imprisonment by President Anwar Sadat. Saadawi fled from Egypt years after being released from prison. Her earliest writings were a selection of short stories entitled *I Learned Love* (1957) and her first novel was *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* (1958). Some of her other works include *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1977), *Woman at Point Zero* (1975), *The Circling Song* (1978), *God Dies by the Nile* (1985) and in 1987, *The Fall of the Imam* (South African History on Line).

Yvone Vera

Vera was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in September 19, 1964 to Jerry Vera and Ericah Gwetai. She grew up in a period when men go off to war, many return while some never return. An environment where women are ignored, abused and where they struggle to survive. A society where the best a woman can be is a second-class citizen. In 1987, Vera travelled to Europe and studied film criticism and literature. She obtained her first degree, a masters and a Ph.D. She married John Jose, a Canadian she met at Njube High School.

Vera moved back to Bulawayo during her prolific years. In 1997, she was appointed Director of the National Gallery in Bulawayo and in 2004, Vera went back to Canada where she died on April 7, 2005. Her works include: *Nehanda* (1993), *Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1996), *Butterfly Burning* (1998) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002). Her themes cover rape, incest, infanticide, and gender inequality using Zimbabwe as a microcosm of Africa before and after independence. She is also known for her poetic prose style, difficult subject-matter, and strong female characters (Gwetai 10).

Leah Chishugi

Leah, a Tutsi survivor of the Rwandan genocide was born in 1974. She grew up in Goma with her parents and siblings. At the age of seventeen she moved to Rwanda, got married and gave birth to a son while still a teenager at the age of seventeen. She witnessed the genocide which began on 6th April 1994 with the assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana and survived the one hundred days killings. She currently resides in London and works as a nurse. Leah is the founder of the charity organisation Everything is a Benefit, which campaigns for the survivors of the victims of rape and other human rights abuses. She returned home in 2008; spent over two months interviewing roughly five hundred survivors of rape in the villages she visited and delivered food and medicine. According to her documentation, the youngest survivor was one year old and the eldest was ninety. She published *A Long Way From Paradise* in 2010 which is a record of the genocide; more like a memoir.

Taiye Selasi

Taiye Selasi was born in London on 2nd November, 1979 and raised in Brookline, Massachusetts. She is the elder of twin daughters as such Taiye is a variation of her given name Taiwo, meaning first twin in Yoruba, her mother's language. She is of Ghanaian and Nigerian origin but describes herself as a "local" of Accra, Berlin, New York and Rome. Selasi has a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from Yale, and Master of Philosophy in International Relations from Nuffield College, Oxford.

In 2005, Selasi published an essay entitled "Bye-Bye, Babar" in which she describes the concept Afropolitanism. This is a term meant to describe a new generation of African emigrants with global citizenship; a concept she experiments in *Ghana Must Go* published in

2013. This concept of Afropolitanism together with her multiple narrating technique gives the study of trauma as portrayed in her novel a wider scope; establishing the idea that not only illiterate females can suffer trauma. She published a short story "The Sex Lives of African Girls" in 2011 and partnered with David Adjaye to create the Gwangju River Reading Room in 2012. In 2013, Selasi was selected as one of *Granta'*s twenty Best Young British Writers. She is the Executive Producer of *Afripedia,* a documentary series. She is developing *Exodus,* a future documentary about global migration.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED SCHOLARSHIP

Conceptual Framework

Trauma

Trauma and the state of the mind have become part of the developments or trends in post-colonial African literature since 1996. As a field of study it goes back to the early twentieth century, which was the time when Sigmund Freud developed his theory of psychoanalysis but Joanna Bourke argues that before Freud "John Eric Erichsen, professor of surgery at University College Hospital in London, first used the word 'trauma' in the sense we use it today when he coined the term 'railway spine', drawing a link between physical states and nervous disarrangement. His central idea was that physical injury to the spinal cord caused nervous symptoms" (3). Trauma is an injury which produces a painful, shocking or stressful effect on an individual's body or mind. It is the result of a devastating experience.

Rebecca Flatow et al state that "individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (33). Similarly, Weiner and Craighead state that "Psychological traumas include emotional shocks that have an enduring effect on the personality, such as rejection, divorce, combat experiences, civilian catastrophes, and racial or religious discrimination . . . . Some of such events early in life may be the foundations for adult neuroses or psychoses" (9). Trauma can be experienced by a group of people as well as by an individual. A group of people could be victims of war,

natural disasters, an accident or armed robbery attacks. Also an individual could be a victim of rape, domestic or sexual abuse. Trauma can lead to a damage on the self, personality or identity of an individual. The effects of trauma may occur immediately or may be delayed and the effects can last for a long time; sometimes, a life time or can be short lived depending on the individual. Flatow et al identify three "Es" in their definition of trauma. These stand for Event, Experience and Effects. The three "Es" explain how an event and its experience can affect an individual's wellbeing. They further assert that "events and circumstances may include the actual or extreme threat of physical or psychological harm (33). The delayed or long-lasting effects of devastating events and how each victim experiences and responds to them are all critical components of trauma. This study therefore examines circumstances which threaten the wellbeing of the female in the selected novels.

Identity Crisis

The concept of identity crisis goes as far back as the transatlantic slave trade when millions of Africans were shipped from Africa to the Americas and Europe. Closely associated with this slave experience are racism, cruelty and dehumanisation. The slaves were divested of their identity since they were forbidden to retain their names, speak their language or maintain the link with their roots. Colonialism closely followed and Africa was subjugated. The white man's ways and language became the tool for acceptable social status, as such some Africans were alienated from their culture, thus identity crisis sets in. According to Dizayi Saman "the question of identity is the most controversial issue and important theme in post-colonial time and literature and it can be regarded as the most important because its crisis exists in all post-colonial communities" (1000), especially the distortion of a people's understanding of their person and culture. The quest for identity is present in many post-colonial communities due to the circumstances, problems and conditions faced by the independent nations. Major

themes in the works written in the post-colonial period have projected the fragmentation and identity crisis experienced by the newly decolonized people. Thus, novelists exposed and expressed the conditions of identity crises that emerged in post-colonial period.

Identity is the state of being whom or what a person is, and his distinctiveness that separates him from others. In other words, it is the sense of being or of becoming that distinguishes one from the others. According to Kobena Mercer "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by experience of doubt and uncertainty" (43). Therefore, within the context of this study, identity crisis to be examined is related to individual females in the midst of estranged patriarchal, social and political structures. Patriarchal oppression, racism and sexual violence are some of such experiences that stifle or offset the identity of the female. Gurvinder Kalra and Dinesh Bhugra state that "Sexual violence against children and women brings with it long-term sequelae, both psychiatrically and socially. Apart from sexual gratification itself, sexual violence against women is often a result of unequal power equations both real and perceived between men and women and is also strongly influenced by cultural factors and values" (244). This study examines such power equations, cultural factors, socio-political laws, patriarchal and post-colonial influences that lead to physical, domestic and sexual violence in some of the novels under study and the aftermath effect on female identity. The study of these novels enlightens the reader on the relationship between the subjective and the historical, the personal and the social as well as the external and the internal.

Patriarchy

Some female characters in African Literature are presented as either docile, totally submissive to patriarchal norms or a those who fight/protest against unacceptable treatment by men. Such representations are as a result of an age-long dichotomy between the male and

female and the internalised socially constructed differences between the sexes which is the basis of inequality and oppression of the female. Aristotle accords the woman an inferior position. In his work *Politics*, Aristotle states "as regards the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject" (1260). Colonial education affirms this differential treatment by stressing the feminine qualities of gentleness and high moral and masculine qualities of boldness, endurance, fearlessness and valour. "When missionaries established the formal educational system in Africa, they did so by infusing some patriarchal ideologies into the educational system, one of which was the belief that boys, rather than girls would benefit more from the school system" (Azuike 81). These are some manifestations of patriarchy which have led to various forms of inhuman treatment of the female.

Patriarchy literally means the role of the father and it is derived from the Greek word "patriarkhes" meaning "father of a race." Patriarchy therefore refers to rulership by the male head of the family. It is male dominance by any means necessary. Hooks Bell defines patriarchy as a "political – social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence" (1). Similarly, Rubaya and Jairos are of the view that patriarchy "is the manner in which men as a social group exploit, dominate and oppress women as a social group" (61). They further assert that "patriarchy had damaged the wings of females from ancient till modern time" (2). Women are seen as weaklings and are subjugated. In *Things Fall Apart* which is considered the formal beginning of African Literature, Achebe portrays this patriarchal society. Okonkwo rules like a god in his home and no one dares to talk or express personal feelings. The same situation is obtained in other African communities where men lord it over women. A patriarchal society is "male-centred

and – controlled; organised and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains . . .” (Abrahams and Harpharm 125). The entrenchment of patriarchal norms into the fabrics of some African communities creates the impression of patriarchy as a religion. Njoku Theresa sees patriarchy as the manifestation of a universal power game. Dominating others to the point of inflicting pain on them is an element of patriarchal power. This power game takes different forms and women are excluded from it (277).

Over the years, patriarchy became a system in which males hold primary power manifested in political leadership, social, cultural and religious spheres where fathers exercise authority over women and children. Any society that upholds the rule or governance of males alone is patriarchal. Some terms frequently associated with patriarchy are male chauvinism, sexism and male dominance. In the African setting, fathers and brothers are the custodians of the females’ personality and sexuality. This male-dominated socio-cultural life entraps the protagonists and some other female characters in the novels under study leading to psychological trauma and some behavioural problems.

Theoretical Framework

Psychoanalytic Theory

Prior to the 19th century, Aristotle had evolved a theoretical stand that art, especially tragedy, has the ability to affect the emotion of the reader. He argues that the action to be imitated should be such that can elicit the feelings of pity and fear which lead to catharsis – the purgation of the emotion. Aristotle’s theory can be considered a psychological one because it indicates an effect on the emotion.

However in 19th century, Sigmund Freud proposed his psychoanalytic theory which increased the understanding of human personality. In two of his books: *Studies in Hysteria* co-authored with Joseph Breuer (1895) and *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), Freud put forth his theories about the working of the human psyche, causes of hysteria, the effect of traumatic experiences and the concept of psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis was coined in 1896 by Freud, and it refers to a body of ideas he developed in the 1890s in the course of treating his patients. It is a branch of psychology which deals with the investigation and treatment of emotional and behavioural problems through interviews that bring to light events in the patient's early life. Freud studied the mind and discovered the psychological attributes that make up the mind. He believes that many of his patients' problems like anxiety, depression and sexual dysfunction are the results of painful experiences they had gone through, especially as children. He uses psychoanalysis as a therapeutic method for treating mental disorders. This he does by looking into the relationship between conscious and unconscious elements in the patient's mind thereby bringing into consciousness repressed fears and conflicts through the method of free association and dream interpretation.

Psychoanalytic theory is the theory of personality development and its dynamics. In literature, psychoanalytic criticism is ". . . the study of the psychological types and principles present within works of literature . . ." (Wellek and Warren 81). It is a theory that brings to light hidden aspects of human life and behaviour which writers explore in the characters they create. Shamaila Dodhy asserts that "using psychoanalytic theory in the study of literature is essential because it is a productive way of exploring psychology through depictions of emotional strife of characters, the memory of traumatic events, and the struggle to overcome anxiety" (234).

Psychoanalytic theory is used to study characters and societies in a work of art in isolation from the author. The critic applying this theory is "interested in the psychological drives of a character and what makes a character to act in certain ways he/she does" (Asika 308). This is because psychoanalytic theorists believe that human behaviour is deterministic and is governed by unconscious drives. This therefore rules out the idea of freewill in human beings. Psychoanalytic approach helps the critic to study characters in a work of art based on universal human psychology. The critic therefore becomes a "psychoanalyst searching for the subconscious patterns which motivate a character" (Scott 72).

Some of Freud's principles and explanations which have great impact on the way we understand literary texts are the unconscious, the repressed memory, the tripartite psyche, the significance of sexuality and the importance of dreams. Freud discovered the role unconscious elements play in the life and behaviour of human beings. Certain ill-treatments, fantasies, desires or fears during childhood are suppressed and buried in the unconscious but affect the behaviour of the individual in adulthood. Ann Dobbie acknowledges this when she states that "the early years therefore encompass critical stages of development because repression formed at that time may surface as problems . . ." (54) ranging from unhappiness, depression and queer behaviours.

Freud acknowledges the id, ego and superego as the three aspects of the human psyche. Dobbie further explains that the id is the source of the psychic energy and psychosexual desires. It is the pleasure seeker and operates without thinking of morals, ethics or values (53). The id is part of the psyche that tends towards the unconscious. The ego is the second part of the psyche and it acts as a mediator between the id and the superego. It is governed by the reality principle as it delays the gratification of the id's desires or looks for acceptable ways of expressing such desires. It is close to consciousness. The third psyche, the superego is driven by the morality principle and it is our sense of right or wrong. In it you find the

moral standards we acquire from our parents and care-givers. The superego is similar to what is known as the conscience. It is important to note that the interactions among the id, ego and superego determines human behaviour as well as approach to the world and the demand of the id and superego upon the poor ego is what causes anxiety in human beings.

Freud postulates the significance of sexuality: the idea that the three stages of development humans go through in childhood directly affect their sexuality. "Infancy and childhood are periods of intense sexual experiences during which it is necessary to go through three phases of development that serve specific physical needs, then to provide pleasure if we are to become healthy functioning adults" (Dobbie 54). The first stage is the oral phase characterised by sucking. This is followed by the anal stage when the child discovers a part of the body that provides sexual pleasure. The third and final stage is the phallic stage. The child discovers the pleasure of genital stimulation at this stage. It is important a child goes through these stages successfully so as to have a sound personality as an adult. "If however these childhood needs are not met, the adult is likely to suffer arrested development. The mature person may become fixated on a behaviour that serves to fulfill what was not satisfied at an early stage" (Dobbie 54).

Freud in *Interpretation of Dreams* states that "it may be that we are all destined to direct our first sexual impulses towards our mothers and our first impulses of hatred and violence toward our fathers . . ." (138). He recognises this as the cause of Oedipus' behaviour in *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles. When a male child forms an erotic attachment with his mother and desires her unconsciously but fearing castration by his father, he represses his desires. If the child however fails to complete the cycle of development by identifying with his father and anticipates his own sexual union, his repressed desires will spring up in his adulthood. Freud calls it Oedipus complex and it is what culminates in Oedipus killing his father (his rival) and having sexual relation with his mother.

A similar case is evident in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* where Paul hates his father and is taken in by his mother's love. Even though Paul does not come to the point of having sex with his mother, his passion for her is so strong that he can't relate intimately with other women. He cannot love another woman because his mother is the strongest power in his life. As such when Paul comes in contact with Miriam, there is a split; a manifestation of Oedipus complex.

Ernest Jones, Freud's colleague and biographer points out this oedipus complex in his work/essay *Hamlet and Oedipus*. Jones is of the opinion that Hamlet delayed killing Claudius because of his disordered mind which is as a result of the effects of his repressed desires for Gertrude, his mother. His sexual attachment to his mother makes him treat Ophelia cruelly. As such killing Claudius for marrying his mother is like killing himself because he desires the same thing as Claudius does. It is this oedipus complex that manifests in his depressive feelings and manic behaviours.

Carl Jung a follower of Freud extended Freud's theory of the unconscious by putting forth the concept of collective unconsciousness which manifests in myths and archetypes developed better by Northrop Frye. Jacques Lacan equally expounded on the unconscious theory to assert that language shapes our conscious and unconscious.

African critics have equally explored Freud's theory of the unconscious and repression to explain the behaviour of the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. Certain repressed experiences in Okonkwo's memory are the driving force behind his actions. According to Nweke Benedict, "Okonkwo behaves like someone seemingly driven by forces within him, of which he is ignorant. And these forces are repressed materials which had been lodged within his unconscious from his childhood" (19). Evidently, Achebe demonstrates that Okonkwo hated his father because he was "lazy and improvident and was incapable of

thinking about tomorrow . . . Unoka the grownup was a failure. He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat. People laughed at him because he was a loafer, and they swore never to lend him any more money because he never paid back" (Achebe 3-4). Okonkwo as a little boy had resented his father's failure and weaknesses (Achebe 10). He suffered insults from his peers: ". . . he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was agbala. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that agbala was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who has taken no title" (Achebe 10). These unpleasant experiences may have affected the young Okonkwo psychologically. As a result of these, Okonkwo hated his father as well as anything or anyone that reminds him of his father. He ". . . was ruled by one passion – to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness" (Achebe 10).

Unfortunately these repressed psychological events do not give up, they become the driving force behind Okonkwo's actions and behaviour. He has no patience with unsuccessful men and with his own son who he considers a replica of Unoka. Okonkwo also "ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his children" (Achebe 9).

Furthermore, Nweke asserts that the repressed unpleasant experiences are responsible for Okonkwo's ill treatment of the women in his life:

> Okonkwo displaces his anger which would have been directed against his father to the 'woman'. Woman represents to Okonkwo a 'non-man', 'a failed man', 'inability to be a man'. And to be a man, one should exhibit masculinity in its rawness; be in control and in charge of his home and wives; possess strength to work hard; be wealthy; acquire titles that distinguish him from feminine men and above all be able to kill

> for a cause if possible. Women in the society Okonkwo comes from do not have the above privileges, powers and positions. Because of this, any man who does not fit into his perception of a man, like his father is a failure. (22)

These repressed memories create fear in Okonkwo: "but his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It is deeper and intimate …. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father" (Achebe 9-10). Nweke states that: "some repressed materials assert themselves and are displaced into acts of aggression and bravery" (24). Okonkwo's rash decisions and actions and all the killings he carries out in the novel could be seen as his attempt to kill every reflecting image of his father. His impatience with people and things and passion for force show that he is being controlled by the id aspect of the personality which, according to Freud, operates without thinking of morals, ethics and societal values or repercussions. Ikechukwu Asika and Jane Ifechelobi assert this by stating that the id "is lawless, and selfish. The id can be a socially destructive force, for unrestrained and uncontrolled id could aggressively seek to gratify its desires without any concern for law, customs or values. It can even be self-destructive in its drive to have what it wants (200). This captures Okonkwo's case because he destroys himself. He dies shamefully almost like his father; not being properly buried and mourned by the people he fought for. Abida Parveen & Samina Yasmin are also of the view that there is the presence of Oedipus complex in Okonkwo. Bearing in mind that he resents his father who could not provide for and take adequate care of his wife and children; Okonkwo could have become attracted to his mother, and works hard to support her.

It is important to point out here that not all the above Freudian principles are fully applicable to the novels under study. Aspects of repression, the unconscious principle, the significance of dreams, the importance of sexuality and the tripartite psyche of the psychoanalytic theory are employed in the analysis of the physical and psychological trauma of some female

characters entrapped by patriarchal and social norms. However, more emphasis in the course of the analysis will be on the first three. The theory will be used to decipher and possibly interpret some concealed meanings within the texts under study and the actions of some characters. Approaching the selected novels from the psychoanalytic and trauma angle is important. According to Martina Kopf:

> . . . it seems that when it comes to psychic suffering and psychic realities marked by violence and suffering, secondary literature persists with the same assumption Nyasha, Dangarembga's protagonist in her novel *Nervous Conditions*, has to confront: 'But the psychiatrist said that Nyasha could not be ill, that Africans did not suffer in the way we had described (201-202)'. This assumption seems to be so strong that even when an author settles her narratives explicitly in the inner, psychic and mental reality of her protagonists, and traces the experience of violence and hurt from an inside perspective, African literature studies have been reluctant to draw on insights from psychology and psychoanalysis. (97-98)

It is therefore a terrain which yearns for more attention in the criticism of African literature.

Trauma Theory

Cathy Caruth, who is recognized as a pioneer of trauma theory explains that trauma is derived from the Greek word "trávma" which means physical wound, but in the literary field it is a "wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). However, Freud was the one who changed the meaning of the term trauma from indicating physical injury to psychological injury. "If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing,

and it is at this specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature meet" (Caruth 2). Caruth and Shoshana Felman are two prominent members of the Department of Comparative Literature at Emory who have been working creatively on the intersection of trauma, literature, and psychoanalysis. Caruth wrote an introduction to a collection of essays titled *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and in 1996 she published *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. On the other hand Shoshana Felman's book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1991) which she wrote in collaboration with Dori Laub and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* lunched both writers into the field of trauma theory.

Early trauma theory portrays trauma as an event that is not representable, an unsolvable problem of the unconscious which functions in literature as the unspeakable void. This early trauma theory portrays trauma as having some neurobiological features that refuse representation, cause dissociation and irreversible damage to the psyche (Balaev 1). All these were the main issues in the discussions that "emphasized the extent of profound suffering from external source, whether that source is an individual perpetrator or collective social practice" (Balaev 1). Caruth describes trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic event in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (181). Caruth's classic trauma model relies on psychoanalytic features of trauma: repression, repetition and dissociation. She further explains that trauma apart from being a difficult experience is also an unclaimed experience, "not one's own." "The impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (9) but Baleav contradicts this stand by stating that: "If the larger social, political and economic practices that influence

violence are the background contexts or threads in the fabric of a traumatic experience in the first place, then trauma's meaning is locatable than permanently lost" (8). Both psychiatrics and psychoanalysts explore trauma theory and conclude that "trauma is embodied in the event which afterwards return to life as forms of memory, nightmares, or flashbacks" (Shamaila 234). The portrayal of these symptoms of trauma in fictional narratives makes them somewhat difficult to digest. Caruth further argues that "the phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience" (4). This situates the study of trauma within the interdisciplinary level.

Furthermore, Dodhy, S.1, et al are of the view that researchers who have worked on trauma studies in the 1990s focused on "the sufferings of Whites like in the Holocaust and war veterans of Vietnam but less attention has been paid to the sufferings of black women" (1825). Rosanne Kennedy and Jill Bennett have argued that "trauma studies have been circumscribed by its predominant focus on Euro-American events and experiences and particularly the Holocaust. We called for a transformation of the field from a monocultural discipline grounded in a psychoanalytic methodology to a mode of enquiry that can inform the study of memory within a changing global context" (86-87). Their concern was that trauma studies failed to address non-Western memories of trauma and loss. They were also concerned about the denial of opportunities for understanding the historical traumas and sufferings of other cultures transmitted through literature by the Western orientation of trauma studies (Kennedy and Bennett 87). This concern gave rise to a review of the concept bearing in mind the universality of trauma.

However, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III) of the American Psychiatric Association accorded trauma its official recognition. This association defines trauma "as a serious injury or a threat to the physical integrity of the self in the form of an overwhelming, sudden, and inassimilable experience" (Visser 253). Since its official entrance into *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association* in 1980, trauma is seen as "a violent event that interrupts the linear temporality of the self. As a matter of fact, the traumatic event is so overpowering that it eludes a possible verbalisation or representation …, the event revealing itself only symptomatically and belatedly through flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, hyper arousal or stark avoidance" (Borzaga 28). The Manual is of the view that an event is considered traumatic when it results in the actual or threatened injury, death, sexual violation or threat to the physical integrity of the person exposed to the trauma and when the person's emotional response to the traumatic event includes intense fear, helplessness, or horror (Ruglass and Kendall-Tackett 5). Some African literary fiction including the selected texts of this research are replete with such threats to individual personality and negative emotional responses; thus placing a demand for critical studies based on trauma theory.

Irene Visser further explains that "the metaphor of trauma often used in trauma theory is that of a sudden, sharp piercing of a membrane, as, for instance, by a sharp object implanted in the psyche, where it remains in its original form, hidden behind the screen of consciousness, but making itself known through a series of symptoms" (253). This explanation of trauma as "sudden" or "unexpected" excludes the prolonged years of hurt and repression of patriarchal and social structures of African society but the description of its retention in the psyche resulting in fear hallucination which culminate into a threat to the individual's integrity and wellbeing captures the tenets of trauma theory. Trauma is not only a singular sudden or

unexpected event; it equally refers to series of unpleasant events taking place over a period of time.

This history, various definitions and perceptions of trauma are "filled with contradictory theories and contentious debates leaving both psychologists and literary scholars to work with varying definitions of trauma and its effects" (Balaev 2). Nevertheless, Visser is of the opinion that reviews "have made the definition more inclusive, allowing trauma to occur along a continuum of responses" (253). Rather than seeing trauma just as a product of a singular event, most postcolonial literary studies have situated trauma in specific historic and societal perspectives. "The trick of trauma theory is that the individual protagonist also functions to represent and convey an event that was experienced by a group of people, either historically based or prospectively imagined" (Balaev 155). Also, Stef Craps argues in his "Caruthian theory", that "if trauma studies are to have any hope of redeeming its promise of ethical effectiveness", the social and historic relations must be taken into account" (Qtd in Visser 254). Some scholars and critics have studied trauma within social, rhetoric, semiotic, psychological, neurobiological and cultural contexts. This has led to works that portray the social, political, cultural as well as psychological components/implications of traumatic experiences. Thus moving away from the idea of being "unrepresentable", the new model of trauma theory "suggest that criticism may explore trauma as a subject that invites the study of the relationship between language, the psyche and behavior without assuming the classic definition of trauma as unrepresentable" (Balaev 4).

Balaev further explains that Psychological trauma is a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of a distressing event. It "refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and standards by which one evaluates society" (149). Trauma comes from one's inability to cope with the emotions coming from an unhealthy experience. Some causes of trauma are oppression,

discrimination, police brutality, bullying, domestic violence, catastrophic events, war, treachery, betrayal, rape and sexual abuse.

This study adopts the pluralistic trauma approach/model which accepts the classic idea of trauma as "silent haunting" thereby underscoring the level of damage done to the psyche as well as the modern trauma theory which asserts the reality of trauma. This pluralistic approach highlights the various representations of trauma in literature and society, lays emphasis on the harm caused by a traumatic experience and also the various sources that inform the definitions, representations and consequences of traumatic experiences (Balaev 6):

> Paying attention to the specificity of trauma does not exclude the fact that social, semantic, political, and economic factors are present in the experience and recollection of trauma . . . It is more likely to acknowledge both the neurobiological and social contexts of the experience, response, and narratives, as well as the possibilities that language can convey the variable meanings of trauma. (Balaev 7)

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) of the American Psychiatric Association included post-traumatic stress disorder in 1980 after it was discovered that "the psychological syndrome seen in survivors of rape, domestic battery, and incest was essentially the same as the syndrome seen in survivors of war" (Herman 32). The three main symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder which reflect in trauma theory are: hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction. Some of these symptoms are observable in the protagonists and some other female characters of the novels under study.

According to Ruglass Lesia and Kathleen Kendall-Tackett: "it was previously believed that exposure to trauma was outside the realm of normal human experience, but research has shown that traumatic events are quite common and can have long-lasting, even lifelong, consequences. Trauma exposure cuts across all walks of life, regardless of age, race,

ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, and cultural background" (6). As such the essence of this study is to critically examine the personal, private and secret experiences of females in the society and in the hands of those they love and depend on. It seeks to uncover the meaning of the various events that constitute an assault on the integrity and safety of the female. These events in the selected works which are seen as traumatic are analysed to portray their impacts on the victims and to show that trauma is not an unusual event rather its presence and threat exist in the society.

Thus the selected novels cut across regions of Africa in order to examine the universality of trauma. Balaev suggests that "extreme experience cultivates multiple responses and values. Trauma causes a disruption and reorientation of consciousness, but the values attached to this experience are influenced by a variety of individual and cultural factors that change over time" (4). Similarly Ruglass and Kendall-Tackett are of the view that:

> Psychological trauma can occur after exposure to a single event or multiple events compounded over time. The likely impact of a traumatic event is often determined by a variety of factors including individual, relational, social and contextual variables, all of which work in concert to bring about resolution of the trauma. Some individuals have significant protective factors that promote resilience in the face of trauma exposure. Others experience immediate distress after the trauma, which resolves without intervention. Still others experience significant distress and difficulty recovering that result in lifelong functional impairment. (6)

This is why in the novels under study, some characters who go through traumatic experiences are able to cope while others degenerate into depression and psychological or mental disorder. With the patriarchal system on ground in Africa, issues that arose from colonial and

post-colonial experiences deepen the effects of trauma on the people especially for the female who is doubly traumatized and many a times goes through identity crisis.

Feminism

As earlier mentioned in the problem of this study, the focus of this research is not necessarily on gender equality yet, there is a need to highlight the theory of feminism bearing two things in mind, first is the choice of female writers and their female protagonists, second, the issues raised which give rise to trauma are some aspects questioned by feminism.

Cultures and traditions for centuries portrayed women as inferior creatures. As far back as the Garden of Eden the woman is blamed for the judgment of God on man and eviction from paradise. Ogbazi, describing the state of women calls it a ". . . protracted cholera-killing blow" (*History* 52) which makes them groan in pain. By 1848, this groaning metamorphosed into an outcry: feminism. Feminism is a concept used to reflect ways gender and sex have been used to subordinate the female. It began as a social movement in Europe but has different varieties because the experiences of women differ.

Dobbie points out that Elaine Showalter identifies three phases in the social and literary development of women's history: the feminine phase was from 1840-1880, the feminist phase lasted between 1880-1920 and the female phase from 1920 – present (106). In the first phase women hid their female authorship by using men's names to publish. Charlotte Bronte used the name Currer Bell to publish her novel *Jane Erye* (1847) and Mary Ann Evans used the name George Elliot to publish her novel *Adam Bede* (1859) and *Silas Marner* (1861). In the second phase women protested for equal rights and in the literary world they disapproved the negative depictions of women by male writers. The third phase female writers paid more

attention to the experiences of women in art and literature. They moved from exploring the depiction of female characters in texts authored by men to the analysis of works authored by women. This phase clearly shows a level of openness and frankness in the discussion of sexuality by female writers (Dobbie 107).

Feminism has gone through stages of transformation beginning with the first wave feminism of the 19th century that focused on women's right to vote. Mary Wollstonecraft is a strong voice in the first wave feminism. Both as a child and as an adult, Wollstonecraft observed the injustices and indignities suffered by women. She therefore concludes that women are born into a powerless role. Thus, her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) advocates equality of the sexes. The second wave feminism existed in the 1960s and 1970s and was characterized by the women's liberation movement for equal legal and social rights, a search through history to establish a female literary tradition and a decry against various forms of violence and abuse. The works of Betty Friedan and Virginia Woolf were prominent within this period. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf insists that a woman must have money and her own room before she can write fiction. According to Habib, "the most obvious meaning of this claim is that women need financial and psychological independence in order to exercise their creative potential" (47). Therefore financial freedom and freedom of the mind become paramount for a female writer. The third wave feminism of the 1990s continued as a reaction to issues raised in the second wave. Issues about sexuality, family, domestic violence and rape are given more attention in the third wave feminism.

As a literary theory, feminism studies gender inequality in literary works. This means that it analyses the experiences and roles of the female in addition to patriarchal laws that seem natural. African feminism believes in the coexistence of the man and the woman but addresses marginalisation, exploitation and oppression of the woman which are strengthened by culture, customs and traditions. Some of the themes under feminism are oppression,

patriarchy, stereotyping, subservience and subjugation. Patriarchal restrictions of the female are what gave rise to the feminist theory which questions gender relations between the male and the female. As such African female writers respond to this with their creative works. In their works they project the plight of the African female and question social and cultural practices that endanger the life of the female. This is a dangerous task because the female writer just like her male counterpart, uses her work to bring about change in the society but when this change is not favourable to the male dominated power structure, the female writer's life is at risk. As a result of this, female writers like Bessie Head, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera went on exile while Nawal El Saadawi was imprisoned for some months.

African female writers and scholars have improved on feminism to come up with varieties of critical concepts which centre on the problems of the female in society. Some of these concepts are Womanism, Motherism and Snail Sense Feminism. Alice Walker puts forth Womanism as a theory of completeness. Women should see men as complementary and be committed to the wellbeing of men and women. Motherism, propounded by Catherine Acholonu appreciates the role of motherhood in the society; the idea that the African woman is a nurturer and a matriarch. Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo's Snail Sense feminism stresses good education, dialogue and negotiation. The idea behind this variety of feminism is the snail's ability to negotiate its environment no matter how tough. With a lubricated tongue, the snail gets round obstacles be they rocks or thorns.

All varieties of feminism agree on the marginalization of women and even though female writers cut across race and ethnicity, Mariama Ba cautions every woman writer to ensure an all aspect presentation of the position of women in her work (qtd in Ajavi-Soyinka 36). In addition, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie assigns two responsibilities to the woman writer: "first to tell about being a woman; secondly, to describe reality from a woman's view, a woman's

perspective" (5). This is what writers of the selected novels have succeeded in doing which informs the necessary step to critically examine their creative works.

Review of Related Scholarship

Violence against the female is a major cause of trauma and identity crisis. Violence here goes beyond beatings to include forced marriage, rape, sexual harassment, circumcision, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilisation, sex trafficking and forced prostitution. Kofi Annan states that "violence against women knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. It is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, perhaps the most pervasive" (Quoted in Kimani 2). Similarly the Johns Hopkins study points out that violence against women goes beyond brutalisation by individuals. "The prevalence of the phenomenon cuts across social and economic situations, and is deeply embedded in cultures around the world so much so that millions of women consider it a way of life" (Kimani 3). Psychological effects of sexual violence which today have equally become a major problem were not given serious attention early in the literary field.

The first substantial study of rape trauma on the title 'Patterns of Response among Victims of Rape' by Sandra Sutherland and Donald J. Scherl was published in 1970 in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. "They were the first to delineate the 'normal' and predictable psychological after-effects of rape" (Bourke 26). This was followed four years later by the publication of Ann Wolbert Burgess' and Lynda Lytle Holmstrom's analysis of ninety-two (92) rape victims admitted to the emergency room of Boston City Hospital in The *American Journal of Psychiatry*. In 1976, this journal for the first time devoted a good portion of an entire issue to discuss the psychological effects of rape. That same year, the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* also published an important article, "The Rape Victim:

Psychological Patterns of Response" (Bourke 26). From that point onwards studies of traumatic effects of sexual assault became prominent. A local organization in Zaria, Nigeria, found that sixteen per cent (16%) of patients with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) were girls under the age of five, a sign of sexual assault. In the single year 1990, the Genito-Urinary Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe, treated more than 900 girls under the age of twelve for STDs. Such sexual assaults, according to a World Health Organisation publication, put African women and girls at higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases than men and boys (Kimani 3) but beyond the risks of sexually transmitted diseases is the high risk of trauma and its consequences which authenticates the importance of this study. Patriarchal, colonial, social, political and racial ideologies which perpetuate trauma are challenged in this research in order to put forth a female-centred vision of society.

Discussing Vera's novels Ogbazi states that they:

> … are primarily her representations of the devastating impact of the emerging social forces on the lives of the people. For her, even when the toll of these historical events is more on the humans generally, women are worst victims essentially because the advent of colonization exacerbated the already injurious forms of subjugation that are incorporated in the African patriarchal system which, in the main, propagates and perpetuates inimical subtle types of silencing. (*UJAH* 111)

How these females grapple with and overcome these silencing and devastating situations is an aspect of this study. Aaron Mupondi while analysing the choice of words in the title of the book *Sign and Taboo: Perspectives on the Poetic Fiction of Yvonne Vera* asserts that "The 'sign' part of the title refers to Vera's use of symbols and images to signify meaning and reality in her works. The 'taboo' part refers to such events as rape, incest, abortion, suicide,

murder and women's other expressions of freedom in the author's works" (219). In this research, the taboos that Vera portrays are examined to evaluate their psychological impacts.

Meg Samuelson observes how sexual violence perpetrated on women by men in Vera's novels traumatises women into silence: "Silence is posed as the standard response to the trauma of colonial and national rape. This silencing operates most fully under the restrictions of taboo, which mute the cry of pain from the female body" (Muponde and Taruvinga 15). This study delineates the crisis of identity as a result of this silenced state of the traumatised female. Samuelson equally projects the idea of an allegorical reading of *Under the Tongue* "using rape to signify colonial invasion into the land occupied by the Shona and the post-independence betrayal of Zimbabweans by a national government" (Muponde and Taruvinga 93). In the world of Zhizha, women "are not treated with respect. They are raped and abused, silenced and ignored. The land too, is exploited for its mineral resources and defiled by a violent war…" (Muponde and Taruvinga 97). In this research however, an attempt is made to analyse the psychological impact of rape on the victims.

Dodhy et al point out the role of "secure base and safe haven which function as a means of re-constructing the broken-self of the protagonist" (1821). This safe heaven is the affectionate attachment figure which has comforting and healing effects on the suffering protagonist. "Providing a safe haven includes being available to the victim, giving space and time for open communication, showing interest in the problems, worries, anxieties of the other" (Dodhy et al 1822). This study examines the impact of this type of relationship in the lives of the protagonist of the selected texts. Similarly, "an early disruption in the mother-child dyad is a significant contributor to subsequent psychical disorders in these adults. A child is able to cope with the outside world when he knows that he has a protective and nurturing parent or caregiver. Without an attachment figure, he suffers serious psychological and social impairment" (Dodhy et al 1822). This observation is applied in the study of the protagonists

of the selected novels in order to establish that the absence of a bond with their mothers contributes to their identity problems. The study therefore examines the protagonists' dire need of attachment to some other females in the bid to conquer the trauma of oppression. Furthermore, John Bowlby states that "attachment theory regards the propensity to make intimate emotional bonds to particular individuals as a basic component of human nature, already present in germinal form in the neonate and continuing through adult life into old age" (120–121). Similarly, Samuelson argues that victimised women are redeemed by other women (Muponde and Taruvinga 219). Beyond this, this study analyses the symbolic therapeutic role of certain female characters in the novels under study to see the positive effect on the minds of the protagonists.

Still on the emotional trauma of rape, Samuleson is of the view that remembering a horrible experience brings healing to the mind: "the past, then urgently needs to be remembered: it needs to be recalled and re-configured. This act of 're-membering' is imbued with revolutionary power in *Under the Tongue*, when it is described as a flame. Memory, literally, becomes a new Chimurenga or force that will sweep through the land, cleansing and purifying it" (Muponde and Taruvinga 94). Samuelson further argues that rape is a form of oppression of women by men, and women can only genuinely recover from rape through memory; that is by confronting the incident and coming to terms with reality. According to her "the violated, dismembered female body moves to the centre of the narratives as Vera's novels envisage the means by which the raped body can find recovery. The recovery and reconstitution of the body itself is located in the act of re-membering" (Muponde and Taruvinga 93). According to Ogbazi, Vera assigns a significant role to the act of remembering because "it is essentially the ability to remember that brings about a healing; that re-members, re-constitutes – a kind of stitching together the already dismembered female body" (*Ogirisi* 75-76). While acknowledging this idea of remembering this study examines

the language of the texts to highlight the difficulty of some of the female characters to verbally articulate their rape and other traumatic episodes. The research also portrays the technique that the writers use to bring their female characters to the point of remembering, telling and confronting their horrible experiences and the recovery effect that follows.

Carolyn Martin Shaw observes that Vera vividly projects her stories through an elaborate use of signs, colours and images but this study analyses the symbolic meaning of the above in relation to the theme of trauma in Vera's work. Similarly, Jessica Hemming points out the symbolic use of cloth: "interior dialogues and exterior skins," is Vera's use of cloth to convey meaning in *Under the Tongue*. According to Hemming, cloth symbolises the fragile relationships between characters and the poverty that afflicts them as they use cloths to create physical boundaries between them in one room. Violet Lunga also agrees with the idea that space among other things contributes to the shaping of "identities and destinies" (191) in Vera's novels. This study further focuses on the extent to which poverty, tight and constrained space in the name of accommodation affect the psychological disposition of some characters who perpetrate trauma not just in Vera's fiction but equally in the other selected texts. Also some social forces, events, situations or attitudes as portrayed in Vera's *Under the Tongue* and other selected texts are pointed out in this study especially as it relates to the female and certain inhuman scenes and unhealthy conditions in the novels.

Looking at the circumstances of the men in Vera's novels, Ogbazi explains that "they have no honour left in them to cherish and protect, having been so much deeply hurt, humiliated and brutalized. In their relationship with the women, beneath the external expression of sexual desires, there is an inner wound that will not be easy to heal or erase" (*UJAH* 120). These are men who have experienced the horrors of land dispossession and chimurenga wars and are emotionally destabilized, as such their personalities, outlook on life and quality of moral behaviour have been affected. How these negatively rub off on the females in the lives of

these men as portrayed in the selected texts is what this study explores. Ogbazi further asserts that the protagonists of Vera's novels are:

> … innocent sufferers. They are harmless, defenseless and helpless beings. They have inherited the chaos of their society and they undergo terrible experiences because of the ways the societal set-up impacts on them. They are scape-goats who have been subjected to so much suffering, not because of their shortcomings or failures in life, or their negative innate qualities; or still, not because of their error of judgment, but primarily because their society has imposed these sufferings on them. (Ogbazi *UJAH* 129)

However, this research is not only on the protagonists' sufferings but also the various ways of escape that each protagonist adopts. The study appraises the seeming mental disorder and schizophrenic actions of the protagonists. Paul Zeleza argues that history was central to Vera: "it animated her imagination, framed her stories, her characters, and her literary vision" (9). Thus, this research x-rays the emotional and psychological effects of historical events like colonialism, guerrilla wars, racism, genocide and apartheid on the protagonists of the selected novels.

In his study of Head's *A Question of Power,* Pearse Adetokunbo, avers that the novel "focuses on the problem of good and evil. The novel attempts to explore the sources of evil, to expose its true face, and to show the misery and suffering it inflicts on human life" (86). He also contends that the emphasis of Head's narrative is on the psychological (81), and that "through her epic battle with the inner forces of evil the character Elizabeth comes into the possession of certain life-sustaining truths" (90). This research, therefore, examines what constitutes the good and evil, and analyses the effects of an internalized evil on the human mind using the protagonist as a case study. Pearse further asks: "Given the South African

situation where the whites have imposed a whole range of jargon to define their humanity as opposed to the non humanity of black people, how does one relate to oneself, and how does one relate to others in the society?" (84). The circumstances that led to these questions and how the protagonist responds to them in *A Question of Power* are highlighted in this study. In addition, the above question can also be extended to the other selected texts: given the African patriarchal situation where the males have imposed a whole range of jargon to define their superiority as opposed to the inferiority of the females, how does the female relate to herself, and how does she relate to others in the society? These questions are addressed through the examination of the protagonists' behaviours.

Michela Borzaga states that "there are degrees of trauma, manifold shapes of the damages inflicted upon a subject that has been the victim of emotional, psychological and physical violence" (30). This traumatized subject simultaneously inhabits two worlds: the ordinary, and the extraordinary or the ghostly realm but he always struggles to defeat the extraordinary in the attempt to return to a relatively safe and ordinary life (Borzaga 30). The various degrees of trauma and the types of damages inflicted on the protagonists of the selected texts are examined in this research in order to make appropriate statements on the effects of trauma on the psyche. Still on the idea of a spectacular world in the study of trauma, Borzaga further argues that "whenever one experiences the traumatic violence of the spectacular, another symptom that manifests itself is also what we could call a 'disorder of the imagination,' an imagination that keeps engaging only in the spectacular, in the excess, by constantly reproducing and re-enacting it" (32). Relating this to the novels under study, the characters that are symbols of this extraordinary force will be highlighted and the protagonists' arduous path towards healing will be elucidated.

Flora Veit-Wild, in her study of *A Question of Power* explains that the novel is "a prime example of madness being written into text, a real 'borderline' novel in which the borders

between body and mind, between sanity and insanity, between reality and unreality, are all blurred" (131). This research goes beyond the study of the novel in relation to the question of madness, the divided self, or the concept of the "alien inside" to identify and evaluate the socio-political structures that result in psychological trauma. Mohamed Fathi Helaly sees *A Question of Power* as "an indictment of the governing system in South Africa. It is a system that governs people not as ordinary human beings but according to the color of their skin" (101). He further argues that "In her [Head's] exploration of the struggle of women in general and of the hybrid women in particular, she provides a Marxist perspective into the lives of many of her characters" (102). This study focuses on the struggles of the doubly oppressed females, not just for equality but to overcome psychological trauma and to assert themselves.

Silue Lèfara observes that "Bessie Head also satirizes and castigates the bestiality, the injustice and the racial discrimination which corrodes apartheid South Africa" (221). He further states that "the flashbacks and the memories of apartheid's torture and bestiality force Elizabeth to use her sex as a remedy against anguish and trauma" (219). Lèfara identifies Sello and Dan as Elizabeth's sex partners. This study does not see *A Question of Power* as a satire rather as a dramatization of the difficult life of someone who had gone through psychic trauma and has metamorphosed into a problematic character. It is a work that portrays madness or insanity as a consequence of the bestiality of the apartheid system. The novel is more like a tool to fight against an unhealthy socio-political system. Abdul Wahab stresses that: "in *A Question of Power*, Head uses madness or insanity as one kind of dynamic force to fight back against apartheid, violence, patriarchy, and racial political views because sometimes it is the only possible way of raising a voice against these powerful authorities" (140). Likewise, this research analyses some characters in the novel including Dan and Sello as allegorical symbols of power, evil and brutality of the apartheid era and by extension makes a universal statement against the oppression of the female in the society.

Marita Wenzel is of the opinion that Head posits power relations as a prominent feature in *A Question of Power*. Head's novel specifically exposes "the multi-layered scope of the power relations that are embedded within the fabric of society and history" (Wenzel 51). He questions the mechanism of power and calls male power a manipulative personal, sexual and political tool of degradation of the female. This study takes a look at the outcome of these power relations in the lives of the characters in the novel. According to Shodhganga:

> Women writers in South Africa have had to write against the backdrop of the two most crucial and unchangeable aspects of their lives - being born a South African and a woman. In addition, they have also been writing amidst the intensely political situation in South Africa, but unfortunately, their writings have not received the same attention as that of the male writers. (128)

This strengthens the importance of this study which involves the analysis of Head's *A Question of Power* and other selected texts to highlight the devastating effects of racial and gender oppression. Head "aims at creating a 'new world' of men and women, far removed from the existing status quo of society, a world free from the power centred brutishness and manipulative violence that she had experienced in apartheid South Africa" (Shodhganga 135); a world where power is decentralised and everyone has a part to play for the good of the society. This vision of Head will be analysed in this study while highlighting the oppressive socio- political system portrayed in the selected novels.

Furthermore, Shodhganga notes that Elizabeth's mental trauma is partly due to her perceived lack of womanhood. Her husband has affairs with other women as well as men, an ample demonstration of his male prowess. Shodhganga also asserts that "sex therefore becomes a dirty word for her, and unlike many other women, she loses the one way in which she can exercise power over men" (172). Apart from sexual deprivation, this study explores other

causes of Elizabeth's mental trauma, as well as the protagonist's assertion of her individualism and independence, and the evolution of an identity for herself. Shodhganga also observes that the outsider motif is predominant in the works of Head. Her primary focus is on the roles and identities of women and female individuality. The men, especially those destroyed by women around them are portrayed as outsiders who have no place in her idyllic world (3). Other motifs adopted by Head in her fiction which help interpret her themes are highlighted in this study.

Pauline Uwakwe depicts Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* as an African female bildungsroman which is a portrayal of gender construction in patriarchy. In this set-up "childhood for girls is dotted with silent frustrations that sometimes translate to self defining actions; actions that may be expressed in revolt and are intended to transcend social limitations" (10). She draws attention in her work to the vision of female development in a patriarchal society and the obstacles that they face in the bid to grow and develop. This study goes a step further to examine the psychological consequences of these frustrations and limitations. Uwakwe further argues that "the making of gender identity is a life-long process that starts at birth. This process is manifested in such things as the choice of names for male and female children, the apportionment of domestic duties among male and female children in a household, or the involvement of male children in specific customary rites" (12). These features reflect in the selected texts and necessitate an analysis of identity crisis in this study bearing in mind that this crisis emanates from the conflict between the expectation of family and tradition on one hand, and individual feelings and desires on the other.

In Sue Kim's study of *Nervous Conditions,* she points out that "mere consciousness of the oppressive situation is not enough as shown through Maiguru and Tambu's mom especially. The physical acts of voicing this oppression, narrating all of the concerns, and then, finally, writing this account are what allows for any development at all" (110). This study goes

beyond the analysis of the protagonists' developmental process to the evaluation of the negative effects of oppression on other female characters who accept subjugation.

Terry Adams is of the opinion that for the potential development of Tambu's identity or bildung, she must understand that as a black girl, she is at the intersection of a number of competing claims to truth powered by oppression and based on gender, race and class (6). This study examines the selected texts to highlight the universality of these oppressive mechanisms. The fact that Tambu's brother and uncle who have been educated still perpetrate oppression reinforces the idea of universal oppression. Rosanne Kennedy argues that Dangarembga's awareness of trauma discourses, memory, colonialism and personal experiences of being a black African woman in colonial Rhodesia and postcolonial Zimbabwe, reflect in her fiction. She "innovatively uses irony, humor, and farce to dramatize the absurdities of racism in a colonial society and the impediments to witnessing it, thereby bringing into visibility what is unspeakable in (post)colonial Zimbabwe"(87). The effects of these oppressive principles on the female and the protagonist's struggle to assert herself are discussed in this study. Frank Schulze-Engler studies *Nervous Conditions* within the context of modernity. He argues that "the novel's characters do not establish their identity in reaction to colonialism, but rather through a self-reflexive journey and reassessment of history and tradition. This research does not agree with the above considering the fact that the disruption of the female's identity is as a result of colonization; first, by the Whites and secondly by black men. Thus the reaction against these oppressive forces generates a new identity.

There is a western world's idea that Africans lack psychological sensitivity. A generalization which reflects in the diagnosis and response of the White psychiatrist in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: "but the psychiatrist said that Nyasha could not be ill, that Africans do not suffer in the way we had described. She was making a scene. We should take her home and be firm with her" (206). Nettie Cloete observes that "while female madness - and related

nervous conditions - constitutes a fairly common theme in Western literature, it has not received sufficient attention in African literature, by both male and female authors" (22). Similarly, Supriya Nair states that:

> The neuroses of female subjects are not just devalued but unrecognized, either because pathological behaviors are seen as a natural condition of their unstable psyches, or because they are refused the agency and critical consciousness necessary to react to their psycho-social environment. Although Africa has long been stereotyped in the West into images of illness, madness, devastation, and hysteria . . . madness in some parts of colonial Africa was seen as a largely male phenomenon, the women apparently lacking the self-consciousness necessary to turn mad. (132)

In reaction to the above idea, this study interrogates the female characters of the selected novels to reveal that the African female is not just capable of but actually goes through destructive traumatic experiences that can lead to mental disorders.

Having interacted with scholarly ideas and views about the treatment and experiences of the female in African literature, this study goes beyond mere narration of the devastating experiences of the female or the clamour for equal rights with the men to put forth the traumatic effects of patriarchy, oppression, racism and certain post-colonial structures on the mind and character of the female bearing in mind that there is no difference in terms of psychological harm and the impact of victimization, "between rape survivors and combat veterans, between battered women and political prisoners, between survivors of concentration camps created by tyrants who rule nations and the survivors of small hidden concentration camps created by tyrants who rule their homes" (Herman 3).

It is important to point out that this research is unique because the selected novels are trauma narratives with female protagonists who go through devastating experiences. The research

specifically establishes the psychological consequences of trauma. The content analysis and the analysis of the styles and techniques adopted by the writers are all geared towards achieving this objective. The adverse effects which are visible in the emotional, psychological and total well-being of the female stretch further by robbing off on her relationship with the society at large. A broken and battered female who grapples with grievous situations and constrains imposed on her by certain social arrangements can turn out a social mis-fit.

CHAPTER THREE

PATRIARCHAL ENTRAPMENT, TRAUMA AND IDENTITY CRISIS IN *NERVOUS CONDITIONS, GOD DIES BY THE NILE* AND *GHANA MUST GO*

Patriarchal Entrapment in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

Nervous Conditions presents the double entrapment and suffering that females in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe experience. Dangarembga shows the destructive impacts of colonialism on the indigenous people (which include women) in Rhodesia as well as the oppression of females by males. Rhodesia was a settler colony where the whites' minority deposed local rulers in the 19th century and began to administer the territory. The colony was formerly known as Southern Zambezia rich in gold mines and ruled by Lobengula. In the 1880s, Cecil Rhodes a British colonialist and diamond magnate arrived with his British South Africa Company (BSAC). He obtained a concession for mining rights from King Lobengula in 1888. This became the beginning of betrayal because Lobengula betrayed his people for his selfish interests.

Cecil Rhodes presented this concession to persuade the government of the United Kingdom to grant a royal charter to his British South Africa Company (BSAC) over Matabeleland. He equally sought permission to negotiate similar concessions covering all territory between the Limpopo River and Lake Tanganyika, then known as 'Zambesia'. In accordance with the terms of these concessions and treaties, Rhodes promoted the colonisation of the region's land, with British control over labour, precious metals and other mineral resources. When he became the Prime Minister of the cape colony, he enacted new laws which enabled him to send the people away from their ancestral lands which he confiscated under the guise of industrial enhancement. Rhodes was more than a mere trader, he was an agent of the British

empire who became so influential that South Zambezia was named after him – Rhodesia. He confiscated the most fertile lands and when white settlers arrived from England, they equally confiscated more lands turning the natives into cheap labourers.

The colonisation of the region's land, with British control over labour led to an unsuccessful revolt in 1896-1897 by the Shona people against encroachment upon their lands, by clients of BSAC and Cecil Rhodes. This is known as the first Chimurenga; a Shona word for fight or struggle. Chimurenga is a guerrilla war the people fought in order to reclaim their lands. The land conflict is central to the history of Zimbabwe and to Africans in general. To the African man, his ancestral land is of upmost importance, more like a prized possession. The land gives him a sense of belonging and he is attached to it because of the belief that he gets spiritual protection from it. Land is the abode of ancestors who are part of the living, blessing the work of their hands. The white man's expropriation of the African man's land is devastating, a grand deception and a rape of his most prized possession (Ogbazi *History* 6). The second Chimurenga, also known as the guerrilla war, was a war between the Africans and the white Rhodesian government which led to independence and the emergence of Mugabe as the Prime Minister. His leadership was marred by corruption and injustice leading to a civil war. The people who fought for independence became disillusioned. The devastations of the war reflect in the lives and activities of the people. Tambudzai's grandmother confirms that during the period of Cecil Rhodes, the natives were deprived of their social rights and belongings (Dangarembga 18-19). The most important thing therefore, became the production of food to eat. Education was not of primary importance especially for the female natives. According to Charles Sugnet "the colonial system makes education scarce; sexism determines that boys shall have first access to it" (qtd in Ogbazi *History* 61). This racial situation in addition to African tradition and culture increases the illiteracy of

women in African countries. The situation of women does not change much in the postcolonial period as seen in *Nervous Conditions*.

Within the context of this study, the woman needs to escape from patriarchal tradition which entraps and reduces her to a second class citizen. In Tambudzai's words: "the needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority or even legitimate" (Dangarembga 12). Tambudzai suffers from stereotyped ideological indoctrination which started early in life. When she cannot continue with her education due to financial constraints in the family, her father thinks she shouldn't mind: "is that anything to worry about? Ha-a-a, it's nothing, he reassured me . . . . Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables" (Dangarembga 15). Jeremiah's advice is just as expected in a patriarchal society where "the female is planted in domestic space as a wife and mother, positions which . . . are sustained by the assumption that she lacks abstract thinking skills for public life when compared to men" (Emenyi 121). Patriarchal principles stifle the personality of the female to the extent that her natural desires are considered unnatural or an abomination. Tambudzai desires to accompany her father and brother to the airport to welcome Babamukuru, and she recounts: "my father called me aside to implore me to curb my unnatural inclinations: it was natural for me to stay at home and prepare for the homecoming" (Dangarembga 34). She reads sheets of newspaper in which the bread from mangrosa had been wrapped, her father reacts by saying she is filling her head with impractical ideas which make her useless for the real tasks of feminine living (Dangarembga 34). Her mother who accepts this patriarchal entrapment reinforces the ideology and tells her daughter:

> This business of womanhood is a heavy burden. . . . How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there

> are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! As if it is ever easy. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength. (Dangarembga 16)

The power of words and language is clearly seen in a patriarchal system and in the above passage. "Language plays an important role in controlling women, because by language, these systems implant their ideologies in the women's minds in order to make them follow their rules without questioning" (Raouf 159). Freud himself attests to the effect of words on the human psyche: "with words one man can make another blessed, or drive him to despair; by words the teacher transfers his knowledge to the pupil; by words the speaker sweeps his audience with him and determines its judgments and decisions. Words call forth effects and are the universal means of influencing human beings. Therefore let us not underestimate the use of words . . ." (Freud 2). The patriarchal system uses words and language as a silent weapon to colonise the minds of women thus majority of the women are trapped in their homes, prevented from gaining knowledge and deprived from their rights. Tambudzai's mother who sees no escape from this entrapment drives the lesson home by cautioning her daughter: "accept your lot and enjoy what you can of it" (Dangarembga 20). Carol McMillan observes this stereotypic position of women and states that differences between sexes are "fostered culturally by forcing women to concentrate their activities exclusively in the domestic sphere. This in turn leads to the development of supposedly feminine traits such as self sacrifice and passivity which have the added consequence of inhibiting the development in women of their potential as rational, intellectual and creative beings" (9).

Nhamo, a symbol of patriarchy in the novel does not fail to force his sister into her supposed "second class" position. He leaves his luggage at the bus terminal and sends Tambudzai or Netsai, his sisters to get it. He tells Tambudzai that she cannot go to school because she is a girl (Dangarembga 21); just like Chido who informs his sister: "you are the daughter . . . there are some things you must never do (Dangarembga 119). This means that the life of the female as far as patriarchal laws are concerned is a lesser or inferior life. Nhamo steals Tambudzai's corn cobs after she had suffered to work on her own portion of land to raise the maize. He does this to frustrate her attempt at raising money to go back to school. Even when Tambudzai is chosen to go to mission school after Nhamo's death, it was not for Tambudzai's personal growth and welfare but for the prospective financial contribution to her family: "Tambudzai – must be given the opportunity to do what she can for the family before she goes into her husband's home" (Dangarembga 56). Her first sentence in *Nervous Conditions* jolts the reader to think she is abnormal or callous: "I was not sorry when my brother died. For though the event of my brother's passing and the event of my story cannot be separated, my story is not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia's, about my mother's and Maiguru's entrapment and about Nyasha's rebellion . . ." (Dangarembga 1). This statement shows that the female characters mentioned are entrapped and traumatized at one point in time or the other. Some escape while others do not.

Trauma and Identity Crisis in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

Throughout the story, Tambudzai is conscious of her daily struggles and the nervous conditions that surround her. She is torn between what she desires to be in life and the position that the family and society have carved out for her. The negative picture of womanhood from Tambudzai's parents and brother and their stifling attitudes throw

Tambudzai into a traumatic situation. She internalizes and represses her devastating experiences while growing up, but according to psychoanalytic theory, she does not forget them because they contribute to her bahaviour later in life. Meanwhile, her dreams and aspirations seem bleak since she might never attain them. Crushing her passionate longing, goals and aspirations is like destroying her entire world. These thoughts trouble her for a long time to the extent that she becomes depressed. Psychologists believe that "the psychological disorder known as depression affect millions of people worldwide and is known to be caused by biological, social and cultural factors. The occurrence of psychological disorders including depression is substantially higher for women than men . . ." (Satngor 17). Tambudzai degenerates into sullen silence which is usually one of the psychoanalytic outcomes of trauma. Her silent attitude still becomes an offence to her father who declares it unnatural and threatens to beat her up. Another behavioural outcome of this traumatic situation is that Tambudzai begins to grow distant from her father who is one of the symbols of oppression: "under the circumstances the situation was clear: there was no way of pleasing my father, nor was there any reason to. Relieved, I set about pleasing myself which antagonized him even further" (Dangarembga 34). Affirming the possibility of this attitude in traumatized children Njoku states that "one of the results of such situation is that parental authority gradually loses its force on [the girl]" (79) and she becomes defiant. In addition, Herman observes that traumatised children or adolescents "may call attention to themselves through aggressive or delinquent behavior (110). The result of this according to Dangarembga is that Tambudzai and her father "co-existed in peaceful detachment" (Dangarembga 34).

These gruesome experiences make Tambudzai to severe filial feelings and ties with supposed relations: "my concern for my brother died an unobtrusive death" (Dangarembga 21). These experiences may seem unnoticeable but they are real within her unconscious such that later in life she makes a statement about the unjust treatment: "thinking about it, feeling the injustice

of it, this is how I came to dislike my brother, and not only my brother, my father, my mother in fact everybody" (Dangarembga 12). The effect is such that she does not feel bad when her brother dies. Tambudzai receives the news of her brother's death with coldness. She is not upset about his death as she remembers all that he did to her because as a boy, he alone has the right to Western education. This according to psychoanalytic criticism is the power of the unconscious which Freud sees as a major source of psychic energy that influences human actions. "Unconscious factors have the potential to produce unhappiness, which in turn is expressed through a score of distinguishable symptoms including disturbing personality traits, difficulty in relating to others, or disturbances in self esteem or general disposition" (Beystehner 1). This is why Iroegbu et al caution that "parents, care-givers . . . should be careful in selecting experiences for children . . ." (41).

According to Njoku, "physical, mental and psychological imprisonment results in escape" (181) as such Dangarembga does not leave Tambudzai at this entrapped state like her mother. "The greatest achievement of the novel lies in the novelist's ability to move beyond mere exposition of the social crimes against humanity to powerfully demonstrate through the lives of the main characters the ways out of the degradation . . ." (Ujowundu 143). Therefore Dangarembga presents Tambudzai's desperate strive to escape from patriarchal entrapment. Tambudzai desperately wants to go to school so she struggles to raise her school fees by herself. It is important to note that at this point, the identity crisis stems out of the conflict between what Tambudzai wants to be in life and what family wants her to be. She does not want to be the subservient female whose ideas and needs do not matter so she fights to assert herself. The fight with Nhamo is significant. It is not just a fight for stolen corn cobs which symbolise her ticket to education; it is a fight against what Nhamo stands for: oppression, patriarchy, tradition and culture. Realising that her father's compound, typical a of patriarchal structure represses female potentials, suffocates and traps them, Tambudzai draws upon self

dependence and determination in her search for escape to carve out an identity for herself. Dangarembga sees education as an escape route for the female so she ensures that Nhamo leaves the scene for Tambudzai to continue with her education. Despite her family's varied views over the opportunity to be educated at the mission school she quickly accepts her uncle's offer to take Nhamo's place at the mission school. While there she studies hard and excels and later obtains scholarship to attend a revered convent school. Moyana puts it this way: "the equation here then is logically . . . brother's death = Tambu's escape and subsequent liberation through the pen" (27).

The climax of Tambudzai's traumatic experience is at the point where Babamukuru insists her parents must have a church wedding. According to Babamukuru, Tambu's parents have been living in sin. If then her parents dwelt in evil, how then will one classify the proceeds (including Tambudzai) from that evil relationship: "Naturally I was angry with him for having devised this plot which made a joke of my parents, my home and myself" (Dangarembga 151). "A wedding that made mockery of the people I belonged to and placed doubt on my legitimate existence in this world" (Dangarembga 165). She was so angry with herself for not standing up to her uncle to declare there was no use for that wedding. Tambudzai realized at this point that her uncle had stifled her psychological and intellectual development: "my vagueness and my reverence for my uncle, what he was, what he had achieved, what he represented and therefore what he wanted, had stunned the growth of my faculty of criticism, snapped the energy that in childhood, I had used to define my own position" (Dangarembga 167). The pain of this situation haunts Tambudzai to the point that she internalizes it and her body suffers the pain:

> The next morning, the morning of the wedding, I found I could not get out of bed. I tried several times but my muscles simply refused to obey the half-hearted commands I was issuing to them. Nyashsa talked to me. She tried hard to coax me

> out of bed, but I was slipping further and further away from her, until in the end I appeared to have slipped out of my body and was standing at somewhere near the foot of the bed. . . . (Dangarembga 168)

Gradually, Tambudzai regains the inner strength and ability which helped her stand up to her father and brother and made it to the mission school: "I would not have been here with Babamukuru if I had not been able to stand up to my own father . . ." (Dangarembga167). She therefore accepts her punishment for not attending the wedding "with a deep and grateful masochistic delight; to me that punishment was the price for my newly acquired identity" (Dangarembga 171).

While in Babamukuru's house, Tambudzai gets disillusioned and begins to question her world and the influences it exerts on her. Contrary to her thought that residing in Babamukuru's house will improve her social and gender status through education, her development rather comes from the knowledge that the home of more educated people is still a site of ideological oppression. Her mental picture of Maiguru as her kind of woman and Babamukuru as the perfect man came crashing down:

> Is it true, Maiguru? Do you have a Master's Degree? Maiguru was flattered. 'Didn't you know?' . . . . I thought you went to look after Babamukuru, I said. That's all people ever say. Maiguru snorted. And what do you expect? Why should a woman go all that way and put up with all those problems if not to look after her husband? . . . . You must earn a lot of money, I breathed in awe. My aunt laughed and said she never received her salary. I was aghast. 'What happens to your money?' I asked. . . . When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if – if – if things were – different – But there was Babawa Chido and the children and the family. And does anyone realize, does anyone appreciate, what

> sacrifices we made? As for me, no one even thinks about the things I gave up. (Dangarembga 102-103)

Tambudzai realises that despite her level of education and income, Maiguru is still a patriarchal slave. Baharvand and Zarrinjooee describe Babamukuru as one who "performs his role as a godlike benefactor who helps the wretched and destitute members of the clan" (33) yet plays the role of a colonizer in his home and forces his authoritative power down the throats of his dependants.

Tambudzai also encounters her cousin, Nyasha who outrightly refuses to be subjugated and openly confronts her father. She therefore decides to find a place in-between Maiguru's and Nyasha's extremes by becoming educated, attain a good position in life but not to openly rebel against Babamukuru. "Instead of merely being disgusted with male authority, she learns from the mistakes of the other female characters, devises her own strategy for fighting male chauvinism, and succeeds in forming her own distinct personality by responding to beneficial aspects from both African and Western cultures" (Cloete 45). Her ability to write her own story is the climax of her escape and emancipation from patriarchal entrapment.

Unfortunately, Tambudzai's mother does not escape. She accepts the oppression and injustices. This doesn't come as a surprise because an individual's responses to reality according to Emenyi are "more or less external manifestations of gender roles which have been internalised over a period of time" (120). As such from the patriarchal point of view, "Ma'Shingayi is the paragon of an ideal wife in Rhodesia. She represents the conventional image of an African woman who endures, and works both at home and in the fields without grumbling about her life. She has no voice of her own therefore she is admired by her husband" (Baharvand and Zarrinjooee 31). Her opinions, desires and feelings have no value and are not considered, not even in matters concerning her and her children. Unlike

Tambudzai, she does not know how to handle this so she becomes depressed, falls sick and becomes almost a nervous wreck: "my mother's anxiety was real. In the week before I left she ate hardly anything, not for lack of trying, and when she was able to swallow something it lay heavily in her stomach. By the time I left she was so haggard and gaunt she could hardly walk to the fields, let alone work in them" (Dangarembga 57). Ma'Shingayi remains in this state of depression throughout the story.

Maiguru who is educated also finds herself entrapped by patriarchy. She has no control over her world but lives in accordance with Shona culture which sees the woman as a man's property:

> . . . the men determine the decencies of women in Rhodesia, the women generally play a submissive role at home in order to gain the favour of their husband as decent women would do. Actually, the women are trained to be silent. The woman will be considered virtuous and decent as long as they are obedient workers whose concern is nothing but satisfaction of their husbands' desires. (Baharvand and Zarrinjooee 31)

Maiguru has a masters degree and makes money but cannot use it for her own purpose: "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" (Dangarembga 103). She dislikes this but could only show it through her sarcastic comments in few occasions. One of such is when Tambudzai comes to her house for the first time: "so you have arrived, Sisi Tambu. That is good. I always think there is something wrong with my house when Babawa-Chido's relatives do not want to visit" (Dangarembga 72). She also tries to show her annoyance and frustration when she refuses to shop for Jeremiah's wedding or to give Jeremiah's wife her wedding dress. In the real sense of it Maiguru is scared of her husband such that she could hardly say her mind concerning family matters but when Lucia

disrespects her and freely challenges her husband about Tambudzai's punishment, she finds her tongue:

> 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 ridiculous weddings, that's when they are my relatives too. Let me tell you Babawa Chido, I am tired of my house being a hotel for your family. I am tired of being a housekeeper for them. I am tired of being nothing in a home I am working myself sick to support. And now even that Lucia can walk in here and tell me that the things she discusses with you, here in my home, are none of my business. I am sick of it Babawa Chido. Let me tell you, I have had enough. (Dangarembga 174)

After this show of emotional trauma, she leaves her husband's house but not for long because she thinks she needs a man to protect her, care for her and give her a sense of value. She swallows her pride and keeps silent because she does not have the capability to break out of the patriarchal cage: "she obeyed and served Babamukuru with slavish devotion because she believed to do so would maximize her comfort and minimize her pain.... She willingly sacrificed her freedom in exchange for security" (Njozi 12).

Nyasha's nervous breakdown results from her father's harshness and her inability to handle the imbalance between the liberal lifestyle British education has given her and the gender discrimination in Shona society. Babamukuru her father refuses to understand this but decides to use force to make his teenage daughter conform to Shona society's image of womanhood and when she refuses, he calls her a whore because "sexuality is the primary index for measuring [her] worth" (Emenyi 42). Her father equally makes it clear that she is not equal with Chido, her brother because she is a girl. This is why Chido is free to go out, flirt with girls and come back anytime he feels like but Nyasha is forbidden to come back

later than the stipulated time. According to Baharvand and Zarrinjooee ". . . Babamukuru is the hysteric character and the centre of neurosis in his . . . family, the one who stays well by making the well ones sick . . . the one whose power-complex is fueled by colonialism long suppression of traditional male authority in Africa" (33).

Essentially connected to psychoanalytic principles is the psychological view that parental treatment of children is one of the sources of many adult problems which include personality disorders, emotional problems and mental illness. Psychologists also believe that identity and personality development is crucial at the adolescent stage. The adolescent stage is a period of transition from dependent childhood to independent adulthood. According to Selina Ekpo "the success or failure of an individual's adult life depends, to a large extent, on how the adolescent period is handled both by the adolescent and the adults in his or her life" (138). These psychological issues become critical in Nyasha's life. She is an example of the educated indigenous people in a colonized country. She spent years in England where she learned that the European is superior to the African, became westernised and forgot some aspects of her native culture. Gradually her viewpoint begins to change and she blames her father's violent behavior on the colonizer who turned him into an inferior wreck:

> It's not their fault. They did it to them too. You know they did, she whispered. To both of them, but especially to him. They put him through it all. But it it's not his fault, he's good. . . . Why do they do it Tambu . . . to me and to you and to him? Do you see what they have done? They have taken us away. . . . They've deprived you of you, him of him, ourselves of each other. We're groveling. . . . I won't grovel. Oh no, I won't. I'm not a good girl. I touched her to comfort her and that was the trigger. I won't grovel, I won't die, she raged and crouched like a cat ready to spring. . . . They've trapped us. They've trapped us. But I won't be trapped. I'm not a good girl. I won't be trapped. (Dangarembga 204-205)

The above excerpt clearly describes the problem of trauma and identity crisis; a situation where the victim struggles to define herself.

Not able to evolve an identity from the two existing identities or strike a balance between who she wants to be and who her father wants her to be, Nyasha goes through identity crisis and becomes traumatised. In other to assert his control, Babamukuru forces Nyasha to eat when unknown to him, the symptoms of trauma manifest in Nyasha's eating habits. She loses appetite and begins to eat less by the day: "She rose from the table, her food unfinished. 'Now where are you going?' Babamukuru demanded? 'To my bedroom,' replied Nyasha. 'What did you say?' . . . Now sit down and eat that food. All of it. I want to see you eat all of it" (Dangarembga 85). Thus, mealtimes become the time of extreme tension:

> May I be excused from the table? 'You aren't going anywhere,' her father told her . . . 'I'm not hungry,' Nyasha explained. 'You will eat that food,' commanded the man. Sit and eat that food. I am telling you. Eat it! Christ! Nyasha breathed and with a shrug picked up her fork and began to eat, slowly at first, then gobbling the food down without a break. The atmosphere lightened with every mouthful she took. (Dangarembga 192)

Later Nyasha goes to the bathroom and vomits all she ate. Herman identifies vomiting as one of the disorders that occurs in a traumatized individual. This vomiting signifies Nyasha's unwillingness to digest on one hand, patriarchal order and on the other hand colonization. Herman acknowledges that when a traumatised person is forced to eat, vomiting usually follows. Such a person may even develop "chronic sleep disturbances, eating disorders, gastrointestinal complaints, and numerous other bodily distress symptoms" (108). He further explains that purging and vomiting are a part of a traumatized people's attempt to "obliterate their chronic dysphoria and to stimulate, however briefly, an internal state of well-being and

comfort that cannot otherwise be achieved" (110). The climax of Nyasha's traumatic experience is the point where according to psychoanalytic and trauma theories she can no longer hold back the internalised and repressed sad experiences; she becomes hysteric:

> She rampaged, shredding her history book between her teeth ('their history. Fucking liars. Their bloody lies'), breaking mirrors, her clay pot, anything she could lay her hands on and jabbing the fragments viciously into her flesh, stripping the bedclothes, tearing her clothes from the wardrobe and trampling them underfoot. They've trapped us. They've trapped us. But I won't be trapped. I'm not one of them but I'm not one of you. (Dangarembga 205)

Nyasha's actions in the passage above are indications that she totally rejects colonial and patriarchal principles. She clamours for freedom. Nyasha physically fights her father who is a symbol of the patriarchal society that wants to entrap her. She refuses to accept patriarchal perceptions of womanhood because "once you get used to it, well, it just seems natural and you just carry on. And that's the end of you. You're trapped. They control everything you do" (Dangarembga 119). Towards the end of the story, Nyasha loses mental control and experiences a nervous breakdown.

In the midst of all these, Tambudzai, is able to evolve an identity for herself towards the end of the novel: "although I was not aware of it then, no longer could I accept Sacred Heart and what it represented as a sunrise on my horizon. Quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed . . ." (Dangarembga 208).

The ongoing analysis shows that the female in a patriarchal society goes through identity crisis as a result of the conflict between what she desires to be and what society has forced her to be and such a situation can be emotionally traumatic.

Patriarchal Entrapment in Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile*

This is the story of Zakeya and her nieces Nefissa and Zeinab who grow up in Kafr El Teen, an Egyptian village. Saadawi portrays the difficult life of the female in a typical patriarchal African society. Patriarchy in this novel is consolidated by the cultural, political and religious forces represented by the Mayor, Haj Ismail (the village barber and healer), Sheikh Hamzawi (the Sheikh of the mosque) and Sheikh Zahran (Chief of the village guard). Kafr El Teen is a village where the majority of the people are peasants exploited by the Mayor. The people labor tirelessly to meet the demands of the Mayor and in addition to this the women are oppressed by the men in the family and society. The Mayor in the bid to satisfy his lust destroys Kafrawi's entire family. First he rapes Nefissa, gets her pregnant and abandons her. She runs away from the village never to return. Not satisfied, he goes after Zeinab, Kafrawi's second and remaining child. When the girl refuses, the Mayor thinking that Kafrawi is the reason behind Zeinab's refusal, incriminates Kafrawi of murder and sends him to prison. Zeinab is deceitfully raped and repeatedly assaulted by the Mayor until she gets married to Zakeya's son and decides otherwise. The Mayor in his usual style incriminates Galal, Zeinab's husband and sends him to prison. Zakeya who silently watches these injustices against her family suffers psychological trauma, gets to the point of no return and gruesomely, murders the Mayor.

The females in *God dies by the Nile* are entrapped by patriarchal laws. They have no voice of their own but only do what the men require willingly or by force: "don't you know that girls and women never do what they're told unless you beat them?"(Saadawi 27) The patriarchal system constitutes identity crisis for the females who are turned from being individuals who have a mind of their own to robots who do as they are told without reasoning or questioning: "So Kafrawi called unto her in a firm voice, 'you, Nefissa, come down here at once' but Nefissa showed no signs of doing what he told her, so he clambered to the top of the oven,

struck her several times and tugged at her hair until she was obliged to come down. He handed her over to Sheikh Zahran in silence" (Saadawi 28). The fear of the mayor has traumatised twelve year old Nefissa right from childhood such that the mere mention of his name sends a shiver through her body and on sighting him in the village, she runs away and hides. When her father tells her she will be taken to the Mayor's house "that night, she could not sleep a wink" (Saadawi 26). She is forced into the Mayor's house where she is raped and gets pregnant. Trauma here is depicted as a forceful invasion into the personal and emotional life of young Nefissa who becomes devastated and in reaction abandons her baby and runs away.

Nefissa's younger sister Zeinab is also caught in this wave of patriarchal entrapment fortified by religion and politics. The trauma of her sister's disappearance, her father's imprisonment and aunt's failing health render her a prey to religious deception. Haj Ismail, one of the Mayor's oppressive tools convinces Zeinab through an arranged prophecy with a holy man at "Sayeda Zeinab" (a mosque) that working in the Mayor's house is God's requirement for her aunt's cure and she agrees to this. Adrienne Rich as quoted by Shihada Isam states that "Patriarchy is the power of ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male" (167). The outcome for Zeinab is that she is raped and repeatedly exploited sexually by the Mayor.

All this while, Zakeya has keenly observed the trend of events as a little girl growing up in her father's house. She watched as her mother was maltreated and mourned from the time "her father struck her mother on the head because she had not borne him the son he expected" (Saadawi 95) to the time "she developed two breasts which the menfolk would pinch when there was nobody around to prevent them" (Saadawi 95). As a married woman she has gone

through the trauma of oppression at the family and social levels. She is physically and emotionally battered by her husband and experienced the trauma of losing fifteen children: ". . . for it was like that. Every time a son of hers died he would strike out at her blindly, and beat her up with anything he could lay his hands on. And the same thing would happen whenever she gave birth to a daughter. She had given birth to ten sons and six daughters – but the only child who had lived to grow up is Galal" (Saadawi 89). She further says that ". . . her spouse Abdel Moneim would beat her with a stick, then climb on her and bear down on her chest with all his weight (Saadawi 95).

Zakeya watches as her son and only hope is abducted into the army. She endures as her niece Nefissa, is forcefully taken by the Mayor. She is helpless when the Mayor takes Zienab, her remaining niece and again she could do nothing to stop him. The return of Galal, Zakeya's son brings her back to life but again the Mayor cuts her joy short by sending him to prison for a crime he did not commit in other to make the coast clear to possess Zeinab. Zakeya is one female with too many troubles and traumas in the novel.

Trauma and Identity Crisis in Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile*

In *God Dies by the Nile,* Nefissa who is repeatedly raped and made pregnant as a result of patriarchal laws which subjugate the female cannot manage the traumatic situation so she abandons her baby after birth and runs away never to return. One imagines what the life of a young girl without a sense of belonging, a family to run to, a means of livelihood, a shattered identity and in a strange land will look like. Zeinab, her sister who keeps her shoulders high and fights against oppression by the Mayor comes to a zero point when her husband is sent to prison. She like her sister goes through distorted identity; torn between being herself and being the Mayor's plaything and sexual object. Like her sister, she runs away from Kafr El

Teen to Bab El Hadeed where she frantically searches for permission to visit her husband. When she exhausts all possibilities, she goes into prostitution. Her identity changes from that of a well mannered hardworking girl with a sense of good judgment to a cheap prostitute. The decisions and actions of these two sisters are the resultant effects of their gruesome experiences.

Their aunt Zakeya suffers even more. The effects of trauma and pain reflect in her strides and physical outlook. Saadawi describes her thus: "a tall upright shadow slipped through and advanced on two legs with a powerful steady stride . . . . The lips were tightly closed, resolute, as though no word could pass through them. The large, wide-open eyes fixed on the horizon expressed an angry defiance" (1). Almost consumed by anger which is an effect of trauma Zakeya pours her strength into her farm work:

> And the blows of her hoe seemed to echo with an anger buried deep down as she lifted it high up in the air and swung it down with all her might into the soil …. They went on with a steady thud, thud, thud, echoing in the neighbouring fields throughout the day almost inhuman, relentless, frightening in the fury of their power. Even at midday, when the men broke off for a meal and an hour of rest, they went on without a stop. (Saadawi 3)

She works furiously from dawn to dusk yet the pain and anger in her do not go away. According to Sigmund Freud "symptoms of hysteria are the result of unresolved but forgotten traumas from childhood" (quoted in Dobbie 51). This means that certain painful and threatening experiences can be repressed in the unconscious but not forgiven and sooner or later they inform an action**.** The traumatic experiences of the past which are stored in her unconscious return to haunt her in form of nightmares. In the novel are dreams that expressed childhood memories of the iron gate (a symbol of oppression), her marital experiences and

the memories of her son. According to psychoanalytic and trauma theories, nightmarish dreams are expected in the life of a traumatized person: "the traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep" (Herman 37).

Furthermore, the repressed memories bounce back and affect the bahaviour of the individual. Zakeya lets out a horrible wail:

> She opened her mouth wide and started to scream and to wail in a continuous high-pitched lament, as though mourning the suffering of a whole lifetime suppressed in her body from the very first moment of her life. . . . It was a wail that went back, far back, to many a moment of pain in her life. To the times when she ran behind the donkey and the hot earth burnt the soles of her feet. To the times when she learnt to eat the salted pickles and green peppers which the peasants consume with their bread, and felt something like a slow fire deep down inside the walls of her belly. To the time when Om Saber forced her thighs apart and with her razor cut off a piece of her flesh. ((Saadawi 95)

Her behaviour becomes strange. She "still squatted on the ground, in the same place. She would close her eyes, then open them, then close them again . . . she would open her eyes in terror, and look at faces gathered around her" (Saadawi 90). Her niece frantically calls for exorcism through religious rituals and prayers "but the devil refused to leave Zakeya's body" (Saadawi 97) because it is not the devil after all. It is what psychoanalytic and trauma theories call dissociation, an altered state of consciousness induced by trauma. "It results in the protean, dramatic and often bizarre symptoms of hysteria" (Herman 1-2). Zakeya has witnessed a lot of violence and "in each instance, the salient characteristic of the traumatic

event is its power to inspire helplessness and terror" (Herman 34). These are evident in Zakeya's behavior: "her eyes kept turning this way and that with a frightened look. 'Zeinab, my child, do not leave me alone. I am frightened. The devils are looking at me from behind the bars of the window'. Zakeya would catch the hold of Zeinab's galabeya. 'No, Zeinab, don't leave me alone" (Saadawi 98). This behavior is recognized in trauma theory as hyperarousal, a symptom of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Sometimes when an individual goes through a traumatic experience "the human system of self preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment . . . . The traumatized person startles easily, reacts irritably to smell, provocations, and sleeps poorly" (Herman 35). Zakeya is therefore in a state of constant vigilance for the return of danger.

Later, Zakeya is forced into constriction by religion. Constriction is a consequence of trauma; a state of surrender, complete powerlessness where "the system of self-defense shuts down entirely. [It is] paradoxically a state of detached calm, in which terror, rage and pain dissolve" (Herman 42). Zeinab and Zakeya are forced by religion to believe that Zakeya's healing will only come by their surrender to the oppressive demands of the Mayor:

> You are to spend the night in the bosom of El Sayeda, 'said the man.' Then tomorrow before dawn you are to start out for Kafr El Teen. There bathe yourselves with clean water from the Nile, and while you wash continue to recite the testimony. . . . Start with the four ordained prostrations, then follow them with the four Sunna prostrations . . . . On the following day, before dawn, Zeinab is to take another bath with clean water from the Nile, meanwhile repeating the testimony three times. . . . Once this is over she is to open the door of your house before sunrise, stand on the threshold facing its direction and recite the first verse of the Koran ten times. In front of hr she will see a big iron gate. She is to walk towards it, open it and walk in. she must never walk out of it again until the owner of the house orders her to do so. (Saadawi 115)

Zeinab is raped by the Mayor and is sexually exploited repeatedly yet she and her aunt accept it as the only way by which Zakeya will be healed. Herman further explains that in the state of constriction, "events continue to register in awareness, but it is as though these events have been disconnected from their ordinary meanings" (42-43). The meaning of what would have otherwise been a grievous crime changes to a saving/healing tool. In this state, there is a "feeling of indifference, emotional detachment, and profound passivity in which the person relinquishes all initiative and struggle" (Herman 43). One could say that Zakeya and Zeinab were more or less hypnotized. On the surface they appear calm and detached from the oppressive environment and activities but underlying in them are the unforgotten traumatic experiences and hurts.

Their actual healing begins with the return of Galal, Zakeya's son from the army. Zakeya springs back to life and in a short while narrates all the ordeals to her son. According to trauma theory, retelling the traumatic experience is a big tool for healing the hurt. The power of healing lies in speaking the unspeakable. This is where modern trauma theory defers from classic trauma theory which postulates that trauma cannot be claimed or expressed in words. Modern trauma theory is of the view that "rape, battery and other forms of sexual and domestic violence are so common a part of women's lives that they can hardly be described as outside the range of ordinary experience" (Herman 33). Zeinab and Zakeya experienced trauma and could narrate their experiences.

Galal, the "healing balm" marries Zainab and brings back love and security for his wife and mother. However, this is short-lived as the Mayor's ruthless and oppressive hand falls on Galal. Like Kafrawi, his uncle he is framed-up for theft and sent to prison. According to Sigmund Freud "symptoms of hysteria are the result of unresolved but forgotten traumas from childhood" (quoted in Dobbie 51). This means that certain painful and threatening experiences can be repressed in the unconscious but not forgiven and sooner or later they

inform an action**.** At this point all the traumatic experiences and hurts which were repressed into the unconscious memories of Zakeya and Zeinab during the constriction period bounce back. Zeinab ends up as a prostitute, leaving Kafr El Teen behind while Zakeya waits for the emergence of the Mayor through the iron gate. When he does, she murders him in a rage. He who destroyed her entire family does not deserve to live. Zakeya ensures she dethrones the god of Kafr El Teen.

Patriarchal Entrapment in Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*

The story of the novel *Ghana Must Go* revolves around the Sai family; an immigrant African family in Boston. Kweku Sai (a Ghanaian) and Folasade Savage (a Nigerian) meet in US as students and get married. Due to challenges of marital life, Fola sacrifices her dream of becoming a lawyer while Kweku goes ahead to become a successful surgeon. Unfortunately, Kweku loses his job over the death of a wealthy patient and unable to face the shame, he abandons his family and relocates to Ghana. Kweku's wife and children: Olu, Taiwo and Kehinde (twins) and Saide are thus entrapped into hopelessness and pain as a result of his abandonment. His decision exerts force on the family bond and ties and there is a split. The twins are sent to Fola's half brother at Lagos, Olu remains in a high school in Boston while Fola stays with baby Sadie. After many years when the children have grown into different professions, the family receives the news of Kweku's death. They are therefore forced to come back together to face the shame and stigma of abandonment.

Trauma in this novel is not as a result of patriarchal restrictions per se but as a result of dare consequences or repercussions of a father's decisions and choices; trauma from the pains and tears emanating from social experiences and the ties of love. The six major characters in the novel have their share of trauma which reflect from their various perspectives portrayed by

Selasi in different sections of the novel. The omniscient narrator's statement that Fola and her children after their second dinner in Ghana "drift to their rooms with their hurts and faint hopes drifting softly behind them, beneath closing doors" (Selasi 301) is a reflection of their individual lives which are saddled with lies, secrets and pains drifting from one part of the world to another all through the novel until towards the end when the masks fall. However, in this research, the three major female characters are examined due to the complex nature of the narration.

Trauma and Identity Crisis in *Ghana Must Go*

It is evident that the traumatic experience of Taiwo, Kweku's first daughter is more intense as well as more devastating. Selasi observes Taiwo's need for love, care and attention right from childhood and when at the age of twelve her father leaves, Taiwo tries to erase his memory by walling him off. Sometimes, "when she thinks of her father, when she lets the thought form or it slips in disguised through a crack in the wall she and Kehinde erected those first lonely midnights in Lagos" (Selasi 37) she forcefully buries the memory. The twins decided never to mention the name "father" or "dad" and if any defaulted he or she will pay (Selasi 38). They also formed the habit of making themselves happy by telling old family stories but carefully refuse to mention their father; to them Kweku has been deleted, just a "He":

> But the way she told it, their father wasn't in it. It was mom's plan, night-sledding; there were four sleds, not five. Until the man was erased - from their stories and so their childhoods . . . . Not dead. Never dead. They never wished the man dead or pretended he was dead. Just deleted, walled off. Denied existence, present only in absence and silence. Reduced to a notion. (Selasi 38-39)

This according to Psychoanlytic theory is an act of repression. The children do not want to retain the memory of their father in their consciousness thus they strive to push him into the subconscious. They are still trying to recover from this painful experience when their mother takes a devastating decision. Taiwo the beautiful and sensitive daughter quickly feels the full impact of their mother's decision to send them to their uncle, Femi. According to Taiwo: Olu the eldest is the privileged one so he stays in Boston, Sadie is mother's favourite so she too stays and that leaves the "burdens" – herself and her twin brother Kehinde - who should be sent away from home. She is heartbroken when her mother declares she cannot take care of four of them and had to send the twins to a stranger:

> . . . she's long since suspected: it isn't the father. Or not him alone. It was Fola who sent them to Femi that summer like two fatted calves to the altar. Not he. How she missed this? The source of her anger. The rage without name: that she sent them away, that she shipped them to Lagos when she should have known better, when she must have known somehow what would happen, who he was, her own brother, her own family. For the cost of tuition. (Selasi 274)

Taiwo carries these hurtful feelings to Lagos where they try to adjust to the new life but the unimaginable happens. Nike, Femi's wife accuses the twins of incest and Femi believes. He forces Kehinde to sexually assault Taiwo in his presence:

> Touch her like you do in the bedroom downstairs. Uncle Femi looked joyful. 'Pretend I'm not here.' At Kehinde's hesitation, he added, 'don't worry. I won't tell your mother what your auntie told me.'
>
> How it happened:

> How her uncle gave her brother instructions from his armchair, a director, the guards looking on. How her brother, not speaking, with his eyes saying nothing, removed her weekday panties, set them neatly on the floor. Put his finger inside her. The baffling sensation, less painful than uncomfortable. An opening, a tear. 'Harder! Harder! Harder! said Uncle Femi. 'Faster! Faster!' with glee in his voice. Kehinde's finger, with force. (Selasi 288)

Femi forced Kehinde to do this to Taiwo for a whole week and this broke the bond and filial relationship between the twins and damaged them irreparably. "This was the first time she learned to leave her body, just to leave the body lying there, mind wandering off. . . . She was floating above them and wondered who was this, then here in that body? Wasn't her. Couldn't be. Was simply a body she'd left there as one drops a towel" (Selasi 288). The above reaction by Taiwo during that traumatic experience confirms what Herman says about traumatized people: "the helpless person escapes from her situation not by action in the real world but rather by altering her state of consciousness. . . . The person may feel as though the event is not happening to her, as though she is observing from outside her body, or as though the experience is a bad dream from which she will shortly awaken" (43). After the first episode of that incident, "she walked out the door with a hole in her body, a space where her girlhood had been . . ." (Selasi 289). Taiwo carries this hole all through the story, unable to fill it or allow anything or anyone fill it. She bottles up, breaks off ties with her siblings and mother and embarks on the path of self destruction. She feels ". . . utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection pervades every relationship, from the most intimate family bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion" (Herman 52). She cannot bring herself to forgive Kehinde who simply carried out his uncle's instruction in the bid to avoid the guard hurting her. How could she forgive Kehinde when

she saw the stain on his shorts by the time he slid his fingers from her body. Taiwo tries hard to repress these experiences; to establish "a boundary mark between 'the way things were' and 'when everything changed,' a moment within which one notices nothing, about which one remembers all. . . . The difference between Taiwo's life at twelve, before everything changed, and the life that came next . . ." (Selasi 41); an "insular" kind of life. Describing herself as an "insular" is very symbolic because it deeply explains how isolated a person she has become. It suggests the isolated life of an island, someone who has become circumscribed. She retreats into herself and bottles up.

Fifteen years on, Taiwo becomes queer and defiant in behavior without a stable and good relationship with people especially, men. She goes into a careless relationship with her faculty Dean, a married man, old enough to be her father and a scandal follows so she decides to give up her law career. Having been hurt by her mother and the first males – Kweku, her father and Kehinde, her twin - in her life, Taiwo goes through an obscure opposite sex and sexual relationship. Kehinde observes the change: "the girl in the photos was not one he knew, not his sister, his Taiwo; she was someone else, older and harder, than the girl he had left in New York" (Selasi 176). According to trauma theory, traumatized patients especially those who have been abused take actions that appear horrible to society in other to attract attention to themselves. Taiwo's relationship with the dean of law actually attracts attention – though a negative one - to her: "how can he know what it is to be stared at and talked about; worse, not to care, to give in to it? . . . the press learned, they made it sound natural: a tale told as time, beauty, power, and sex, dean of law school in love tryst with editor of *Law Review*, BEAUTY AND THE DEAN!" (Selasi 129) She becomes withdrawn filled with inferiority complex and hatred especially for her mother. She feels betrayed by her mother and bares her heart:

> And what happens to daughters whose mothers betray them? They don't become huggable like Sadie, Taiwo thinks. Then don't become giggly, adorable like Ling. They grow shells. Become hardened. They stop being girls. Though they look like girls and act like girls and flirt like girls and kiss like girls - really, they're generals, commandos at war, riding out at first light to preempt further strikes. With an army behind them, their talents their horsemen, their brilliance and beauty and anything else they may have at their disposal dispatched into battle to capture the castle, to bring back the Honor. Of course it doesn't work. For they burn down the village in search of the safety they lost, every time, Taiwo knows. They end lonely. Desired and admired and alone in their tents, where they weep through the night. In the morning they ride, and the boys see them coming. And think: my, what brilliant and beautiful girls. Hearts broken, blood spilled. Riding on, seeking vengeance. (Selasi 274-275)

Selasi's expression of Taiwo's thoughts in the above quotation clearly shows she experiences identity crisis. She is distorted from the beautiful twelve year old daughter into a forcefully mature and hardened female. Hers is "the death of Darling Daughter. The brightest of pupils, who never looked out, who had spent half her life with her head in a book, learning Latin roots, spewing right answers. Alone. She had never been close to a man, not since Kehinde; her efforts to make or keep friends came to naught . . ." (Selasi 128). This is expected from a traumatized person because her "intimate relationships are driven by the hunger for protection and care and are hunted by the fear of abandonment or exploitation. Her desperate longing for nurturance and care makes it difficult to establish safe and appropriate boundaries with others" (Herman 111). Kweku's death deepens the hole in Taiwo and after an overview of her life, she contemplates escaping or committing suicide:

> … rage out of nowhere, overwhelming, a rage beyond reason. Her body begins trembling, then moving, without bidding: first quivering, then burning, then standing,

> then walking: without thinking, without speaking, she is walking away. . . . A fire in her legs. Faster, onward, consumed – until, reaching the edge of the village, nearly jogging, she looks up and sees that she's reached a small clearing. Absent clustered structures obstructing the ocean, the sand beckons, open, like an answer. . . . A few miles beyond another village begins. Somewhere in her mind is the idea of escaping, of making her way to the end of this beach. . . . (Selasi 271-271)

Taiwo's healing begins when she confronts her mother at the beach and secrets were unveiled. Modern trauma theory emphasises the importance of talking about traumatic experience in other to facilitate healing.

Sadie the baby of the family is equally affected by Kweku's decision to abandon the family. Sadie was a baby when Kweku left so she rarely knew him. She does not experience the love of a father and hardly remembers him except for the things she sees in family pictures. To her Kweku is:

> The man in the photo, that one blurry photo of her and her dad in those dull shades of yellow and brown and burnt orange that all their photos from the eighties seem to have: of him sitting in the rocking chair in the hospital nursery as seen by the nurse from the nursery doorway, she bundled up, newborn, her hand on his finger, he dressed in blue scrubs with an unshaven beard. The man from the story. Who barely resembles the man she remembers, the upright, precise, always leaving, clean-shaven and crisp, in the morning, breezing out the front door in a fresh-pressed white coat. (Selasi 149)

To make matters worse, her siblings talk about their days with their father and make it look as if it is her birth that offsets the love, joy and harmony of their home: "and there's she. Baby Sadie. A good decade tardy, arriving in winter, a cheerful mistake . . ." (Selasi 215). She

becomes vulnerable, insecure goes through inferiority complex and bulimia. She constantly compares herself to her siblings and concludes she is the least: ". . . she's here on her own, the one like the others, feeling inferior as she always does whenever they're home. With one of them (two max, the twins for example) she can generally rise above it but not with all three, so much older and taller, inexplicably taller. And surer, more spectacular, more shinny than she" (Selasi 214). Sadie forms the strange habit of hiding in bathrooms: "a perfect place really, a cocoon, a world away. The peculiar insularity of bathrooms, a comfort" (Sadie 143). She struggles to accept herself as she is, to accept her family which she sees as "weightless" (Selasi 146). Gradually, she begins to heal emotionally with her reconciliation with her mother.

Fola, a mother of four experienced the trauma of growing up without a mother who died at childbirth. Her mother, Somayina Savage (nee Nwaneri) was the only child of an Igbo father and Scottish mother. Fola's grandparents never cared about her because they see her as the cause of their only child's death: "no one mentioned that they never came to see her, Rt. Hon. John and Maud Nwaneri, never called nor sent a gift, but she could guess it: that they blamed her for their only daughter's early death, as she would come to hate them" (Selasi 103). At thirteen years, she loses her father during the anti-Igbo pogrom in the 1980s thus becoming orphaned, Fola is sent first to Ghana and later to Pennsylvania by Sena Wosornu, her father's friend. She has no parents or grandparents to look up to, so she goes into marriage looking up to her husband to fill the vacuum. She gives up her career and manages to build a home but Kweku's drastic decision leaves her in the middle of the road. She therefore takes the erratic decision to send her twins away. Her decision may be reasonable or truthful but not convincing enough because she knows Femi is a drug dealer. Considering her history one can say that she is used to being left and leaving. Her mother leaves her at birth; her father leaves home to visit her grandparents and never came back. She is whisked away to Ghana by a

family friend and soon after sent to Pennsylvania alone. These experiences might have influenced her decision about her children; since she survived, they too can. She clearly states "I can't manage at the moment . . . The four of you" (Selasi 169). She didn't think twice about the likely consequences of sending her twins far away under the care of such a questionable character. The consequence is that she suffers sixteen years of loneliness, gets almost addicted to smoking and only begins to recover when the entire family travels to Ghana to bury Kweku. The novel ends as the healing process begins in Kweku's family. Hearts are unburdened, truths are told and forgiveness is sought for. These are all important because "in the immediate aftermath of the trauma, rebuilding of some minimal form of trust is the primary task. Assurances of safety and protection are of greatest importance (Herman 61). Coming to terms with the past will help them create a future.

Stylistic Features and Techniques in the Novels under Study

Characterisation and Point of View

Though Dangarembga, Saadawi and Selasi are from different regions of Africa, the three portray similar experiences of the girl-child growing up in patriarchal and post-colonial settings. Their novels capture female teenagers whose story span from childhood through their teenage age and to adulthood. Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* shares her experiences between childhood and age sixteen while Saadawi and Selasi present three females each whose story cover childhood to adulthood.

Selasi makes use of an unusual and complex narrative style where the reader is forced to read the same story from at least six different views. This style portrays the various reactions to the trauma of abandonment by the various characters and the means of survival adopted by

each character. For example, Taiwo gets into a scandalous sexual relationship and does not mind what the press says, Fola carves out a new world without a husband but gets addicted to her cigarette while Sadie gets intimate with the bathroom and spends a lot of time there.

Fragmentation and Stream of Consciousness

A great part of Selasi's narration is opaque and fragmented. There is a heavy use of stream of consciousness and events, past and present are lumped together; making it a serious task for the reader to differentiate between the two. There is also a heavy use of flashback; events narrated drift to and fro in time which is an indication of how her characters' lives drift. for Example while in Ghana for her husband's burial, Fola observes the present state of Taiwo, her first daughter but her mind quickly drifts back to Taiwo's childhood days, further back to events immediately after Fola's father's burial then back again to Taiwo's Lagos experience at the age of twelve before returning to the present (Selasi 234-238). An example of fragmentation can be seen on page 64 of the novel:

A hospital again, 1993.

Late afternoon, early autumm.

The lobby. (Selasi)

This is followed by one sentence definition of each of Fola's four children. Selasi builds these techniques into her novel to reflect and underscore the tension, terror and restless state of the trauma victims in the novel; how fragmented their lives have become. Sadie captures this in the following statement: "[the Sias] are weightless . . . scattered fivesome, a family without gravity, completely unbound . . . with no living grandparent, no history, a horizontal- they've

floated. Have scattered, drifting outward, or inward, barely noticing when someone has slipped off grid" (Selasi 146).

Symbols

The authors present the fathers of the protagonists as symbols of patriarchy whose decisions and choices for their daughters affected their identity. Jeremiah's decision that Tambu does not need to go to school, take a trip beyond the village or read scraps of newspapers almost crushed the young girl into a shadow of herself. Apart from Kafrawi and Abdel who are symbols of patriarchy in the case of Zakeya and her nieces, the Mayor is a major symbol of patriarchy and oppression. The word 'god' in the title of Saadawi's novel is highly symbolic. Saadawi in the foreword to her novel recalls the dream she had as a child where she saw the Mayor in prison for raping servant girls and robbing the women of their harvest. She narrates this dream to her grandmother who categorically told her it was impossible: ". . . the Mayor is a god and no one could punish him" (Saadawi vii). The word god in the title of the novel symbolizes owner of all; the one who decides if you will live or die. The Mayor exists in this capacity in the novel.

In Kafr El Teen the Mayor is feared and obeyed like a god. He keeps his people under servitude such that "prices are rising all the time and the peasants owe more and more taxes to the government . . . . Zakeya and Galal are up to their ears in depth . . . (Saadawi 160-161). The people work all year round yet end up with debts to the government. In the words of Haj Ismail: "They've always been hungry. There's nothing new in that, and the villagers have lived on dry bread and salted cheese with worms" (Saadawi 160). According to Sheikh Hamzawi "we are God's slaves then when it is time to say our prayers only. But, we are the Mayor's slaves all the time …. People like him who live on top of the world, don't know the

word impossible. They walk over the earth like Gods" (Saadawi 69-70). This is why the Mayor affords to destroy lives as much as he wills without batting an eyelid. While surrendering herself to the Mayor's sexual demands, Zeinab thinks: "now she could leave herself in the hands of God, deliver her body and soul to him, fulfil her vow, and savour the relief of having done so" (Saadawi 125). To Zeinab, the Mayor is god who must have his way. Despite all these, no one dares challenge the Mayor:

> Who could find out the things that had happened? He was above suspicion, above the law, even above the moral rules which goverened ordinary people's bahaviour. Nobody in Kafr El Teen would dare suspect him. They could have doubts about Allah, but about him . . . It was impossible . . . and that if any one of them even so much as thought of playing tricks, of wagging his tail, he would cut it off for him, and cut his head off with it too. (Saadawi 123-124)

In the same vein, Zakeya sees the Mayor as Allah. She, a peasant musters courage and kills him by the river Nile. She eliminates the source of the people's problems and frees them from bondage: "I know it's Allah, my child. He's over there, my child. I buried him on the bank of the river Nile" (Saadawi 175). To Zakeya, the Mayor is a god who has unleashed terrible suffering on his people as such his reign needs to come to an end. In the third novel, Kweku is the head of the family and his patriarchal decision to abandon his family makes them especially the ladies vulnerable to unpleasant experiences. The pain goes deeper when he takes first a mistress and later another wife.

The iron gate is another symbol of oppression in Saadawi's novel. It is the gate to the Mayor's house. Behind this iron gate all manner of ruthless decisions and actions are carried out. Many girls are violated by the Mayor and his son. No girl goes through that iron gate to the Mayor's house and comes out the same. They are physically defiled and psychologically

deformed and de-shaped. Zakeya loathed this iron gate while Nefissa and Zeinab as children feared it and avoided going close to it: “ever since childhood the sight of the iron bars had filled her with fright. She heard people mention the gate and the iron bars when they talked of different things. But they never came close, and when they walked through the lane they sidled along the opposite side, and their voices would drop to a whisper the moment it came insight” (Saadawi 25). When trauma drives Zakeya to near insanity, she constantly points at the gate saying the devils are looking at her from there: “Zeinab’s eyes followed her fingers as they pointed to huge iron gate of the Mayor’s house . . .” (Saadawi 98). One can say that violent death of the Mayor demystifies and waters down the power of the iron gate in the mind of the females in Kafr El Teen.

Selasi’s title “Ghana must go” is symbolic. It is taken from the forceful expulsion of over a million Ghanaian immigrants without proper immigration documents from Nigeria in 1983 during Shehu Shagari’s regime. As a title *Ghana Must Go* is significant because it underlines the forceful movement of Kweku’s family to Ghana. It is as if his family carried on with the lies of a “happy family” until his death thus, the journey to Ghana becomes a must.

Afropolitanism

It is important to point out here that Selasi explores her Afropolitan concept in the characterization of *Ghana Must Go*. Afropolitanism is a concept she coined in her 2005 essay "Bye-Bye Babar." This concept describes African immigrants with global citizenship. Selasi ensures that mobility which is a component of Afropolitanism is a major theme in her novel. She depicts culture and class mobility using the various characters as such each character explores his or her own identity through different Afro-diasporic experiences. Kweku and Fola (Parents) move from Africa to the US, bring up children in a certain culture and country

different from Africa and the children travel to various countries making strong relationships before returning to Africa. The end point of Afropolitanism in the *Ghana Must Go* is that multiple citizenship of the characters does not shield them from trauma and its effects.

Journey Motif

Journey motif is evident in the novels. It is a physical movement symbolic of mental process of growth and maturity. Tambu's journey to the mission school and later to a convent school helps widen her horizon, strengthens her identity and confidence in breaking free from patriarchal entrapment. That movement from her father's house to school and interactions with other girls of her age helps her mature mentally such that she refuses to go for her parents' wedding which she said made a joke of her parents, her home and herself (Dangarembga 151).

Nefissa and Zeinab leave Kafr El Teen and realize they can survive without surrendering to the whims and caprices of patriarchal, social and political oppression. The authors make use of journey motif to ensure that their protagonists make discoveries about themselves and grow into better, stronger and self assured females.

For the Sai ladies, the journey from America to Ghana is very significant because it ensures their reconnection with not just their past but with their origin. It is a journey from America to Ghana; from illusion to reality, from shame to pride, from betrayal to forgiveness, from hate to love and from pain to healing. In this journey, dark secrets come to light, personalities are discovered and identities recovered. It is in Ghana that Saide discovers she is not an outsider as she has always felt. Her aunts quickly observe the stark resemblance to their dead sister Ekua and within a few hours of her first visit to her homeland she discovers

her ability to dance to her native music. This boosts her confidence that she is not after all inferior and good for nothing. She gains a sense of belonging and sees herself as a good addition to the Sai family. That sudden and forceful movement initiates and fosters healing for the Sai ladies thereby forging new frontiers.

Female Connection

There is also a hint on the idea of women coming together in other to overcome oppression. Tambudzai's first few sentences in the novel support this: "for though the event of my brother's passing and the event of my story cannot be separated, my story is not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia's; about my mother's and Maiguru's entrapment; and about Nyasha's rebellion . . ." (Dangarembga 1). The closeness between Nyasha and Tambudzai and indirectly with Lucia helps the girls grapple with patriarchal oppression. Tambu's affinity with Nyasha becomes clear when she sees a similarity between Nyasha's experience with Babamukuru and her experience with Nhamo: ". . . thinking how dreadfully familiar that scene had been, with Babamukuru condemning Nyasha to whoredom, making her a victim of her femaleness, just as I had felt victimised at home in the days when Nhamo went to school and I grew my maize" (Dangarembga 118). Dangarembga further strengthens this concept when she attributes part of Nyasha's sickness to Tambudzai's absence. Nyasha who misses the companionship states: "It was better . . . when you were here because we could laugh about it, so it looked silly and funny and we could carry on that way. But now that you're going, there won't be anyone to laugh with. It won't be funny any more" (Dangarembga 193). Nyasha further tells her cousin: "But the fact is I am missing you and missing you badly. In many ways you were very essential to me in bridging some of the gaps in my life, and now that you are away, I feel them again" (Dangarembga 200). Later in the

novel, against her uncle's decision of travelling to the homestead, Tambudzai decides to stay with Nyasha for a while during her holidays to help her feel better: "I did not want to go, I felt I could not. I could not leave my cousin in that state. You know how it is when something that has been a cornerstone of your security begins to crumble" (Dangarembga 203).

Likewise, Zakeya and Zeinab become a team and consentaneously work towards finding a solution to the family problem and overcoming oppression. Both travel to Bab El Hadeed in Cairo where they are deceived to believe lies. When it becomes clear that their predicament is arranged by the Mayor and his lieutenants, Zakeya and Zeinab agree silently to revolt; a decision they carry out in the novel. Furthermore, Fola's reconnection with her daughters in *Ghana Must Go* strengthens the family bond. She also reaches out to Kweku's second wife knowing the power of feminine unity in moving a family forward.

Dangarembga, Saadawi and Selasi use their works to establish that memory and the way we account for our experiences go a long way to influence our behaviour. Although at early childhood the child may seem to be untouched by the grief and pains of negative experiences, as time goes on their effects begin to emerge through the behaviour of the child. Bearing this in mind the question is: who decides what is befitting for the girl-child who eventually becomes the mother tomorrow?

In explaining the dynamics of their protagonists' psyche the authors portray domestic violence in the novels which eventually leads to psychological trauma. The authors present female protagonists and equally portray a glimpse of hope. Tambu decides to move on in life by ignoring her mother's warning threat that the Englishness that killed Nhamo, caused Nyasha a nervous breakdown, alienated and estranged Chido will soon destroy her. This threat would have had disastrous effects on her if she had allowed it but she is able to navigate the relationship between Western education and the traditional Shona culture. She

forges ahead by questioning things before accepting them and refusing to be brainwashed she walks into self assertion.

Zakeya, eliminates the obstacle to fair living in Kafr El Teen and even though she ends up in prison, there is the likelihood that her family members who are imprisoned unjustly will be released an maybe things will return to normal in the community. Fola and her children, having told themselves the truth decide to move forward while the healing continues especially with the addition of another female to the family.

The number of psychological and behavioural problems of the female emanating from patriarchal oppression points out the dare need for the female to be allowed to discover her authentic self (identity/personality) because when this is achieved, she becomes confident and bold enough to face life.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIETAL UNDERTONE OF TRAUMA AND IDENTITY CRISIS IN *A QUESTION OF POWER, UNDER THE TONGUE* AND *A LONG WAY FROM PARADISE*

A Question of Power

Literature is a well established field of study that reveals the experiences of people in a society as such the events portrayed in Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* and Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise* paint good pictures of the social challenges of Africa represented by Zimbabwe, South Africa and Rwanda. On the surface reading a reader will conclude that Elizabeth, the protagonist of *A Question of Power* is mad but what Bessie Head does is an attempt at dramatising the life of a distabilised individual who has gone through the trauma of oppressive political ideologies of a racial and patriarchal society. Mohamed Helaly observes that Elizabeth "suffer[s] greatly as a woman, but her suffering as a hybrid is even greater. On the one hand, she is socially marginalized as a female living in a patriarchal society. On the other hand, she is also culturally colonized as an individual living in a society where racial discrimination is prevailing" (101). Head uses the protagonist to portray the idea that childhood experiences contribute a lot to the mental make-up of an adult. Adetokunbo states that "Bessie Head uses the psychoanalysts' delimitation of the human mind into the conscious, the sub-conscious, and the un-conscious to portray the totality of her protagonist's experience" (80), experiences which almost destroyed the protagonist. According to Diala-Ogamba "the apartheid policy and racism of the South African government at the time made life unbearable for the non-whites who were its victims, and these dehumanized people found it difficult to accept the white oppression" (62).

Motabeng, the setting of the novel is where the greater part of the actions in the novel take place but from the standpoint of psychoanalytic and trauma theories the emphasis is on how the society contributed to the social instability and mental imbalance of the protagonist. Elizabeth, the protagonist relocates to Motabeng from South Africa but she does not leave the painful experiences of South Africa behind as such her psyche was already a fertile ground for mental and nervous breakdown.

Elizabeth, was born in a mental hospital in South Africa. Her mother is labeled insane because of her love relationship with a black stable boy (Head 16), as such she is locked up as a mad person; mad because she breaks the South African Immorality Act. This is a law imposed and upheld by the society. Elizabeth's mother is, therefore, abandoned by her mother's family and by the stable boy's family. She is rejected because apartheid law forbids Blacks and Whites living together as a family. "Since by this system blackness implies inferiority, Elizabeth's mother's association with a black man is a social pollution" (Adetokunmbo 82). The same society confirms Elizabeth's mother mad when she commits suicide which is considered a mad act not minding the emotional trauma of rejection and incarceration. The abandonment and rejection are extended to young Elizabeth. "In Apartheid South Africa, the problems surrounding the half-caste child begin even before its conception. The union of black and white being illegal, the coming together of its parents is illegal, hence the child is the illegal product of an illegal affair" (Adetokunmbo 82). The law against inter-racial love affair instituted by the powerful white authority makes Elizabeth suffer the mistake made by her mother. Family and society label Elizabeth illegal, a source of shame and evidence of sexual depravity so she is rejected by the society and by both families. Her white grandmother who insisted on visiting her once in a while does that secretly.

Apart from creating and implementing laws that define individuals even before birth, the society goes a step further to prejudice and stigmatise victims of such obnoxious laws.

Elizabeth is rejected by a nursing home because she does not look white. She is sent to a Boer family but is returned a week later for the same reason: the colour of her skin so the Child Welfare Committee pays a cloured woman to care for her. An innocent child goes through stigma because of the colour of her skin. “Elizabeth’s tragedy is linked to the madness of colonial violence and sovereignty of the colonizer who decides whose life is illegitimate and whose is legitimate, which life is a gift and which is a curse” (Borzaga 33). A curse because “there was no escape from it to the joy of being a human being with personality. There wasn’t any escape like that for anyone in South Africa” (Head 135). Growing up with her foster mother gives her no privilege to a normal childhood. According to her:

> It was during the war, and the beer-house mainly catered for soldiers off duty. They came along with their prostitutes and there was an awful roar and commotion going on all day. Though Elizabeth loved the woman, she was secretly relieved to be taken away from the beer-house and sent to a mission school, as hours and hours of her childhood had been spent sitting under a lamp-post near her house, crying because everyone was drunk and there was no food, no one to think about children. (Head 8)

Leaving her foster home does not end her troubles. She was still trying to grapple with the problem of injustice meted out against her for being in a wrong environment as a black child before facing total destruction at the mission school. As soon as she arrives at the mission school, the principal gives her a disheartening information: “we have a full docket on you. You must be very careful. Your mother was insane. If you’re not careful you’ll get insane just like your mother. Your mother was a white woman. They had to lock her up as she was having a child by the stable boy, who was a native” (Head 9). This prejudiced information shatters Elizabeth’s belief about her identity, sets the stage for a high level of injustice against her and lands her deeper into trauma. Herman states that “at the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of

disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities" (33). It is atrocious for the society and the principal to conclude that the fact that her mother was considered mad simply means that Elizabeth will go mad any moment. As she listens to the Principal's story about her life, Elizabeth feels herself

> . . . begin to split, to crack, how slowly earth starts vanishing from under her feet and she begins drifting away like a wave, turning into a cloud, into a hollow, into nothingness. Here the subject is not only faced with the fact of being non-White, different, or other, but she also experiences the hypothesis of her own abortion, she is faced with her annihilation . . . . (Borzaga 33)

The principal lives on the alertness of her insanity such that at the slightest quarrel between Elizabeth and other children, she is gravely punished by incarceration. Unfortunately, she could not do anything about the abuse or report it to anyone. "She is made to understand from childhood that she is of a different breed" (Diala-Ogamba 76). It is like "living with permanent nervous tension, because you did not know why white people there had to go out of their way to hate you or loath you" (Head 19). Soon other girls observed the routine and took advantage of it:

> Once Elizabeth struck a child during a quarrel, and the missionary ordered 'isolate her from other children for a week.' The other children soon noticed something unusual about Elizabeth's isolation periods. They could fight and scratch and bite each other, but if she did likewise she was locked up. They took to kicking at her with deliberate malice as she sat in a corner reading a book. None of the prefects would listen to her side of the story. 'Come on, they said. The principal said you must be locked up'. (Head 9-10)

Elizabeth grapples with this inhuman treatment till the end of her studentship. “Expelled from the earth, Elizabeth remains in the world of the ordinary as a walking body but her invisible gets confined at the edge of life and is suddenly placeless. Mentally she is dislodged to another realm . . . that realm in which trauma keeps coming back and revealing itself under different shapes and guises” (Borzaga 34). Unfortunately, nobody notices her psychic condition rather society sees her physical reactions and judge her by them. She clearly asserts that “one would go stark, raving mad if a deep and endless endurance of suffering, such as one would encounter in South Africa, were really brought to the surface” (Head 84).

According to Adetokunmbo, “Elizabeth's associations and choices in adulthood reveal that she has to some extent accepted, and internalized, the sense of inferiority and evil imposed on her by society”(83). One will not really be surprised by her behavior since trauma theory sees psychological trauma as “an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning” (Herman 33). Elizabeth’s life become almost meaningless thus, she joins a political party which was banned two days later. She suffers arrest and a court case. “It might have been the court case which eventually made her a stateless person in Botswana” (Head 11). This is because after the arrest and the court case, Elizabeth carelessly marries a man just out of jail whom she knew little of. It turns out to be that the man is a chronic womaniser and homosexual so after a year of marriage, she takes her son and leaves. She is forced to take an exit permit which is a ticket of no return.

Society’s theory of Elizabeth’s life is that because she was born in a mental hospital by a mother believed to be insane who eventually commits the insane crime of suicide, Elizabeth is bound to go insane. Since her search for identity in a political party and in marriage fails, she moves to Botswana but she is already disposed for a mental and emotional breakdown.

She already has a negative view of herself as an illegal child born by a mad mother, a real social misfit. The effects of psychological, emotional and physical violence on Elizabeth is so devastating that when she tries to verbalise her battles with Dan, Medusa and Sello words fail her:

> It seemed too fantastic to recall what happened to her between that time and the time she came out of the hospital. It seemed like the typical record of a lunatic, except that a part of her mind kept clear, silently observing all that was done to her by Dan. The other was so chaotic and panic stricken that words jumbled sentences she uttered, threw her straight into the loony bin a week later. She had not clear idea of what she was saying. She was struggling to recapture the image of the Medusa and what Medusa and Sello had done to her, and she couldn't get it straight. (Head 192-193)

Her experience in the above passage indicates a dissociation of the psyche which is one of the consequences of trauma. Adetokunmbo agrees with this when he clearly states: "The socio-political system of apartheid creates perpetual tension in the society. To the sensitive and concerned individual especially, the conflicts and evils of life within the system can lead to a dissociation of the psyche" (83). The term "dissociation" was used by Pierre Janet to describe the altered state of consciousness as a result of psychological trauma. Freud called this alteration in consciousness "double consciousness" (Herman 12). This is why Eugene who had firsthand experience with apartheid's destructive system observes that "South Africans usually suffered from some form of mental aberration" (Head 58).

Also Elizabeth views herself as not being black or white but at the same time both. She therefore develops:

> . . . a distorted view of her position and role in society. This distorted view of herself, encouraged by the divisive nature of her society, and the schism latent in Elizabeth's

> mulatto psychology become overt in her psychosis. When the character involved is one who, like Elizabeth, is extremely sensitive to her social circumstances, the problem becomes bewildering (Adetokunbo 82-83).

Elizabeth therefore hates herself and everybody else. This feeling of hatred is first repressed but according to Freud's theory the memories do not stay repressed for long as they boil over during her exile in Motabeng. Her search for repose in Motabeng is disturbed by her mental retentions of her South African life. She has stored in her mind the scorn, disrespect, disdain sadness, misery and desolation which made up her life in South Africa. This distorted view of herself makes it difficult for her to fit into a society where people are classified by their skin colour. This becomes traumatic because trauma in the novel is "conceived as a sort of implosion, as a painful, dialectical struggle between different temporalities, multiple contradictory worlds that translate into extraordinary, spectacular phenomena both at the level of the psyche as well as of the body" (Borzaga 27). Elizabeth goes through identity and complex crises. With the whites she feels inferior because she is partly black and with the blacks she feels superior. She finds it difficult to identify with either black or white because doing so will mean hating and rejecting a part of herself. Thus, she is stuck in between the two and fragmentation sets in. fragmentation is the "central principle of personality organization. Fragmentation in the inner representations of the self prevents the integration of identity" (Herman 107). Her struggles to reconcile these complexes are what Head portrays as her nightmares. These nightmares portray memories of her traumatic moments in South Africa. According to Herman:

> Long after danger is past, traumatized people relive the events as though it were continually recurring in the present. They cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts. The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both

> as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep. (Herman 37)

Therefore for Elizabeth, the normal regulation of sleep and wakefulness becomes distorted and disrupted. Her bedtime becomes a time of heightened terror instead of a time of comfort and affection.

It is important to point out that one of the guiding philosophies of the novel is that man's wellbeing with the world is dependent on his well-being with himself as such Elizabeth's well-being is tested with probing about her self-image. These are encapsulated in the sexual symbol of Elizabeth not having a vagina, or having an ineffectual one. The reference to Elizabeth's ineffectual vagina takes place in the dream but it is a reflection of her inner sexual frustration. An aspect of Freud's psychoanalytic theory centres on the significance of sexuality. He is of the view that between infancy and childhood stages, an individual needs to successfully go through the oral, anal and phallic phases of sexual development as to become healthy, functioning adults (Dobbie 54).

> If these three overlapping stages are successfully negotiated, the adult personality emerges sound and intact. If, however, these childhood needs are not met, the adult is likely to suffer arrested development. The early years, therefore, encompass critical stages of development because repressions formed at that time may surface as problems later. (Dobbie 54)

This situation plays out in the life of Elizabeth whose childhood experience was a difficult one. There is no indication that she sucked her mother's breasts since she was moved from one family to another; no father figure to look up to as a hero and according to her there was no atmosphere for a child in her foster home. In addition, there is no indication of close friendships with other children or an intimate relationship with the opposite sex. Her story

indicates she suffers sexual dysfunction. This sexual symbol of an ineffectual vagina indicates a negative view of Elizabeth's self, leads to her frustration and actually agrees with Freudian assertion that the sexual libido is central to man's psychic behaviour. Thus a woman without a vagina is more or less useless especially in a patriarchal system. This absence of personal well-being results in Elizabeth's lack of well-being with the society.

In Botswana her supposed land of redemption Elizabeth is still not redeemed from emotional breakdown. In the words of Vanamali, "in South Africa, Elizabeth was a half caste and in Botswana she is an outcast. As a coloured woman, Elizabeth could never attain the simple joy of being a human being with a personality" (Qtd in Emenyeonu 79). She is discriminated against by Africans who do not approve of her urban behavior. Also she is light skinned so she is isolated and despised: "people don't care here whether foreigners get along with them or not. They are deeply absorbed in each other. I like the general atmosphere because I don't care whether people like me or not. I am used to isolation" (Head 54). Heywood describes her as

> . . . a half breed from South Africa into Botswana, a stranger in her home and still a stranger in the place she would like to call a new home. A low breed. A bastard. Daughter of a mad woman. Her non-identity, statelessness, chronic loneliness, and life on the verge of terrestrial hell, added to her inherited mental anguish, all make her logical guest of the mad house. She remains a victim to the end. (Qtd in Emenyeonu 79)

Her negative relationship with African people made matters worse for her. Not being able to resolve the colour conflict in her psyche, she cannot identify with blacks or whites. Elizabeth's first mental breakdown in Motabeng comes as a result of staring at a black man's face. She raves at the man simply because she detests the colour of his skin. The man's

colour awakens the conflict within her and she is overwhelmed. However, the remote cause of her outburst is the mental torture she has been having. For about a week, Elizabeth has been hearing, "the recurring monotonous song in her head: 'Dog, filth, the Africans will eat you to death . . . .' A week of it reduced her to a wreck" (Head 43). Her outburst is a desperate reaction to her nervous tension and not necessarily aimed at the shop attendant. Trauma theory explains her explosive or aggressive behaviour as a traumatised person's reaction to the feeling of overwhelming danger.

According to Borzaga, Njabulo Ndebele in his article "The Rediscover of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa" clearly states that the history of black African writing "has largely been the representation of spectacle" (31); meaning a spectacular world as opposed to the ordinary. He further explains that this literary trend is related to the nature of the apartheid system, a system characterised by brutality. "Ndebele describes the spectacle as the opposite of the ordinary: its key traits are: lack of specificity of place, characters which are mere abstractions, instant meaning, lack of causality of events, the absence of development and change in time, obliteration of subjective reality" (Borzaga 31). This spectacular world is what Elizabeth tries to conquer in *A Question of Power*. Dan, Medusa and Sello are not real characters in the novel but are the internalised symbols of power and brutality typical of the apartheid system that torment her in her dreams. Dan asserts his superiority over Elizabeth when he taunts her about her racial origin. He indirectly declares to her that as a black man, he is doubly superior to a coloured woman: first as a man, second as black. Elizabeth's confrontation and interaction with these two figures in her nightmares gives a clue to her past life which leads to identity crisis. Dan, Medusa and Sello are symbols of

> . . . the good, obscene and evil in life. They represent the problem of gender and racial discrimination and oppression confronting Elizabeth. Medusa, another power structure that appears in Elizabeth's nightmares exploits her awareness of racism by

> reminding her that she had been rigidly classified "coloured" in South Africa and there is no escape from it. All these power symbols dominate her nightmares and torture her. (Diala-Ogamba 80)

This should not be a surprise because Freud discussing the sources of dreams states that "one of the sources from which dreams draw material for production . . . is to be found in childhood" (11). Jessen Julius in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dream* asserts that "the content of dreams is always more or less determined by . . . the events and experiences of the whole past life of the individual" (11). Elizabeth struggles to come back to the ordinary world characterized by meaningful work, friends and loyalty which can help to pull one out of the vicious circle of the past. Hers is a case of a contemporary woman battling with social forces with bizarre dimensions. "In *A Question of Power,* Head uses madness or insanity as one kind of dynamic force to fight back against apartheid violence, patriarchy, and racial political views because sometimes it is the only possible way to raise voice against these powerful authorities" (Wahab Abdul 140). The novel is an indictment of the power structures in society and their abuse that cripple the desires of individuals.

Elizabeth reaches her limit of endurance and goes insane but after losing her teaching job due to her mental aberration, she realizes that "people only function well when their inner lives are secure and peaceful. She was like a person driven out of her own house while demons rampaged within, turning everything upside down" (Head 49). Elizabeth musters courage to block her mind from remembering and being affected by the devastating apartheid experiences. She then adapts to life in Motabeng: "a complete stranger like the Cape gooseberry settled down and became a part of the village life of Motabeng" (Head 163). She accepts a job from Eugene, a white man who experienced the injustices against blacks in south Africa and in sympathy for the blacks goes into exile in Botswana. Her connection with Kenosi is quite significant as this stands to signify the need for female connections in the

fight against patriarchy and social injustices. The agricultural programme in Motabeng succeeds and is quite significant because it demonstrates power sharing; each one had something to contribute to the success of the programme and this brings a sense of belonging.

Under the Tongue

Yvonne Vera, a Zimbabwean writer presents some of her female characters as the major voiceless members of the society. They are the victims and casualties of patriarchal, colonial and postcolonial experiences and developments. Zhizha the protagonist goes through psychological trauma as a result of being raped by her father who ought to protect her. According to Herman Judith "Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life" (33). Zhizha is therefore overwhelmed by this experience of rape as such from the beginning of the novel the reader comes in contact with a devastated girl who grapples with a meaningless life and struggles to overcome trauma. All these put together drive the female into silence as seen in *Under the Tongue*. From the beginning of the novel, Zhizha the protagonist narrator declares her inability to tell her story: "a tongue which no longer lives, no longer weeps. It is buried beneath rock" (Vera 121). In the words of Lunga Majahana "it should be noted that *Under the Tongue* begins with numerous expressions that metaphorise speaking, or the inability to speak. The phrase under the tongue itself aptly encapsulates the notion of the unsayable" (12-13) but Vera with the aid of pacing, elaborate descriptions, slow pace, waiting, pausing and expecting is able to present the consequences of Zhizha's oppressive experience while the reader is kept in suspense until later in the novel when Zhizha struggles to articulate her rape experience (Ogbazi 70). The pauses and lacunae

observed in the novel are as a result of the protagonist's difficulty in narrating her plight. Zhizha suffers from shock and agony which have weakened her emotionally so she struggles to use the right word that will help her narrate the physical and psychological assault and sometimes gets chocked:

> A knife moves sharply on the rock. I hear a cry like falling water, then silence.
>
> I call in the night . . . Mother . . . Mother
>
> A knife moves sharply over the rock.
>
> Mother . . .
>
> There is silence. A sound comes toward me. Thud, on the ground, at my feet. I run far into the night but I fall hard on the ground. (Vera 141)

This style of writing makes Vera's novel complex particularly at the language and narrative levels. Reacting to Zhizha's state in the novel, Dodhy, Shamaila states that her "fears and worries are not just creations of mind but they are very real that is why they are not letting Zhizha to concentrate on the present" (236). Her anxiety and panic disorder have given rise to intense feelings of dread and fright of recurring attacks such that in her sleep she experiences these attacks. These according to Herman are symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and she identifies its three main stages as hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction. They play out in Zhizha's character. Hyperarousal is characterised by poor sleep patterns and the tendency to startle easily. On pages 130,132, 141 and 142 Zhizha goes in and out of sleep because of fright of another attack:

> I turn in my sleep. I listen. There is silence. A sound comes toward me. Thud on the ground, at my feet. . . . I turn and turn but my feet are buried beneath the earth. Water everywhere. Water and night. Thud. I wake from my sleep. Then I turn again, and

> sleep. Nothing. My arms reach into the dark and search the silence. Nothing. Nothing but the fear growing across my forehead and blinding me. (Vera 142)

Herman understands this when she states that the traumatised person "may find herself in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why" (34). Thus, Zhizha tosses here and there on her bed, unable to sleep calmly. The second state of post-traumatic stress disorder is intrusion and it is defined as the repeated interruptions of trauma. Zhizha experiences this when she says: I know that an unspoken word has arrived and uncovered this silence. "I know the word begins with me. I hold the word between my fingers. I hold tight and the word grows deep under my tongue. The word cannot be forgotten. It has grown large roots among us. Branches sprout beneath the ground where memory is watered with death. This ground is stone but something grows on it" (Vera 161-162). This unspoken word which begins with her name is the memory of her past unpleasant experiences that she does not want to mention but, which intrude into her present life:

> Zhizha.
>
> He calls in a whisper and cry. Father . . . His voice is full of the unknown things of my destroying sleep. . . .
>
> Father holds my breathing in his palm. His palm is wide and widening, grooved and wet. Then he lifts a heavy arm and touched the edge of the moon, in my sleep. I shout through fingers so strong, so hard, his fingers saying in their buried touch,
>
> Zhizha . . . Zhizha.
>
> A hidden visit. (Vera 124)

Zhizha strives to move on but the memory of her ugly past in the symbol of "unspoken word" keeps intruding. It is unspoken because it is forbidden to speak of such things.

Constriction is the third symptom of post traumatic stress disorder. It is a point at which the victim surrenders or gives up. Zhizha, having lost control of her emotions due to the overwhelming situation declares: "I hide somewhere behind my eyes. I remember. I hide deep inside my head. I hide under my tongue. I hide deep in the dark inside of myself . . ." (Vera 134 and 142). She has given up the fight to regain herself and thinks it better to hide from normal life. At this level of trauma Zhizha goes through identity crisis. She is emotionally deformed; her identity is distorted and she leaves less than a normal human being.

Vera uses her characters to show the impact of colonial, oppressive, patriarchal structures and postcolonial tensions. The life and personality of Munroyiwa, Zhizha's father has been adversely distorted by the war and this in turn affects his filial relationship. This is clearly seen in the desecration of father-daughter relationship between him and Zhizha, his daughter. Those who fought in the chimurenga war and those who supported from home are disillusioned because what they fought and hoped for is not seen anywhere. The reason being that after independence, African leaders came up with corrupt, predatory and exclusionary leadership. Ancestral lands which are the only means of livelihood were taken from them. These affect their psychological disposition which in turn influences their moral behavior. To add to this psychological state, the accommodation in the cities is so tight and this contributes to uncontrolled libido in Zhiha's father. Reacting to the accommodation challenge Ogbazi states: "Nothing happens that is outside view. Besides being curtailed by physical boundaries . . . movement is also restricted by the perpetual gaze of neighbours and the surveillance of the colonial masters" (*UJAH* 123). Such tight accommodation in which people know each other's secrets or closely watch one another are the conditions that the characters are compelled to contend with in their daily lives. Some of these tight living conditions and

social structures lead to the sadistic behaviour in the men and precipitate the bizarre actions like that of Zhizha's father. Ogbazi's observes that these men

> . . . are all wounded beings. They have gained nothing for their struggles and the immense sacrifices they have made for fatherland. All they reap are betrayal, deprivation, abuse and mental torture. They, like the women and children, are victims of broken promises, dashed hopes, and unaccomplished dreams. They are all part of history, they have all been raped, they are the casualties of the cruel colonial masters and the intolerant and brutal African leaders of post independence Zimbabwe. (*Ogirisi* 86-87)

The type of environmental structure seen in *Under the Tongue* is not far from what is observed in some African countries at present where tribal or religious wars and insurgencies have displaced people from their homes. They are forced to live in congested camps where many females are raped and their lives distorted.

These oppressive patriarchal and postcolonial setups portrayed in *Under the Tongue* lead to the protagonist's traumatic experiences which affect her psyche and personality. The pain she goes through is so intense such that she finds it difficult to verbalise it: "this pain cannot be carried in the mouth. There is no mouth. It follows one like a shadow, this pain. It is hewn from rock and larger than memory. How can we carry it on our shoulders? It is swollen like clouds of rain. It is greater than all our yesterdays. It is lightning from a burnt sky" (Vera 160). Zhizha loses her power of speech as a result of trauma. Besides being rooted in a patriarchal society where it is a taboo to speak ill of the father (the man), Zhizha shuts up and does not speak about her rape episodes. Speaking up about it would have helped the traumatised character but it is a taboo to speak up especially against men so Zhizha suffers in silence: "I touch my tongue in search of places of my growing. My tongue is heavy with

sleep. I know a stone is buried in my mouth, carried under my tongue. My voice has forgotten me . . . . I touch my tongue. It is heavy like stone. I do not speak" (Vera 121-122). All that is left is the scar: "Scars are our hidden worlds, our places of forgetting" (Vera 182). The scar therefore is symbolic; it is a pointer to the painful experience. The presence of the scar on the body is a constant reminder of the horrible experience. According to Kopf "the scar in *Under the Tongue* is a misdirected sign, it again represents a failure. Zhizha uses an already existing sign, one, which is available to her, to signify an inner reality difficult to represent" (100). The scar as a sign bridges the gap in the failure of language to capture or describe the reality of Zhizha's trauma.

By the time she breaks the silence in the novel, Zhizha becomes a voice speaking up for women who have been abused and have been silenced. In *Under the Tongue,* Zhizha has no voice yet the narrative comes from her. What Vera does in this novel is to represent the thoughts of her protagonist as speech. The narrative discourse is constituted by the thoughts of the protagonist. Vera taps into the memory of the protagonist, gives her a voice and gets her to tell her story. It is important to note that silence is a major effective way to perpetuate the taboo of speaking out against man's inhuman treatment of the female. It is a patriarchal law that whatever a man does to a woman should be accepted by the woman. Thus Vera's use of the first person narrator is significant because she gives Zhizha as well as other women the voice they have been robbed off. "Vera points to the power of words, speech and of telling stories as the means to fight silence and taboos. By giving Zhiza the voice to represent herself Vera subverts images of African women's submission to abuse. Similarly, the voice granted to Zhizha breaks the silence imposed on women and the impossibility of self-representation" (Ortega-Guzman 103). She therefore reclaims herself by saying that which has not been heard.

A Long Way from Paradise

A Long Way from Paradise is Leah Chishugi's story of how she survived the Rwandan genocide along with her son and Donanta, her mother's cousin. President Habyarimana's plane is shot down as it approaches Kigali airport for landing. The event which takes place in the evening of 6 April 1994 sets off the gruesome murder of over eight hundred thousand Tutsi people. Leah is caught in the midst of this genocide but manages to escape Kigali but not before days of peril, physical injuries, pain and hunger. Close to the border of Gisenyi, her stomach is sliced open by the interahamwe soldiers and she is left under a pile of rotting bodies to die but she regains consciousness eighteen hours later. She flees to Zaire and not long after observed a familiar feeling of terror which has developed within the weeks she witnesses killings, the flow of human blood and dead bodies strewn on the streets, pathways, churches and houses. Leah flees through different countries – Nairobi, Kenya, Zambia, South Africa – before she finally settles in London.

Genocide is an aspect of war and a social challenge. In the Rwandan case, a particular tribe, the Hutus feel they are superior and decide to exterminate the other tribe not minding the fact that they are humans. Outside depression and anxiety which are aspects of emotional effects on war victims, physical consequences include injury, sexual violence, malnutrition, illness and disability. The impact of war or genocide on mental and physical health is not restricted to veterans or perpetrators "but rather encompass men and women who experienced traumas and family stressors in the course of war" (Korinek et al 31). The executive board of World Health Organisation (WHO) recognizes this and in January 2005 advocated "support for the implementation of programmes to repair the psychological damage of war, conflict and natural disasters" (Murthy and Lakshminarayana 2).

Leah, the protagonist of the novel and Donata, her baby-sitter had their share of trauma within the three weeks they witness genocide in Rwanda. The outstanding effect on Donata is her near numbness and the inability to speak for three weeks they were on the run. The first time she speaks is in Goma where they find peace for the first time in three weeks: "Donata looked very contented as she cleared our plates away. She had begun to speak haltingly. 'Let's stay here, Leah' she said. These were the first words she had uttered since . . . three weeks ago" (Chishugi 109). Donata represses and internalises the horrorific sights, endures the harsh physical and emotional conditions, but never discussed them: "we never discussed what happened to us in Rwanda though. It was too painful a subject to broach and I was sure Donanta was trying as hard as I to block the whole thing out" (Chishugi 130). By the time they get to Nairobi where they try to settle down into normal life, Donata experiences a breakdown: "Donata was indeed bleeding profusely. It was as if there was a fountain spurting inside her head with such force that it had to gush out from every available exit. She was unconscious" (Chishugi 131). After series of scans the doctor could not diagnose anything more than a psychosomatic problem; the consequence of trauma: "what has happened to her could be the body's way of responding to extreme trauma, explained the doctor" (Chishugi 134). Herman understands this situation and states that "the likelihood of harm is also increased when the traumatic events include physical violation or injury or exposure to extreme violence, or witnessing grotesque death. In each instance the salient characteristic of the traumatic event is its power to inspire helplessness and terror" (34). Donata is exposed to extreme violence and witnesses grotesque deaths so she suffers the traumatic consequence. After a while she recovers physically but suffers some level of amnesia which according to trauma theory is a consequence of trauma in humans.

Likewise Leah who represses her traumatic experiences fights hard to survive:

> It was only after I got out of Rwanda that I started to feel pain from my wounds. In the same way that I was managing to block out terrible thoughts of what had happened to Christian and my family, most of the time I felt nothing of the physical pain and emotional trauma of being cut. I began to realize that the human body and mind can be kind. When there is too much pain for any human being to bear it is blocked out, filed away to be dealt with at a later date. (Chishugi 83).

This is what Freud calls repression; the memory of those negative experiences being forced out of the conscious level into the unconscious yet are not forgotten. Leah is able to physically survive but does not escape from the persistent feeling of fear, terror and intense feeling of running away. In her own words: "I felt the familiar urge to run intensifying inside me. Every time I saw Rwandise people I wanted to put as much distance between us as possible" (Chishugi 140). Trauma theory recognises this feeling as the hyperarousal state when the victim is always on the alert because she feels insecure. In support of this experience Herman states that "traumatic events destroy the victim's fundamental assumptions about the safety of the world, the positive value of self, and the meaningful order of creation" (51). Leah therefore runs from one country to another in search of peace.

Despite Leah's effort to run as far away from Rwanda as possible, she could not run from the effects of trauma on her body and psyche. She finally succumbs to post traumatic stress disorder and loses consciousness: "the last thing I remembered is filling the kettle from the tap. Then I collapsed. The kettle fell with me, the split water gathered in a pool around me" (Chishugi 135). When she regains consciousness, she realises she has lost the ability to speak and write. The doctor tells her: "your condition is a response to the extreme trauma you have experienced. Your body is shutting down to try to heal" (Chishugi 137). It is amazing how devastating trauma can be to the human body. Herman an expert in trauma and recovery explains that traumatised people over time "perceive their bodies as having turned against

them" (86); reason being that they lose "any baseline state of physical calm or comfort" (Herman 86). Leah's body goes through this devastating experience which is like coming back to a zero point:

> Even though I had a roof over my head, a warm jacket to wear and I could afford bread, I was still plagued by the past. I kept saying to myself, Maybe I should have died. Why did I survive? My legs started to swell up and were covered in red blotches that looked like cherry tomatoes. My doctor said that sometimes depression and post-traumatic stress showed themselves with physical symptoms like that. (Chishugi 248)

However, with the help of a new friend, Leah begins to heal physically, emotionally and learns how to read and write from the scratch. Apart from the negative impact on her body, Leah has nightmares which according to trauma and psychoanalytic theories are the reaction of the repressed memory from where negative events return to haunt the victim in form of nightmares:

> By day I focused my thoughts on the here and now, but as soon as I fell asleep. The terrible dreams come – Christian, my parents, my sisters and brothers all swam before my eyes. Sometimes they are alive, sometimes dead. Their souls were haunting me. I often woke up screaming. In these terrible dreams I was always running. I still have nightmares today. (Chishugi 210)

Leah's experience reveals to what extent conflicts and wars can cause trauma which distort the live of an individual as such the World Health Organisation (WHO)

> . . . estimated that, in the situations of armed conflicts throughout the world, 10% of the people who experience traumatic events will have serious mental health problems and another 10% will develop behavior that will hinder their ability to function effectively. The most common conditions are depression, anxiety and psychosomatic

> problems such as insomnia, or back and stomach aches. (Murthy and Lakshminarayana 27)

Before she goes through the horrors of genocide, Leah was an educated, elegant, carefree and easy going girl; only concerned about her family. Having been a refugee on the run who depended on people for help, Leah evolves a new identity of a mature lady with the ability to reach out to those in trauma and pain:

> Living through genocide changed me forever. My carefree innocence and simple trust in other human beings has gone. I found myself in touch with people from all over the world . . . asking for advice about how to deal with war trauma. I would like to help not only the women of eastern Congo but others who have suffered similar traumas. (Chishugi 284-285)

This is the Leah we see at the end of novel.

The recovery from trauma "is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery. Others may offer advice, support, assistance, affection, and care, but not cure" (Herman 133). So just like Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* and Zhizha in *Under the Tongue*, Leah makes new connections and relationships having supposedly lost her husband, parents and siblings. She begins to rebuild her life with the help, care and love of Pastor Levi and Mary, his wife: "without realizing it I was looking for a replacement family, and almost immediately Pastor Levi and Aunt Mary filled that big, black hole for me. I felt their love whenever I spent time with them. In so many ways they reminded me of my parents. They filled my emptiness and made me feel safe" (Chishugi 207). She is able to get a job and take care of her son. Gradually she begins to pick up the pieces of her life but her healing becomes better when she confronts the brutality meted out against the women of Walungu, Eastern Congo. The

sight she confronts in Walungu is not different from the Rwandan genocide. She identifies with the females and shares her experiences:

> On the fourth day I started crying and said, I've been though the same things. I told them about running from men with machetes, about all the killing I had seen, about how my sisters and brother had been slaughtered . . . . When I had finished talking everything changed. The women looked at me as one of them. We all cried together, then we laughed together and talked. (Chishugi 281)

This experience justifies modern trauma theory's claim that trauma can actually be put into words. It is not an "unrepresentable" event, an unspeakable void or an experience that is outside the range of human understanding rather it is an experience by real people living in real time and space. Breuer and Freud equally discovered in their study that "hysterical symptoms could be alleviated when traumatic memories, as well as the intense feelings that accompanied them were recovered and put into words" (Herman 12). Leah like the protagonist of the novels under study connects with other women to fight oppression and discrimination.

These unfavourable social, political structures; patriarchal laws and inhuman treatment of fellow humans as portrayed in *A Question of Power, Under the Tongue* and *A Long Way from Paradise* are what trauma and psychoanalytic critics point out as reasons for some abnormal behaviours and identity crises.

Stylistic Features

Psychological Realism and Stream of Consciousness

Head and Vera make good use of psychological realism, a technique which focuses on the consciousness, internal thoughts and motivations of a character. Psychological realism places more emphasis on the complex workings of the human mind than on the event in the narrative. It is through the process of exploring the consciousness and memory of the protagonist that trauma is exposed and the character becomes realistic. Head and Vera explore their female characters' emotional disposition to show how this affects or influences their total development. Their narrations focus on the consciousness and sub-consciousness of their protagonists. This means that it is what goes on in their minds that are presented as narration.

The thoughts of Zhizha which are traumatic are narrated to the reader in form of speech. What Vera does in the greater part of the novel by employing stream of consciousness, is to focus on the consequences of a girl's gruesome experience by exploring her consciousness and her thought process. An example of Zhizha's thought process is captured in the novel: "I remember the darkness and the night which have visited. I have to remember . . . . In the darkness I see just one red dot and I can store it anywhere inside my head, even under my eye. I watch it move inside my head till it disappears. It grows very small. When I look at a small red dot it grows and fills my head" (Vera 135-136). Vera focuses on Zhizha's thoughts because her

> … major concern is on the dire consequences of her female protagonist's bizarre experience; that is, the complexity of the way her mind, her whole being reacts to this unwholesome experience. In the exploration of her dilemma, the writer plumbs into

> the depths of the victims traumatized psyche in order to expose her inner turmoil. Hence, she lays bare Zhizha's thought processes. (Ogbazi 74)

This is what Carolyn Martin Shaw terms "exteriorization of internal monologues" (25). In the case of *A Question of Power*, it is what goes on in the subconscious mind of Elizabeth that precipitates her nightmares which form a major part of the narration. Below is a sample of her nightmares:

> He looked at her. He was grinning widely. He raised a plain steel crown of a dull hue to his head. She looked straight and full into the grinning face. He was looking at a point beyond her, too, into the future. He was full of confidence. The African grin said too much. It was hatred. It was control of a situation . . . . He grasped her firmly and sped away back along the path of the meteor. . . . She awoke the next morning with the roar of that river in her ears. She was ill and broken down, unprepared in health for this new clamour. (head 113)

As these events play out in Elizabeth's dream, she gets little or no sleep and this affects her mental health. Head and Vera delve into the memory and traumatised psyche of their protagonists to portray their traumatic situations. On the other hand, Leah's narration is a memoir of her traumatic experiences during the Rwandan genocide.

Female Connection

Another stylistic feature is the use of female connection in search of freedom. Discussing attachment theory Bowlby wrote, "attachment theory regards the propensity to make intimate emotional bonds to particular individuals as a basic component of human nature, already present in germinal form in the neonate and continuing through adult life into old age" (120–

121). Love, care and attention are the things a child needs more which in later life "help him to make socio-emotional adjustments and build psychological resilience in the face of impersonal and interpersonal trauma" (Dodhy 1822). Dodhy further argues that this closeness and female bonding is important because it provides a "safe heaven. Providing a safe haven includes being available to the victim, giving space and time for open communication, showing interest in the problems, worries, anxieties of the other, giving reassurance and moral support, making him feel worthy and sustaining physical closeness besides warmth in times of need" (Dodhy 1822).

Based on the attachment principle, Zhizha is able to reclaim herself by connecting with her grandmother who helped her tell her story. She shows Zhizha love, care and attention as such Zhizha gets attached to her. Zhizha's grandmother reaches out to her by first letting her understand that she is not alone in her suffering. She explains to Zhizha that females go through one suffering or the other to the extent that they can't point to the exact place in their body where they feel the pain (Vera 162). Grandmother becomes an attachment as well as a therapeutic figure by narrating her sorrowful experiences to Zhizha. In doing this she absorbs Zhizha's fears, consoles and encourages her to speak because sharing her experience will help bury her grief: "the best words are those that are shared and embraced, those that give birth to other words" (Vera 137). She spends days and nights with Zhizha to soothe her broken psyche and finally Zhizha is able to rise out of sorrow and touch the sky:

> Grandmother's song enters into my growing and finds parts of me hidden and still and alone, full of the forgotten things of the earth. She moves nearer to me and touches me with her shadow…. I am swallowed by the shadow which grows from Grandmother and bends deep into the earth, lifting me from the ground, raising me high. It is warm inside the shadow. It is warm like sleep. I meet the sky in that warm place and the sky is inside Grandmother and it is filled with voiceless stars. (Vera 162)

Zhizha's ability to narrate her cruel experiences in her father's hands breaks the silence of traumatized female voices because it is a taboo in a typical patriarchal setting to talk about the gruesome experiences of women. "Zhizha through the support of a community of women [mother and grandmother] in *Under the Tongue* translates into an outspoken woman who refuses to suffer in silence" (Mangena 145). Initially, Zhizha succumbs to patriarchal pressure and silence but realises that "we have tongues; we are not trees. Our tongues carry the memory of our pain. Our journey is watered with tears but we are not trees. Our arms are not silence . . . the path to the river is buried on the soles of our feet. This path has many thorns, but it is our path . . . even rain falls on this path which is why the grass grows on it" (Vera 173).

Similarly Kenosi cares for Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* and shows her love. Elizabeth connects strongly with Kenosi who positively influences her mental growth and gradually pulls her back to life: "As far as Elizabeth was concerned she was to look back on this strange week and the Kenosi woman's sudden appearance as one of the miracles or accidents that saved her life" (Head 91). She who had been too traumatised and weak is encouraged to get back to the garden by Kenosi. Pulling Elizabeth towards the soil is a symbol of a pull towards life and "she becomes a silent balm for Elizabeth's spirit" (Borzaga 38-39).

Also Leah and Donata are attached to each other as they face trauma in *A Long Way from Paradise*. Leah also connects with the women of Walungu, Eastern Congo who have passed through similar experiences. This connection facilitates her healing and a renewed sense of purpose. She throws her life into helping them heal and survive that anyone looking at her will not know she has been through one of the worst traumatic experience: "how come you look so nice, as if you have never had any problem? Asked one" (Chishugi 282). The transformations in the lives of these protagonists attest to the fact that "Interactions with attachment figures that are sensitive and responsive to their calls for help promote a stable

sense of attachment security and build positive mental representations of self and others" (Dodhy 1822). The female protagonists are able to access psychological healing by connecting with other females in similar experiences.

Fragmentation and Poetic Prose

Vera makes use of the poetic style in many of her fictions as such they are classified as poetic prose. This means she writes them as if she is writing poetry. She uses her novel to show that prose fiction can be presented in the way poetry is written. She makes use of features of poetry like rhythm, repetition, short sentences and sometimes fragments instead of the usual plot and character development typical of prose narrative. This style makes her work dense and compact. In *Under the Tongue* "these simple sentences help to bring out the little girl's innocence, thereby heightening the reader's sympathy for her, both before and after her misfortune. The staccato arrangement of some of the sentences enhances the uncertainty, anxiety, fear and insecurity experienced by Zhizha" (Lunga John 13). An exqmple of this poetic prose narrative style is given below:

> A voice scrambles, turns into night.
>
> Zhizha.
>
> Father whispers an embrace of lightning. I bite hard on my tongue, hold my breath deep in my chest… I hear father.
>
> . . .
>
> But my voice is lost. Astray. Salt spreads through my eyes…
>
> Then soundless cry . . .

sh sh sh

Father speaks in an unremembered voice . . . . (Vera 123)

It is also important to note that “it is the intensity and elegance of Vera's "poetic" prose, with its use of repetition, ellipsis, and accretion of metaphorical meaning that compels the reader's engagement with content” (Eva Hunter 1). The reader thus strives to understand the metaphorical expressions and the essence of the repetitions in order to make meaning out of the narration.

She also makes use of pacing and pausing in *Under the Tongue* which elicits patience from the reader. The reader is compelled to patiently and expectantly go through the text in order to get to the core of the matter and at the same time feels the pains of the protagonist. This usually happens before she reveals the cause of the protagonist’s trauma. It is towards the end of the novel that Vera brings to bare the cause of her protagonist’s trauma.

The use of pacing and pausing in the novel heightens the feeling of trauma as they represent the difficulty of the victim to narrate her experience:

Night . . .

Father . . .

My cry is death not life, softens, like stone breaking in water, softens, like saliva, softens, like rain.

I hear breathing, violent, breathing, on rock. A rigid silence.

Father . . . between my legs

Wet between my legs. Blood-wet wetness. Not flowing. Slippery.

Not so loud.

He put mucus here, and blood . . .

Quiet.

He put mucus between my legs . . .

Quiet

Am I going to die?

Quiet.

He broke my stomach . . .

He put blood between my legs. (Vera 228)

These paces and pauses in-between powerful fragmented sentences in the narration have a way of gripping the mind of the reader thereby allowing the painful experience of the protagonist to be firmly felt by the reader. The protagonists of Vera, Head and Leah are clear examples of victims of unpleasant circumstances invented and perpetrated by society in which patriarchal, political, social and white power structures see only their power and not humans. They are like gods with the power of death over people. This raises the question: How does one relate to oneself and to others in the society in the face of negative social forces? Forces like dictators who see none as good or right but themselves. Leaders of countries who take decisions based on selfish interests that eventually lead to chaos and wars. The consequence is that people especially females are left to grapple with the pangs of trauma:

> They have inherited the chaos of their society and they undergo terrible experiences because of the ways the societal set-up impacts on them. They are scape-goats who

> have been subjected to so much suffering, not because of their shortcomings or failures in life, or their negative innate qualities; or still, not because of their error of judgment, but primarily because their society has imposed these sufferings on them. When we make an objective appraisal of their lives, we observe that they have been violated severally. They have been betrayed, rejected and humiliated. They are surrounded by unfriendly people who are uncaring and indifferent to their plights. They are not loved in the real sense of the word since love entails caring and reciprocity. (Ogbazi *UJAH* 129)

However, the writers strongly put forth the idea that women should not give up on the battle to withstand oppression and any hindrance on their way to progress. Uniting with other women is the key bearing in mind that individuals are the very people who can change the structure of society. The study has shown how a person's psychology can be affected by society's assessment and treatment of the individual. The treatment of trauma from the inside as portrayed by the writers of the novels give room for literary discourses on the themes of violence, madness and the divided self.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The pertinent issue in the study of the selected novels for this research is the exploration of the female characters' emotional and psychological disposition and the relevance of this to their overall wellbeing and development. In the study of the selected novels which centre on the distorted and divided self as a result of unpleasant experiences, the research carefully emphasised the consequences of the protagonists' as well as some female characters' gruesome experiences and the complex way their minds and whole being react to these horrible experiences. The researcher explored female psychological sufferings caused by patriarchy, oppression, conflict and discrimination. This is against the western world's idea that Africans lack psychological sensitivity. The researcher analysed the selected novels in this study to refute this idea, to establish the psychological affliction of the female and equally the destroyed social silencing experienced by African women.

The study reveals that an African female is capable of going mad because of intense discrimination which turns her into an outcast in her own home. In the case of Elizabeth the colour of her skin becomes her greatest source of destruction just like the shape of a Tutsi's nose leads to destruction of lives in *A Long Way from Paradise*. These chaotic situations in the society are as a result of laws made mostly by the male members of the society. Such pronouncements, promulgations and laws plunged people, especially the female into armed conflicts and all forms of trauma. The social silencing and restrains on the female in families and the society at large lead to destruction of family ties among siblings. In addition, the hasty and insensitive decisions of heads of families expose family members to exploitation and sexual abuse. The end point is the disruption of personhood and inability of proper relationship and coexistence among family members and between them and the society. They

become queer and difficult to relate with. The Kafr El Teen females are raped, exploited, plundered emotionally, financially and physically. These culminated into various degrees of trauma leading to prostitution, mental dissociation, suicide and murder.

These novels especially portray blurred borders between reality and unreality, sanity and insanity thereby compelling the reader to have a feel of the protagonists' turmoil. It is important to point out that transformation is at the core of the novels. There is therefore a breaking free from oppression into a new world of knowledge, fairness, compassion, attention and a new order of imagination. All the protagonists evolve new identities, achieve self assertion and the authentic self. Some took delinquent actions in the bid to assert themselves but should not be judged accordingly considering the fact that they are victims of oppressive socio-political structures. In the real sense of it they have been wronged; innocent sufferers, helpless and defenceless. A people society has exploited and cheated thus, they react to express their anger and frustration.

Furthermore, the study reveals that the selected novels operate at the personal and universal levels. The quest to be liberated from suffering caused by oppression, rape, patriarchy, colonialism, armed conflict, gender and racial discrimination is extended to the oppression and rape of the African society.

Trauma creates speechless fright that either divides or destroys identity. This study demonstrated how traumatic events disrupt attachment between self and others. However, these writers from the four regions of Africa portray similar themes in their novels. All the novels portray socio-political conditions/issues in post-colonial Africa. The inhuman treatment of the female from childhood to adult stage reflect in their works. They equally put forth a vision of an ideal society where there is fairness and equity in all spheres of life. A society where every individual is noticed as a person, not as a thing; where one wants to give

rather than being forcefully taken; where power lies in every individual who participates to create wealth; a society that thrives on interdependence. These novels as well as this research are tools to awaken the consciousness of African nations and leaders to have mercy on the oppressed people by re-examining some post-colonial policies that adversely affect the female.

Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* is the first novel by a female African writer in which madness is explored. Similarly, Dangarembga is among the first African female writers to examine the exclusive white nervous disorders: anorexia and bulimia and she is highly acknowledged for bringing the female perspective to the foreground of postcolonial dialogue. Vera also stands out in her consistent focus on women's problems and her commitment to women's struggles for freedom. Her works are outstanding because of her unique style just as Selasi whose *Ghana Must Go* is a debut with a complex narrative style. These writers succeed in moving beyond the confines of normal literary conventions to portray madness, sexuality, psychic disorders and guilt. Although these writers explore the dynamics of their characters' psyche they still insist on hope.

Writing provides the female (writers and protagonists) a forum to articulate forbidden issues and views, what some refer to as taboos. It gives them a free space which is hardly available in spoken discourse. Although the protagonists of the novels studied begin the process of healing from psychological trauma and reintegration into the society, the real causes of anxiety, oppression and tension are still intact. In various African countries, there are still certain socio-political structures and conditions which still afflict the female. In Africa for example, there are cases of rape in some IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps across the country. In Nigeria, Internally Displaced Persons are over four million and most of them are women and children without food, good drinking water, shelter, clothes and security. These camps are as a result of violence, wars and armed conflicts leaving the women to bear the

consequences. This necessitates more research in this area in other to create greater awareness about the plight of women which could be detrimental to their psychological well being.

The novels studied in this research make a universal statement that in any traumatizing social and political situation, women suffer more. Therefore unhealthy social conditions as well as political laws and decisions that can lead to trauma and pain should be avoided.

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