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Title

Women Writing Trauma and the Construction of the Female Identity in Postcolonial Fiction

Investigating Psychological and Cultural Trauma in Malika Mokeddem's *l'Interdite*, Calixthe Beyala's *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga*, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Option: Comparative Literature

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Statement of Authorship

The content of the present thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the research report contains no material already published or written by another researcher except where due reference is made.

Boutheina Boukhalfa

Dedication

For my parents.

Acknowledgments

If there is one fundamental truth that this thesis has taught me is the deep extent to which lives are entangled with each other. I happily confess that the process of writing this thesis has sharpened my awareness of how I am relationally constituted and enabled by my relations to various others.

While I am thankful and grateful for everyone who has supported me during the development and writing of this dissertation, I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge those who have been particularly important in helping me through this process. First, then, I would like to thank my academic supervisor Professor Halimi Mohammed Seghir for his support during the writing of my thesis and the critical insights he has been providing throughout the project.

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The process of completing a PhD presents great challenges, and I have witnessed at first hand or through peers how hard it is to remain motivated and driven through severe stress and deteriorating mental health brought about by contemporary neoliberal-driven academia. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the several friends, colleagues and peers who I met along this journey in conferences, seminars and events who, as PhD students, are facing this struggle every day, and thank them heartily for – through shared realities and experiences – instilling hope in me.

Abstract

Some personal or collective histories can never be completely integrated into the continuum of one's emotional life. Such stories produced in traumatic times or in disastrous events are likely to remain only partially understood or accepted. Examining the human consequence of traumatic events is one challenging focus of this work. It is comparatively productive, however, if these events are approached from the perspective of the trauma they have produced—an approach that suspends chronological and geographical barriers of time and space. This dissertation seeks to explore how women express psychological and cultural trauma through the writings of postcolonial fiction. By analyzing the historical context of what psychological and cultural trauma has meant to women, and how they have represented it, the dissertation proposes a model which is based on the recurrent sources of trauma for women, the 'triple trauma' of domestic violence, sexual abuse and unbelonging. By examining cross-cultural examples from selected writings of Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi, questions are asked about the similarities and differences of how psychological and cultural trauma is represented through fiction, and what this means for the female protagonists of the texts, the female writers, readers and the cultures and societies out of which these writings originate. In analyzing these relations, this thesis finds that the fictional writing about the sources and experiences of trauma can expose a range of ideological connections, and that the writing and reading about these connections constitutes a valid trauma discourse. This trauma discourse supports the aim of contemporary feminist traumatology which is to make women's trauma visible, give meaning to it, and ultimately create frameworks that promote the healing (and prevention) of trauma.

Summary in French

Certaines histoires personnelles ou collectives ne peuvent jamais être complètement intégrées dans le continuum de la vie émotionnelle d'une personne. De telles histoires, produites lors de périodes traumatiques ou d'événements désastreux, risquent de ne rester que partiellement comprises ou acceptées. L'examen des conséquences humaines des événements traumatiques est l'un des défis de ce travail. Il est cependant relativement productif d'aborder ces événements du point de vue du traumatisme qu'ils ont produit - une approche qui suspend les barrières chronologiques et géographiques du temps et de l'espace. Cette thèse vise à explorer la manière dont les femmes expriment les traumatismes psychologiques et culturels à travers l'écriture de fictions postcoloniales. En analysant le contexte historique de ce que le traumatisme psychologique et culturel a signifié pour les femmes, et comment elles l'ont représenté, la thèse propose un modèle basé sur les sources récurrentes de traumatisme pour les femmes, le " triple traumatisme " de la violence domestique, de l'abus sexuel et de la non-appartenance. En examinant des exemples interculturels tirés d'une sélection d'écrits de Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala et Chimamanda Ngozi, des questions sont posées sur les similitudes et les différences dans la manière dont le traumatisme psychologique et culturel est représenté par la fiction, et ce que cela signifie pour les protagonistes féminins des textes, les écrivaines, les lecteurs et les cultures et sociétés d'où proviennent ces écrits. En analysant ces relations, cette thèse constate que l'écriture fictionnelle sur les sources et les expériences du traumatisme peut exposer une série de connexions idéologiques, et que l'écriture et la lecture de ces connexions constituent un discours valide sur le traumatisme. Ce discours sur le traumatisme soutient l'objectif de la traumatologie féministe contemporaine qui est de rendre visible le traumatisme des femmes, de lui donner un sens et, finalement, de créer des cadres qui favorisent la guérison (et la prévention) du traumatisme.

Summary in Arabic

ملخص

لا يمكن أبدًا دمج بعض التواريخ الشخصية أو الجماعية بشكل كامل في استمرارية الحياة العاطفية للفرد. مثل هذه القصص التي تم إنتاجها في الأوقات العصيبة أو في الأحداث الكارثية من المرجح أن تظل مفهومة أو مقبولة جزئيًا فقط. يعد فحص العواقب البشرية للأحداث الصادمة أحد التحديات التي تركز عليها هذا العمل. ومع ذلك ، فمن المفيد نسبيًا أن يتم التعامل مع هذه الأحداث من منظور الصدمة التي أحدثوها - وهو نهج يعلق الحواجز الزمنية والجغرافية للزمان والمكان. تسعى هذه الأطروحة إلى استكشاف كيفية تعبير النساء عن الصدمات النفسية والثقافية من خلال كتابة روايات ما بعد الاستعمار. من خلال تحليل السياق التاريخي لما تعنيه الصدمة النفسية والثقافية للمرأة ، وكيف مثلتهن ، تقترح الأطروحة نموذجًا يعتمد على المصادر المتكررة للصدمة للنساء ، `` الصدمة الثلاثية " للعنف المنزلي والجنسي. سوء المعاملة وعدم الانتماء. من خلال دراسة أمثلة عبر الثقافات من كتابات مختارة ، يتم طرح أسئلة حول أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في كيفية تمثيل الصدمة النفسية والثقافية من خلال الخيال ، وماذا يعني هذا بالنسبة لبطلات النصوص. ، الكاتبات والقراء والثقافات والمجتمعات التي نشأت منها هذه الكتابات. عند تحليل هذه العلاقات ، توصلت هذه الأطروحة إلى أن الكتابة الخيالية عن مصادر الصدمة وتجاربها يمكن أن تكشف مجموعة من الروابط الأيديولوجية ، وأن الكتابة والقراءة حول هذه الروابط تشكل خطابًا صادمًا صحيحًا. يدعم خطاب الصدمة هذا هدف علم الصدمات النسوية المعاصر وهو جعل صدمة المرأة مرئية ، وإعطاء معنى لها ، وفي النهاية إنشاء أطر تعزز الشفاء (والوقاية) من الصدمة.

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List of Abbreviations

APA. *American Psychological Association*

CPTSD. *Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*

DSM. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*

TTT. *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga*

PTSD. *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*

General Introduction

> *I had no one to love me; or to make me respected, to enable me to acquire respect. I was an egg dropped on the sand; a pauper by nature, hunted from family to family, who belonged to nobody – and nobody cared for me.*
>
> –Mary Wollstonecraft, The Wrongs of Woman (1994)

> *Years pile up in front of me: the sign on the door saying KEEP OUT. THIS MEANS YOU!*
>
> –Trezza Azzopardi, the Hiding Place (2002)

Jemima, an abandoned and mistreat child in *The Wrongs of Woman* (1994), compares herself to a dropping egg to express the experience of growing up motherless and unbelonging to anyone, without affection and care, without a family to provide the most basic sense of security. Like Jemima, Dolores, the protagonist narrator in The Hiding Place (2002), is a child victimized by multiple traumas and rejected by society. Her childhood is tinted by physical and emotional violence and stigmatization. The novels by Wollstonecraft and Azzopardi both emphasize the powerful impact of suffering and trauma on women.

These quotes from the two romantic women writers are a point of departure to call attention to the discrepancies between two uses of the concept of trauma: one demonstrates psychological trauma, and the other operating in important paradigms of cultural trauma. The meaning of trauma in narratives is, thus, tied to the psychological and cultural experiences of suffering. However, before delving into trauma narratives, one sees it necessary to map the trajectory of trauma and suffering.

Suffering is a universal predicament that is often described as arduous and at times impossible to speak of. While this remain true to a certain degree, trauma is a separating force that can render its victims silent or incapable of moving forward. Horrific events experienced in

community or individually, encumber the victims as they resurge unexpectedly in repetitive sequences in the present[1].

Trauma has rich and animated meanings. For this reason, this dissertation cannot settle for one understanding of trauma as prescribed by contemporary scientific knowledge, but rather looks into different approaches to trauma in the literary field.

In fact, the etymological lineage of the word trauma is from the ancient Greek word that means "to break, cut, hurt, injure, scathe, sear or (most commonly) to wound" (Duggan, 2015, p. 15). The medical meaning of the term trauma, introduced in English in the 17th century, signifies a physical wound, typically a severe blow caused by an external agent (Luckhurst, 2008). However, the contemporary use of the term trauma emerged later, more precisely in the late 19th century, when the meaning of trauma "shift[s] from *soma* to *psyche*" (Marcus, 2014, p. 34), following what Ian Hacking calls "the psychologization of trauma" (Hacking, 2003, p. 184).

Moreover, trauma is a wound. This wound, like words, require an interpretation and an investigation to what it means in the lives of individuals and communities. Laqueur, in a magazine article, claims that we live in an age of trauma. he reported that a verifiable increase in the use of this term: "Having once been relatively obscure, it is now found everywhere: used in the *New York Times* fewer than 300 times between 1851 and 1960, it has appeared 11,00 times since" (Laqueur, 2010).

Indeed, the vocabulary of trauma seems ubiquitous as we label as traumatic events ranging from casual to the catastrophic in everyday language. The sudden shut down and confinement that started in 2019 because of COVID-19 pandemic can be regarded as traumatizing as it altered

[1] Several trauma scholars, critics and psychiatrists, agree that the first characterization of trauma is repetitiveness of the traumatic event in the present. In Karin Fierke's work, *Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We must Not Be Silent: Trauma, Political Solipsism and War, trauma* is described as a "dislocation accompanied by an inability to mourn or to speak of the trauma" (Fierke, 2004, p. 472). She further explains that grief is "embedded in a community and an isolation" (Ibid).

the collective memory worldwide. Ever since, we daily confront the unthinkable in news and television reports, in bizarre public trials, and in relentless statistics exposing rape, murder, torture, battering, and child abuse in an increasingly violent society. Indeed, this pandemic is still challenging our sensibilities with occasions for communal mourning too numerous to chronicle.

With this in mind, Leys presents a characterization of this dominant understanding of modern trauma; a characterization that persists in contemporary times:

> Owing to the emotions of terror and surprise caused by certain events, the mind is split or dissociated: it is unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed. As a result, the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness; instead, she is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories. (Leys, 2000, p. 2)

Certainly, trauma is "one of the signal concepts of our times" (Leys, 2000, p. 10). In this vein, James Brassett and Nick Vaughan-Williams highlight in their introduction to a journal issue on the government of traumatic events in contemporary times:

> It seems that trauma is fast becoming a paradigmatic lens through which the dynamics of contemporary international politics are framed, understood, and responded to [and] our understanding/understandings of trauma and the traumatic event tend to be dominated by the ascendancy of managerialist discourses of humanitarianism, psychology, and the newly emergent frame of resilience planning. (Brassett & Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 183)

In other words, trauma became the symbolic of our cultural condition, and it is in this sense that the concept is of particular interest to the field of literary studies, which initiated a profound and prolonged focus on trauma beginning in the mid-1990s.

Trauma, then, became a concept that is found in numerous fields, from describing a grave physical wound in the medical field, to a category of legal institution[2], to a field of criticism in the humanities. Before the migration of trauma to literary studies, various commentators on the history of trauma have noted a significant relation between trauma and modernity; there is something particularly modern about trauma. Lerner and Micale suggest that the concept of trauma, particularly its expansion to capture physiological phenomena and, eventually, psychological experiences "was simultaneously responsive to and constitutive of 'modernity'" (Lerner & Micale, 2001, p. 10).

Emblems of modernity, Luckhurst argues, are the city, urban activity, technology, machinery and, most notably, the railway. Besides being "the icon of British modernity" and a piece of "engineering genius," the railway became notorious for its dangers and accidents (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 21). Furthermore, Luckhurst suggests that although psychological wounds are not new to human experience, there is something unprecedented about the social changes that originated in the European Enlightenment and that reached their greatest intensity in the Industrial Revolution, which carry a particular relevance for trauma and which have shaped the vocabulary and the concepts within which it is currently conceived (Luckhurst, 2008).

These changes included new political alignments, the rise of the nation state, urbanization, and the rise of increasingly capitalistic economic relations. Technological innovations and new machines altered landscapes along with our sense of time and place and social relations. The

[2] In a research project, Borg (2020) demonstrated how some types of testimonies and witnessing in legal institutions are connected to trauma and trauma of sexual violence. See *Narrating Trauma: Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and the Political Ethics of Self-Narration*

advent of film, cinematography, and the telegraph changed standards and patterns of communication.

These markers of modernity represent a series of shocks or even violent assaults on human sensibilities and on individuals' notions of personal or corporate identity, all of which evoke a traumatic vocabulary. In particular, Luckhurst notes, "the general scholarly consensus is that the origin of the idea of trauma was inextricably linked to the expansion of the railways in the 1860s" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 21). As the rails spread across the landscape, linking disparate places and standardizing previously uncoordinated clocks, railway crashes exposed ordinary people to powerful accidents involving previously unimaginable levels of energy.

In fact, Ralph Harrington contends, if the steam engine on a railway can be considered as a symbol of the 19th century, "a steam engine running *off* a railway and dragging its train to destruction behind it might serve equally well" (Harrington, 2001, p. 31).

For this reason, the work of British physician John Erichsen from the 1860s on railway injuries, or railway spine, is often taken to be a significant reference point in the modern history of trauma. The concept of trauma then was laid out in the therapeutic practices of late nineteenth-century European neurologists such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, Josef Breuer, and Sigmund Freud. Their conception continue to determine how we speak about trauma in the psychiatry field. These men developed a range of theories to account for abnormal behaviors by their patients, none of which showed any obvious connection to immediate physical or organic causes.

With this prelude in mind, how is the migration of trauma theory to the humanities, particularly in analysis informed by Derridean deconstruction, to be understood? The migration of trauma theory to the humanities, although more prominent in the 1980s, was stimulated by an interest

in issues surrounding the Holocaust. Many studies of trauma within non-medical fields centre on the question of bearing witness to a traumatic event.

For example, a lot of academic work has drawn on issues raised in the autobiographical works of Holocaust survivors, such as Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Charlotte Delbo, Jean Améry, and on other works on survivor literature from this era by Terrence Des Pres, Giorgio Agamben and, in the world of cinema, by Claude Lanzmann[3].

The key issues that emerge from this phase of trauma theory revolve around the difficulties of bearing witness to such a terrible event, or the possibility of representing this event in a just manner. Kaplan suggests that the unexpected consideration of trauma in the humanities in the late 1980s took place "perhaps because trauma theory provided a welcome bridge back to social and political concerns in an era when high theory had become abstract" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 25).

Susannah Radstone suggests a similar explanation when she writes that trauma theory "aimed to help the humanities move beyond the crises in knowledge posed by poststructuralism and deconstruction […] without abandoning their insights" (Radstone, 2007, p. 68).

However, other forms of violence and suffering than holocausts and genocides left individuals and communities traumatized. Geoffrey Hartman, a professor in the comparative literature department at Yale and a member of the Yale School of deconstruction influenced by Derrida's work, wrote in 1995: "[t]rauma study's radical aspect comes to the fore less in its emphasis on acts of violence like war and genocide than when it draws attention to 'familiar' violence such as rape, and the abuse of women and children" (Hartman, 1995, p. 546).

[3] See Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man*, in *The Complete Works of Primo Levi* (2015). Elie Wiesel, *The Night Trilogy: Night, Dawn, Day* (2008). Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After* (1995). Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities* (1980). Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps (1980).* Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999). *Shoah*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (New Yorker Films, 1985).

In addition to Harman's assertion, everything that has been mentioned before is within the western framework of conceptualizing trauma. Feminist criticism and postcolonial theory in particular, brought into light the trauma of non-Western subjects. Jennifer Yusin points out in *Postcolonial Trauma* whether or not the kinds of wounds inflicted by colonialism can be accounted for by the concepts within trauma studies constitutes an important question for the field (Yusin, 2018).

Colonialism is an inveterately traumatizing phenomenon, and the title of an essay collection from the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Something Torn and New* (2009), evokes the very essence of trauma and trauma healing in such a context.

In this work, Ngugi argues that colonialism in Africa may be best characterized by the trope of dismemberment. He offers the nineteenth-century examples of the Xhosa leader Hintsa wa Khawuta and of the Gikuyu chief Waiyaki wa Hinga, whose bodies were literally disfigured by colonial troops, as symbols of colonialism's "even farther-reaching dismemberment: that of the colonial subject's memory from his individual and collective body" (Ngugi, 2009, p. 6).

Ngugi is certainly not the first to point out the traumatic impact of colonial rule. Writers, scholars, politicians, journalists, and other intellectuals in postcolonial contexts have testified abundantly to the harms of colonialism. In doing so, the words and concepts they have deployed have frequently anticipated or complemented the vocabulary of trauma theory. Achebe's famous novel about the effects of the colonial encounter offers the image of a traumatic wound in its very title – *Things Fall Apart* (1994).

Psychological approaches to postcolonial studies have often examined the effects of colonization and decolonization on the colonized, or formerly colonized, as well as colonizers. These effects include the internalization of racism, inferiority complexes and the traumatic

legacies of colonization and slavery, post- slavery trauma, apartheid, wars and twentieth-century genocides. After the Second World War, several French- speaking theorists began looking at the psychological effects and legacies of colonization upon the colonized and colonizers; Frantz Fanon is on top of the list. His works, especially *The Wretched of the Earth* (2002) is a proof of an early relationship between psychological and postcolonial methods that is often overlooked by those who see only an inherent Eurocentrism in psychological approaches to trauma.

Even though the roots of the postcolonial and the psychological are traced through the works of Fanon, women's experience was marginalized despite the literary emergence of trauma narratives. According to Anne Whitehead, "the desire among various cultural groups to represent or make visible specific historical instances of trauma has given rise tonumerous imp ortant works of contemporary fiction" (Whitehead, 2004, p. 1).

However, despite the visibility of some violations that cause trauma to women and the consequences this may have for them, there are still largely underdeveloped and silenced aspects of psychological trauma. Besides, the history of psychological inquiry about trauma shows that there has been an ongoing power struggle over what constitutes trauma, both in experience, manifestation, representation and treatment. These aspects have contributed to the ongoing silencing of women's trauma experiences.

This is especially true in regards to African women who even before encountering specific traumatic incidents have experienced silencing through patriarchal oppression and colonial marginalization. Being already voiceless within a given patriarchal neocolonial culture or society, coupled with the additional burden of experiencing psychological trauma, which by its nature is the unspeakable story, creates a strong conflict in which the challenge to express trauma becomes central.

Finding a means to communicate the experience of trauma is therefore of vital importance to African women who have experienced traumatic events first-hand, or those who have witnessed trauma. As a reader I have been affected, disturbed and intrigued by the many instances and the great range of expression of trauma in fictional representations of African women's experiences by African women writers such as Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

What has especially fascinated me in their trauma fiction is the continuity of women's trauma, the identifiable similarities and differences in the representations, and the meaning that these trauma stories convey in regards to the female reader.

Notably, African women writers have always faced challenges in voicing their experiences of suffering. The act of writing fictional narratives by African women and about African women may constitute a personally and politically effective task, as the female authorial voice writing about trauma can be the liberation of the voice of the *other*.

In this vein, Kali Tall observes that writing about traumatic experience can serve as a weapon in the struggle for empowerment. Writing fictional narratives of trauma is an act contributing to gaining psychological freedom, while also presenting a challenge, a transgressive, disruptive excess to the ideological structures that create women as an *other* (Tal, 1996).

However, the path towards freedom for African women writers meanders between the western feminism and postcolonial feminism. In postcolonial thought, two factors have worked hand in hand against women: religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism. As a result, postcolonial feminists have had to contend with two obvious realities: the women's respect for, and obedience to their communities' traditional demands and subservience to the dictates of fundamentalist religious rules. An African woman's commitment to community, nationalistic

sentiments and fundamentalist religious rules has more complex causes than the simplistic cultural backwardness.

Explicitly, in the African context, feminism is largely a reaction to specific historical legacies, colonization and pre-colonial traditions, upon whose foundations its modern political, social and economic structures have been built, and from which the African feminist strives to emancipate both men and women. Emancipation will be achieved for African women writer, as Cixous would put it, through the symbolic act of writing from woman toward woman. According to her, it is through this act of communication and in which she accepts the challenge of the discourse, that woman will affirm woman somewhere other than in silence, the place reserved for her (Cixous, 1976).

Writing has provided African women the opportunity to make their voices heard. As a tool of communication, African women writers in particular have used writing to bring to the attention of their own people and, by extension, to a wider readership aspects of culture that have not been addressed at all or insufficiently but which are of most concern to women.

By addressing women's trauma, women writers have not only created a "room of their own", in the Virginia Wolfe sense of a space of creativity, but more significantly have made forcible entry into writing, hitherto the preserve of men. If through writing, the marginalized African male has wrestled back the use of his voice, the African woman writer, doubly marginalized, recognizes the power of writing as a negotiating tool in the struggle to be heard on her own terms. This is precisely the case of Malika Mokeddem' l'*Interdite*, Calixthe Beyala's *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* (1988), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004).

Notably, through the selected novels of the aforementioned women writers, one seeks to demonstrate how trauma theory can be more inclusive and culturally sensitive. In an influential book called *Beyond Feminist Aesthetic: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (1989), which

is more than 20 years old now but whose argument remains pertinent and can help us understand what is wrong with trauma theory, Felski contends that it is crucial to reflect women's experiences outside the range of Western writers. Through feminist approaches, she emphasize how agency, voice, narrative, and literary form interact with gender in assigning meaning to trauma.

In this way, feminist approaches to trauma treat it as a complex, layered phenomenon whose cognitive, emotional, and spiritual components cannot be understood in isolation. Similarly, Vickroy asserts that trauma goes beyond the most severe contexts of trauma (war, the holocaust, rape) into realms of sexual, class, social injustice, and racial traumas consequent on objectification under aggressively normalized ideologies (Vickroy, 2015). Social mechanisms attached to those ideologies attempt to shape the individual into a psychically "death-dealing" functionality (Vickroy, 2015, p. xi).

In line with this view, I place particular emphasis on trauma texts by three women writers. This investigation of trauma in postcolonial texts is one important way in which I explore some largely uncharted territory. Second, I focus on literary approaches to trauma of unbelonging, trauma of rape and sexual abuse, and trauma of domestic violence, that is, on individual, personal traumas, an area that has received far less scholarly attention than historical and collective traumas in the postcolonial field. In examining the psychologies and poetics as well as the politics of trauma in selected African women's fiction, a number of key questions arise and constitute central concerns throughout this study:

- How do literary works of women writers represent and enact trauma?
- How do they approach the unthinkable, express the unspeakable, and depict the unpresentable?
- What shapes and functions does trauma take on in different literary texts?

- How does it figure as a semantic and as a structural category?
- In what ways do these texts self-reflexively thematize the meanings of writing (about) trauma?

Investigating these and related questions, I read l'*Interdite, TTT,* and *Purple Hibiscus* as part of the cultural imaginary, with their negotiations of trauma and its multiple meanings reflecting back on the culture within which they were written. The two elements that constitute the basis of my trajectory, the comparison of three postcolonial texts, namely l'*Interdite* (1993) by Malika Mokeddem, *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* (1988) by Calixthe Beyala, and *Purple Hibiscus* (2008) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the focus on the trauma of unbelonging, trauma of rape and sexual violence, and trauma of domestic violence require further explanation.

African women writers challenged critics who focused on the way women were seen as helpless, or mad, and that the abuse was exaggerated and left survivors feeling permanently marked. Writers like Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie sought to depathologize women's experiences and expression of trauma. On this note, the objective of this dissertation is to demonstrate how these women challenged the culture of their traditional societies and voiced the different psychological traumas that women can endure in silence. Laurie Vickroy asserts that "these works attest to the frequency of trauma and its importance in a multicontextual social issue, as it is a consequence of political ideologies, colonization, war, domestic violence, poverty, and so forth" (Vickroy, 2002, p. 2).

In doing so, the selected African women writers transform the trauma through literary texts. However not processing it to the point that trauma can or ever will disappear; residues of trauma is in fact the origin of their writings, which persists in repeated images from the past that becomes excessive, obsessive, delusional, hyperbolic, indeed, hysterical. Ultimately, and in this

line of this reasoning, the feminine creativity is examined in depth in this dissertation to show how women are shaped by trauma, and how is it manifested through women's writings.

There may be some question as to why I chose these three women, as well as these particular novels, to focus upon for this dissertation. One may argue that so much has been written about *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* that it seems a difficult task to contribute any new criticism to this novel. However, I believe that the unusual combination of novels I have chosen to study makes this dissertation unique. Most of these texts are what I refer to as revisionary texts, for the protagonists, Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili, and their authors revise an existing work, incorporating their vision and interpretation of trauma into that text in order to make readers aware of a new and different literary history.

In *Culture and Imperialism,* Said states that "In reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and what its author excluded. Each cultural work is a vision of a moment, and we must juxtapose that vision with the various revisions it later provoke" (Said, 1994, p. 11). By pairing *l'Interdite, TTT* with another (re)visionary work, *Purple Hibiscus,* I hope to provide even more insight into the idea of writing trauma.

Moreover, these writers have shown how their societies and cultures contribute to implementing violence by shedding the light on the uniqueness of women's experience of trauma. For example, Malika Mokeddem explores in l'*Interdite* the unspeakability of unbelonging to the country of origin, while Calixthe Beyala and Chimamanda Ngozi examine the impact, of rape and domestic violence on women in *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* and *Purple Hibiscus*, respectively. Certainly, through the female protagonists, Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili, one discovers the extreme, as well as the systemic or everyday forms of violence the African woman endures in her life.

I see it necessarily in this regard to follow a multidisciplinary approach, so as to address a broad range of possible contexts and the extensive ramifications of trauma and trauma theory. I focus on psychological and psychoanalytical approaches because both consider the interrelationship of cultural, cognitive, and physiological contributions to the production and evaluation of emotions. Also, some psychologists suggest that it is not fair ro separate survivors' defensive behaviors from the social context. Each protagonist's trauma, namely Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili will be examined in accordance it the social environment the protagonist grew into.

Psychoanalysis, the framework of many humanist trauma studies, offer a relevant focus on origins of traumas and their repressions and repetitions. Psychological frameworks share with trauma fiction an investigation of the situational and social variables shaping the experience of trauma survivors.

Narrative theory and its cognitive studies of readers support my analysis in enabling me to pinpoint the relationship of cognition and emotion in textual representations of characters and it the reading process. Narrative theorists have located storytelling methods that make aspects of fictional characters' minds available to readers, from different backgrounds, through their thought process, social aspects of mind, and focalization.

These narrative strategies draw readers in an help them develop mental models of the characters and ascribe mental states and lived experience to the characters. Further, they stimulate readers' empathy and suggest ways to assess characters' behaviors in relation to these frameworks and to authors' rhetorical frameworks.

The juxtaposition of the texts chosen for this dissertation offers a testing ground for the hypothesis of creating a connection between what is a universal occurrence (the traumatization of women), and the individualized contextual creative, literary response to it.

Chapter one entitled *Trauma paradigm and its vicissitudes* provides a genealogical overview of trauma from the mid-19th century onward, highlighting the key figures and phases in the modern history of trauma up to contemporary trauma theory. In so doing, this chapter presents the background against which the theoretical concerns of the dissertation can be understood, both to highlight continuities and also to emphasize the specific interests of this study.

Chapter two entitled *Feminism, Trauma and the Politics of Violence and Silence in Women's Postcolonial Literary Endeavor* considers the postcolonial feminist analyses of trauma theory and provides new ways of thinking about violence and silence. It also takes into consideration the feminine creativity and how it helps women voice traumatic atrocities. This chapter also see trauma as a 'positive' motive behind women's creativity.

Chapter three entitled *Rising From The Ashes of a Wounded Identity: The Construction of Sultana's, Tanga's, And Kambili's Identity Beyond Wounds* is devoted to the comparative analysis of the selected novels that deal with trauma of unbelonging, domestic violence and sexual abuse. It also examines how testimony, memory, and witnessing might be new parameters to women's dual resistance against trauma and patriarchal muting.

Chapter four entitled *African Women's Trauma Narratives as a Cultural Negotiation: towards New Ways to Reading Cognition and Emotion of Oppression* looks into the possibility of narrating trauma. It also trances the relationship between reader/text/author in a way that triggers readers' empathy. Notably the latter is discussed as a last section of the dissertation to suggest new perspectives and relations between trauma and empathy.

Chapter 1

Trauma Paradigm and its Vicissitudes

Introduction

This chapter presents the background against which the concerns in trauma pursued throughout the dissertation can be understood. Notably, this chapter present the genealogy in trauma and trauma theory, both to give an account of the major sources and issues in the history of trauma and trauma theory, and to establish a contextual background for the issues pursued in the rest of the thesis. This chapter identifies major stages in the history of trauma which stimulated different phases in the history of theorizing trauma in literary studies.

In fact, the migration of trauma form psychology and psychoanalysis to literary studies is marked by the Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) and Ruth Leys *Trauma: a Genealogy* (2000). Leys' main claim in relation to the history of trauma is that, despite the non-linearity and singularity of events, it has always been structured by tensions or oscillations between what she calls the mimetic and antimimetic tendencies or paradigms (Leys, 2000). The mimetic and antimimetic tendencies cannot be strictly separated from each other; for Leys, the contradiction between these tendencies has continued to shape psychology and psychoanalysis: "from the moment of its invention in the late nineteenth century the concept of trauma has been fundamentally unstable, balancing uneasily – indeed veering uncontrollably – between two ideas, theories or paradigms" (Leys, 2000, p. 298).

The significant contribution to trauma theory in the humanities is marked by the work of Cathy Caruth. Caruth is a product of the Yale school of deconstruction who received her PhD from Yale University in 1988, amid the flourishing of the Yale School of deconstruction with which de Man was associated when he went to Yale in the 1970s until his death in 1983. Caruth's view, elaborated in her 1996 book *Unclaimed Experience*, is that:

> trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely

> *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on. (Caruth, 1996, p. 4)

Caruth's claim, which she proposes through a series of readings of Freud's texts in relation to works of literature, is that the force of trauma does not lie in the event itself but in the event remaining 'unclaimed' at the time it happens which results in traumatic repetitions.

The meaning of trauma is informed and determined by the powerful role played by Western psychological and psychiatric discourses. The last section of this chapter takes into consideration critics that suggested, despite the constructionist power of such discourses and practices to regulate the realm of the traumatic, trauma can fit in other disciplines such as the postcolonial discourse. Thus, significant changes are taking place in the contemporary governance of trauma not just in the psychiatric sphere – which has traditionally contested the politics of PTSD perhaps due to its politically charged origin in the aftermath of the Vietnam war – but also in civilian contexts and institutions, including disaster preparedness, social injustices and oppression.

1.1. Genealogy of a Concept

1.1.1. Historical conceptualization of trauma

Trauma has become an important concept of our time. Its nature has been debated in an increasing number of books, journals, and studies ever since the American Psychiatric Association (APA) introduced the PTSD diagnosis. From this moment, many societies started using this term to explain certain psychological conditions. Consequently, trauma became an essential feature of present-day subjectivity. In light of this, one wonders when did this new paradigm emerge, and most importantly, why?

Trauma has been a particularly controversial subject within the field of psychiatry. Any attempt to define and conceptualize it entail further challenges due to the complexity of the historiography of psychiatry. This complexity, claim Roy Porter and Mark Micale, is due to the nature of psychiatry that is "scattered in a multitude of areas of past activity and inquiry" (Porter & Micale, 1994, p. 5). Within this heavily politicized discipline, "the history of trauma", argues Schönfelder, "is a history of repeated gaps and ruptures, with cyclical periods of attention and neglect, of fascination and rejection" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 27).

Similarly, Judith Herman thinks that the history of trauma is *itself* traumatized for it is marked by "periods of active investigation [that] have alternated with periods of oblivion. Repeatedly in the past century, similar lines of inquiry have been taken up and abruptly abandoned, only to be rediscovered later" (Herman, 2015, p. 7). In addition to its complex history, the mutation of trauma from the domain of medicine to that of psychology, psychiatry, and later literary studies is also problematic.

Etymologically speaking, trauma is the Greek term for 'physical wound', 'defeat', or 'injury' that is inflicted on the body. This wound, according to Ruth Lys, is "a surgical wound,

conceived on the model of a rupture of the skin or protective envelope of body resulting in a catastrophic global reaction in the entire organism" (Leys, 2000, p. 19). Similarly, Laplanche (1976) defines trauma as an old medicosurgical concept that describes an *intense* physical wound that distorts the whole of the body. However, tracing the "transposition" of this medicosurgical concept into psychology and psychiatry, as Laplanche remarked and as stated earlier, is challenging (Laplanche, 1976, p. 129). In light of what have been said, and in order to conceptualize trauma within the field of psychiatry and psychology, one finds it necessary to frame it in a consecutive series of momentous events[4].

In fact, interests in studies on trauma started with the British surgeon John Erichsen's diagnosis in the 1860s of a condition cause by railway crushes known as 'concussion of the spine' or 'railway spine' (leys, 2000; Schönfelder, 2013; Davis & Meretoja, 2020). Survivors of railway accidents noticed a change in their behavior, even without a sign of physical injury. While Erichsen linked the traumatized victims' distress to a spine damage, further investigations of the concussion of the spine moved towards a more psychological and psychosomatic explanation. Trauma here is associated with industrialization and the rise of "technological and statistical society that can generate, multiply and quantify the 'shocks' of modern life" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 19).

Nevertheless, other researchers have showed that this traumatic syndrome was an entity on its own. Thomas Pfau for example, favors a "trans-individual and structural-discursive"[5] conception of trauma, which is significantly different from the notion of "railway spine" (Pfau, 2005, p. 21). Subsequently, not until a century later, the German neurologist Hermann

[4] In order to locate trauma within history, Greg Forter gave the term 'punctual' traumas to historical events which are characterized by singularity, magnitude, and horror such as the Holocaust (Forter, 2007).

[5] In his book *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy 1790-1840* (2005), Thomas Pfau, a professor of English and German, focuses on the delicate experience of trauma, paranoia, and melancholy based on the views of David Hume, Emanuel Kant, Jack Lacan, Sigmund Freud, and Nietzsche. His defined trauma as an emotion that transcends and goes beyond the individual because of its slippery nature. In this regard, it cannot be thematic and topical, but discursive.

Oppenheim named this psychological condition 'traumatic neurosis', which denotes a neurological damage in the brain (Leys, 2000; Davis & Meretoja, 2020). In this light, the psychological stress was explained in terms of physical 'break in', or a "shock of modern technology on individual subjects" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 42), and was described by Laplanche as "the subjective syndrome of cranial trauma", argues (Laplanche, 1676, p. 130). He further claims that such statement created:

> A series of gradations linking major impairments of tissue to decreasing perceptible degrees of damage, but that would nevertheless be of the same nature: histological damage and, untimely, intracellular damage. The trauma would proceed, as it were, to a kind of self-extenuation, but without losing its nature, until it reached a certain limit, that limit being precisely what we call "psychical trauma."" (Laplanche, 1976, p. 130)

Accordingly, the term trauma acquired a psychological meaning and described a form of mental distress, rather than a purely bodily illness. This mutation of trauma from body to mind was located in the roots of hysteria[6], a term commonly used in the works of the next key figures in the history of trauma: Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot, and Sigmund Freud.

Notably, it was Sigmund Freud who had the most distinguished, yet paradoxical views on the historical conceptualization of trauma. This is specifically because Freud, according to Forter, developed two models of trauma: he located the first model in his seduction theory[7], and quickly abandoned out of "fear" (Forter, 2007, p. 261).

While the second model moved to a "structural view of trauma that…becomes then the result of historically specific and resistible social forces than the transhistorical truth or condition of historical experience itself" (Forter, 2007, p. 262). However, Adami (2008) observes that interest in trauma studies have been neglected again at the beginning of the

[6] This point is elaborated in depth in the section about Psychological Trauma.
[7] For more insights on the seduction theory, see Ruth Leys *Trauma: a Genealogy* (2000)

twentieth century. The horrors of World War I reawakened interests in trauma when masses of soldiers were diagnosed with "shell shock", a condition where soldiers did not suffer from a physical affliction caused by exploding shells, but from extreme fear (Schönfelder, 2013; Sütterlin, 2020). Additionally, the notion of "shell shock" appeared in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), where he described the traumatic impact as a form of intrusion in the "protective shield" of the soldier's psyche (qtd.in Sütterlin, 2020; p. 13).

Freud further maintains that because of the event's overwhelming impact, patients cannot assimilate the experience into their psyche; they are thus condemned to repeat, or relive the event in their dreams (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, 1991). During and after the war, Harold Merskey remarks that many people suffered from psychological symptoms similar to soldiers coming back from war. However, interests in trauma were neglected again until the outbreak of the Second World War[8]. The substantial number of individuals who suffered from war neurosis renewed attention in trauma (Merskey, 1995).

The Vietnam War was the next event that considerably contributed in the growing awareness of trauma and its effects on individuals. Schönfelder confirms that it "played a pivotal role in convincing the medical and psychiatric professions to officially recognize the effects of trauma" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 43). Ever since, the holocaust and genocides captured the attention of critics and became important key point in discussions about trauma. Consequently, the horrific events of the war convinced the medical as well as the psychiatric board to officially recognize the effects of trauma under the term PTSD and incorporated in the psychiatric manual the DSM. Once recognized by the American Psychiatric Association[9],

[8] According to van der Kolk, the work of the active psychiatrists in WWI were largely forgotten by the outbreak of WWII. An exception however is the work of the American psychoanalyst Abraham Kardiner who became a source for the symptomatology of PTSD (van der Kolk, 2004; Sütterlin, 2020)

[9] In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association officially recognized trauma as a psychological wound under the concept of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They defined traumatic experience as an "outside the range of usual human experience" (APA, 1980, p. 236). However, this definition is inaccurate as it excludes

waves of extensive research, an "explosion", remarks Van der Kolk of studies were conducted on the subject (Van der Kolk, 1994, p. 31).

This brief selection of events is, overall, the common framework and the first key steps of historical conceptualization of trauma. The events also demonstrate how the history of trauma is complex and discontinuous. Herman fittingly characterizes the history of trauma as a history full of "episodic amnesia", meaning "it has been periodically forgotten and must be periodically reclaimed" (Herman, 2015, p. 7).

She also indicated that in order to understand these oscillations of trauma between progress and regress, critics must take into consideration the *political* contexts within which theorization of trauma have occurred (Herman, 2015). Indeed, Sütterlin confirms, "histories of trauma succeeding Herman's have not only the political context but the many other discourses that have influenced the trauma concept" (Sütterlin, 2020, p. 14).

From an equally general perspective, albeit with a somewhat different focus, trauma is a concept that was conditioned by social, economic, and political shifts. Between 1895 and 1974, studies of trauma focused almost entirely on its impact on white men, neglecting male violence towards women and children. Consequently, concepts like 'rape trauma syndrome', 'battered woman syndrome', and 'abused child syndrome' draw lines of a new horizon that is reflected in the literary discourse of trauma (Schönfelder, 2013).

Moreover, Sütterlin linked these vicissitudes in contextual approaches of the history of trauma to Foucault's "discourse-analytical" (Sütterlin, 2020, p. 14). He further argues that Foucault contributed significantly in his 1973/74 lectures on *Psychiatric Power* to the changes of trauma, and how psychiatrists such as Charcot and Freud need an "assignable case", or an

a range of ordinary experiences that may be traumatic such as domestic violence, rape, and battery (Herman, 2015).

"event" that would help build a meticulous aetiological framework, which would strengthen their anticlerical philosophy (Sütterlin, 2020).

For Foucault, trauma is a product of power struggle, that is, an event, a manifestation within a given discourse. However, a certain level of *inclusiveness*[10] is appropriate in this case to prevent trauma discourse from maintaining what Rothberg called a "hierarchy of suffering", which is politically and intellectually dangerous (Rothberg, 2009, p. 9). In order to do so, trauma should transcend the political power struggles that "pitted suffering against simulation, reality against imagination and truth against falsehood" (Sütterlin, 2020; p. 14).

The historical outline sketched above sheds the light on all of the significant point of reference for my analysis. The meanings of trauma were generated over a series of historical events. From the industrial accident, hysteria, shell shock, survivor syndrome, combat fatigue to PTSD, accounts such as these provide a much deeper understanding of the complexity of the history of trauma.

These historical millstones are not only a junction of trauma conceptualization, they are also a recognition of the experiences of suffering which can lead to mental illness. Porter writes on the latter in *A Social History of Madness*, "even today we possess no rational consensus upon the nature of mental illness", he continues, "Madness has been and remains an elusive thing" (Porter, 1987, p. 8). Even though porter wrote this in 1987, and given that trauma a mental disorder, his statement has not entirely lost its legitimacy, which leads one to ask questions about the nature of trauma.

[10]For further queries, see Schönfelder's dissertation *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma* where she compares the ways we look at trauma and highlights the importance of certain generalizations regarding it. She thinks that "a rhetoric of singularity" is dangerous to a certain extent because it limits specific types of experience and may or may not label them as traumatic (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 44).

1.1.2. Nature of Trauma

It has been stated in the previous section that trauma was originally located in the domain of medicine and then psychology. This mutation was later recognized by the American Psychological Association and the term PTSD became used to describe individuals with psychological wounds. In this stream of events, one wonders about the nature of trauma.

Heated debates on the nature of trauma are a point of discussion among clinical practitioners and theorists such as Herman, Erikson, Caruth, LaCapra, Maria Root, and Bessel Van der Kolk. Some suggest that the nature of trauma lays in the traumatic event itself, while others focus on the experience of trauma, emphasizing its singularity. The sociologist Kai Erikson remarks that the distinction is becoming more and more blurred, and to make a clear difference is ambiguous (Erikson, 1991).

Arguably, Van der Kolk (2014) considers trauma as the individual's response to an overwhelming event that goes beyond the human emotional and cognitive functioning. In other words, an event that can disrupt one's psyche and can cause long lasting psychological effects. Similarly, Herman explains that trauma is a human response to danger in overwhelming situations where "neither resistance nor escape is possible" (Herman, 2015, p. 34).

On different parameters, Chris Brewin emphasizes the response to extreme stress is classified as PTSD, and specifies that "it is not the symptoms themselves, but rather their frequency, their persistence, their intensity, and their failure to become more benign with time that define the disorder" (Brewin, 2007, p. 42).

In other words, the difference between a normal reaction and a traumatic reaction is marked by degree and length rather than quality. In this context, it is important to note what recent studies have revealed: "the majority of people will experience a traumatic event at some

point in their lifetime; however, only a minority will develop PTSD symptoms severe enough to meet criteria for a diagnosis" (Afifi et al., 2010, p.108).

The question why some individuals develop pathological and persistent symptoms to specific traumatic events while others are able to cope to acute levels of harm is still a persisting question in trauma studies.

Mostly, clinicians agree that trauma overwhelms the innermost sensation of an individual and disrupts her/his relationship with reality. In this case, the nature of trauma lays in how one experiences it, without eliminating the impact of the harmful event since Van der Kolk confirms that "trauma is not just an event that took place in the past", he continues, "it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body. This imprint has ongoing consequences for how the human organism manages to survive in the present" (Kolk, 2014, p. 21).

Trauma in this case alters individuals' "psychological, biological, and social equilibrium such that they become obsessed with the past" (Vickroy, 2015, p. 6). Traumatized people become stuck in their past because the world for them is experienced with a different nervous system (Van der Kolk, 2014; Herman, 1996). Moreover, LaCapra argues that the traumatized individual relive the past as if it were the present, instead of it (the past) being a fragment in memory (LaCapra, 2014). Trauma then does not occur in the here and now, which makes understanding its nature a challenging task. Caruth specifies:

> the wound of the mind –the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world–is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that…is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor …so trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that

> its very unassimilated nature –the way it was precisely not known in the first instance –returns to haunt the survivor later on. (Caruth, 1996; pp. 3-4)

Accordingly, from a Caruthian viewpoint, the nature of trauma is not easily communicable. In fact, it is sometimes not graspable for the individual who experiences it and that is why it is referred to as the unspeakable experience. Correspondingly, Herman asserts that trauma "overwhelms the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning" (Herman, 2015, p. 33).

In this sense, individual's subjective response and cognitive encoding of trauma alters his perception of reality and meaning making. Consequently, the individual is left with a shattered sense of self, fragmented memory, and destroyed beliefs. Additionally, among other symptoms of trauma is shame, doubt, feelings of helplessness, and the "closing off of the spirit as the mind tries to insulate itself from further harm" (Erikson, 1991, p. 457).

Harm, according to Erikson, is what gives the 'traumatic' event shape and definition. The intensity of the symptoms differs from one individual to another, so the experience of trauma and the ability to cope with it varies from one individual to another (Erikson, 1991; Vickroy, 2015).

Another important point that is worth mentioning is Kai Erikson's conception of trauma. According to the sociologist, trauma can result from cataclysmic events such as war or genocides, as it can be a result of daily life events. The latter comes in the form of "a sudden flash of terror, [or] a continuing pattern of abuse as well as from a single assault" (Erikson, 1991, p. 457). According to the psychologist Laura S. Brown, trauma can be a cultural phenomenon when there is a collective repression of some aspects of social life such as violence, poverty, and abuse that enhances the traumatization of minority groups (women, people of color, and gays) (Brown, 1995).

Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish stress from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Individuals who develop PTSD for example, are more at risk to above-mentioned symptoms. What, then, characterizes Posttraumatic Stress Disorder? From a more general perspective, trauma is different from stress in that trauma is "outside the range of usual human experience" (qtd.in Erikson, 1991, p.457), while stress refers to a series of event that is periodical or momentary.

The recent version of the DSM, the DSM-IV-TR[11], explains trauma in relation to three elements: the traumatic event, the individual's response, and the resulting pathologies (APA, 2000, pp. 463-468). According to the diagnosis criteria, criterion A1 (stressor) describes the type of events that can be classified as traumatic, namely, "an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of the self and others" (APA, 2000; p. 467).

Criterion A2 (subjective emotional response) stresses that the event or/and events must be experienced with "intense fear, helplessness, or horror" to categorized as traumatic (APA, 2000; p. 467). One observes that the DSM-IV defines the traumatic event both in terms of objective characteristic of the event and subjective reactions of the traumatized individual. This is somehow paradoxical because trauma is indeed an external event, but it seems that it cannot be effectively defined unless the individuals' response in involved. One contends that trauma is defined through the structure of the traumatic event, and it gains meaning from the individual's response to the event.

[11] The DSM (the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders) has several editions. The fourth edition, the DSM-IV was created in 1994 and then was revised in 2000 as DSM-IV-TR. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the term DSM-IV for the following references.

Although the DSM-IV and DSM-5[12] have different approaches to the conceptualization of what makes an event traumatic, they still have in common the core feature of a traumatic event: "an intense confrontation with one's own or someone else's vulnerability and morality" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 63).

The experience of trauma does, indeed, lead to PTSD. This nevertheless depend on certain factors, including the individual's aptitudes, the context of exposure, and the post traumatic environment. Van der Kolk et al. strongly highlight that PTSD is "the result of a complex interrelationship among psychological, biological and social processes" (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, 1991, p. 431).

People's experiences of trauma involve reliving the original experience in the form of "intrusions" (intrusive memories, daydreams, nightmares, flashbacks, and hallucinations) (APA, 2000, p. 468). Trauma is then characterized by repetitiveness within the individuals' dynamic process of feelings that enables them to be present in the now because after all, trauma is "something alien breaks in on you, smashing through whatever barriers your mind has set up as a line of defense. It invades you, occupies you, takes you over, becomes a dominating feature of your interior landscape" (Erikson, 1991, p. 458).

A full understanding of the nature of trauma requires one, according to Fischer-Homberger, to renounce conventional dichotomies like body-psyche, exogenetic-endogenetic (Schönfelder, 2013). Beyond that, the symptomatology of PTSD, as explained by the DSM, can be manifested in both physical and psychological ways, which explains the difficulties in

[12]The DSM-5 introduces the concept of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as follows: "the development of characteristics symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events. Emotional reactions to the traumatic event (fear, helplessness, horror) are no longer a part of Criterion A (APA, 2013, p.274). This definition is different from the DSM-IV (2000) and DSM-III (1980). These noteworthy changes in the DSM's definition of PTSD reveal the shift from an event-based to a response-based notion of trauma. For further clarity on the history of these changes, see Chris Brewin (2007) *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Malady or Myth?*

making a distinction between the two. Traumatic memory for example can be explained in terms of cognitive structure, as well as in neurophysiological measures[13] (Schönfelder, 2013).

1.1.3. The Wounded Memory

Traumatic experiences are processed in a different way than nontraumatic experiences, which make traumatic memory different from nontraumatic memory (Van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1991). Arguably, survivors of trauma experience two kinds of memory phenomena: flashbacks and the lack of conscious recall. Flashbacks are commonly known in this context as intrusive memories.

The latter can be described as vivid images of the traumatic scene, which make the victims feel as if they are reliving the past in the present (Ehlers and Clark, 1991). Moreover, these intrusions are characterized as being intense and immediate, pushing victims to separate or dissociate from themselves to avoid the pain (Vickroy, 2015). Interestingly, Herman argues that the traumatic experience is 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, 2015, p. 37).

Herman's argument is based on Janet's description of his hysterical patients who seemed to be dominated by an *idée fixe*, which makes traumatic memories stored differently from ordinary memories. Janet elaborated the difference:

> [Normal memory], like all psychological phenomena, is an action; essentially it is the action of telling a story. … A situation has not been satisfactorily liquidated . . . until we have achieved, not merely an outward reaction through our movements,

[13]For the neurobiology of PTSD, see *Neurobiological Alterations Associated with Traumatic Stress* by Weiss Sandra Weiss (2007) and Van der Kolk's *The body Keeps the Score* (2014).

> but also an inward reaction through the words we address to ourselves, through the organization of the recital of the event to others and to ourselves, and through the putting of this recital in its place as one of the chapters in our personal history. . . . Strictly speaking, then, one who retains a fixed idea of a happening cannot be said to have a "memory" . . . it is only for convenience that we speak of it as a "traumatic memory". (qtd.in Herman, 2015, p. 37)

Traumatic memories are, then, frozen in time, overwhelming, and lack verbal description and background (Herman, 2015; Van der Kolk and Van der Hart, 1991). This could explain, according to Vickroy (2015), individuals' repetitive behaviors. She further elaborates that most of the trauma victims remember the traumatic event, "though they might try to avoid the sense or the visceral memories returning them to that scene" (Vickroy, 2015, p. 8).

While intrusive memories are a common feature of trauma manifestation, amnesia, in contrast, represents one's inability to recall, or access to memories of the traumatic event. Ronald Comer explains amnesia as a "loss of memory" which cannot be elucidated in terms of ordinary forgetting because it is not caused by "organic factors" but by the effects of traumatic event (Comer, 2015, p. 144).

In fact, trauma specialists argue that intrusions and amnesia are caused by the abnormal way they are processed by the mind; traumatic memories tend to resist the ordinary flow of autobiographical memories (van der Kolk, 2014). Anke Ehlers and David Clark assert that traumatic memory is "poorly elaborated and inadequately integrated into its context in time, place, subsequent and previous information and other autobiographical memories" (Ehlers & Clark, 1991, p. 325). Consequently, trauma victims cannot recall intentionally the traumatic experience, while the experience keeps haunting them through flashbacks and nightmares. This nature of traumatic memory is a recurrent theme in literary representation of trauma.

1.2.Theorizing Trauma

In the broadest sense, the origin of the experience of trauma lies in the nineteenth century diagnosis of nervous disorders known as railway spine (Luckhurst, 2008). It was, however, Freud's discoveries and his earliest hypotheses about the unconscious and the mechanisms of repression that laid the foundation of the concept. According to Forter, Freud suggests in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) that hysteria is caused by a traumatic experience "that have not been fully integrated into the personality (Forter, 2007, p. 262). In the same way, Van der Kolk defined hysteria as "a mental disorder characterized by emotional outbursts, susceptibility to suggestion, and contractions and paralyses of the muscles that could not be explained by simple anatomy" (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 177). Nevertheless, Rousseau thinks that hysteria is a complicated phenomenon in the agenda of western medicine as it reveals the "binary components of the medical model –mind/body, pathology/normalcy, health/sickness, doctor/patient –as no other condition ever has" (Rousseau, 1993, p. 92).

Throughout his scattered work on trauma, Freud located the root of hysteria in childhood sexual trauma[14]. He argues that the painful experience is often repressed and forgotten by the conscious mind. However, these repressed experiences continue to dwell in the unconscious in what Freud called "foreign bod[ies]" in the mind (Forter, 2007, p. 262).

In fact, Freud developed two types of trauma theory according to Cathy Caruth (1996): the model of castration, generally considered as an early model, is linked to the theory of repression and the return of the repressed. The second model is the model of traumatic

[14]For the sake of clarity and simplicity, childhood sexual trauma is not defined in this section nor any other section because it is a complex and its definition will not serve the purpose of this dissertation. However, for further queries on this subject, see Young, *the Harmony of Illusion: Inventing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (1995) and H.F. Ellenberger *The Discovery of the Unconscious: the History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (1994).

neurosis[15], which is connected with war veterans, accident victims, and work on hysteria. From his insights and the insights of the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, the concept of hysteria captured the public's attention as "a great venture into the unknown" (Herman, 2015, p. 10).

Initially, the term hysteria was not defined systematically and it was linked to incomprehensible symptoms that is proper to women and originating in the uterus, hence the term hysteria (Ellenberger, 1994).

Symptoms of hysteria often included motor paralysis that demonstrated a neurological damage, amnesia, confusion, and fragmented memory. Moreover, Freud noticed unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events that generated an altered state of consciousness and consequently induced in return the hysterical symptoms. Pierre Janet called this alteration in consciousness dissociation, while Freud called in double consciousness (Herman, 2015). Janet believed that one's capacity for dissociation stems from a psychological weakness. Freud on the contrary, argued that hysteria "could be found among people [women mostly] of the clearest intellect, strongest will, greatest character, and highest critical power" (Herman, 2015, p. 12).

As a result, Freud maintained that hysteria "represented disguised representations of intensely distressing events which had been banished from memory" (Herman, 2015, p. 12). According to Herman, hysterical symptoms are linked to traumatic memories which can be recovered and put into words. Freud called this "catharsis", and later called it "psycho-analysis", which started as a treatment with a purpose of explaining the traumatic symptoms to patients (2015, p. 12).

[15]Cathy Caruth indicated in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) in a footnote this model under the name of accident trauma (135, n.18).

However, after the first and second world war, many individuals, men and women, suffered from symptoms closely resembling hysteria which made it impossible to locate it in childhood sexual trauma and consider it as an illness of women only. Consequently, Freud neglected this early theory of trauma based on hysteria and created psychoanalysis on the ruins of hysteria (Herman, 2015; Forter, 2007). This dramatic turnaround was not the work of one man as Herman remarks, hysteria was, and still is, a concept with many unanswered questions around it. But to understand its complexity, one finds it necessary to understand the political and social climate that gave rise to it in the first place.

Hysteria offered a more or less scientific explanation for prevailing phenomena such as witchcraft, religious ecstasy, and demonic possession states in the late nineteenth century. The French neurologist Charcot, Pierre Janet, and Freud used the Salpêtrière as their kingdom to emphasize the role of hysteria in understanding trauma (Davis & Meretoja, 2020). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Tuesday Lectures[16] were nothing but a social event to which several classes at that time attended to admire the work of the newly born field of neuroscience.

On one hand, the downside of the performance is that Charcot and his colleagues needed an audience to illustrate the quality of their work, which cannot necessarily be classified as a scientific investigation and most importantly, they did not have an interest whatsoever in the victims inner lives as they viewed their emotions and feelings to be cataloged. On the other hand, these investigation were not done in vein as by the mid-1890s Freud and Janet arrived to a striking formulation: hysteria was a condition caused by psychological trauma (Herman, 2015).

[16]The Parisian neuropsychiatrist Jean-Martin Charcot held what is known as Leçons du Mardi where he and his colleagues (Pierre Janet, William James, and Sigmund Freud) displayed young women who found refuge in the Salpêtrière from lives of constant violence, exploitation, and rape. Charcot generally used hypnosis as a method of healing from hysteria and he played out this method in the overtly theoretical setting of the famous Tuesday Lectures with a purpose of exploring, investigating, understanding, and curing *les névroses traumatiques* (Herman, 2015; Duggan, 2020).

Accordingly, one can say that the roots of trauma trace back to the concept of hysteria that is mainly characterized by an altered memory and lack of language. In Van der Kolk's words, "traumatized people simultaneously remember too little and too much" (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 179). Repressed memories come back to the victims in form of flashbacks or vivid images as painful *remembering* of a chocking experience.

In this regard, 'shock', and 'surprise' are the initiation to the formulation of trauma theory. According to Forter, the psyche that usually filters out and limits what we perceive has been disabled and overwhelmed by the factor of 'shock' and 'surprise' (Forter, 2007). That is to say:

> The psychic apparatus is overcome, that is, partly because it fails to anticipate the event that overwhelms it, just as the body is traumatized when an external concussion catches it unawares, making flight or defense against the concussive force impossible. (Forter, 2007; p. 263)

In this regard, Forter stresses that the factor of surprise may constitute a significant element in rendering an experience traumatic. Indeed, it is important to emphasize that meanings of trauma have meandered somewhere between the physical and the psychical. However, Forter's statement is puzzling because it makes the analogy with physical injury inexact. Luckhurst (2008) maintained that this theory emerged from Freud's perception of the psyche as a field of conflict between sexuality and its repression. Freud's sexual theories suggested a two-stage development.

The first stage appears in the sexuality that is repressed in the period of childhood that he termed 'latency' and which return in the adult sexuality. In other words, "early traumas in childhood would be forgotten in latency, but re-emerge in adults. Sexual disorders therefore acted like clues hinting at a hidden crime buried in infancy" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 8).

Yet again, the Freudian statements are too paradoxical and complex due to his notorious shift in position when approaching trauma. According to Schönfelder (2013), Freud openly states his shift in position in a letter to Fliess in 1897, he writes: "I was at last obliged to recognize that these scenes of seduction had never taken place, and that they were only phantasies which my patients had made up"'(Schönfelder, 2013, p. 70).

After his statement, Freud revised his notion of sexual repression to focus instead on the phenomenon of compulsive repetition that is caused by the experience of trauma. For the current discussion, it is important to note that Freud's theorization of trauma is a greatly simplified one, and that is done for the sake of clarity and simplicity because Freud's writing in some ways remain a significant theoretical point of reference in this dissertation.

With that being said, Freud was careful in distinguishing the kind of repetition from the "hysteric replication" through investigations of the original trauma (Forter, 2008, p. 267). Furthermore, he explained that the victim goes back to the traumatic event in dreams and imaginatively returns to the experience that traumatized him. Freud thinks that this is due to the insufficient readiness of the ego in the exact moment of the shock, which leads to the repetition of the traumatic event. This also explains the victims' return to the traumatic event as a way to "master the stimulus [i.e. the traumatizing event]" (Forter, 2008, p. 268).

This view of repetition land itself to an interpretation in which "human subjectivity is intrinsically traumatic, in which manifestations of traumatic behavior are merely the expressions of a deep, structural trauma that compels all human beings toward regressive self-destruction" (Forter, 2008, p. 268). Given this suggestion, repetition, in this sense, is a fundamental characteristic of trauma writing and trauma reading as Cathy Caruth suggested in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996).

Anne Whitehead describes repetition as "inherently ambivalent, suspended between trauma and catharsis" as well as between "remaining caught within trauma's paralyzing influence" and "working toward memory and catharsis" (Whitehead, 2004, pp. 86-87). In essence, the psyche returns to the scenes of unpleasure is an attempt to repair the damage. Repetition in this sense, "has become a cultural shorthand for the consequences of traumatic events: individuals, collectives and nations risk trapping themselves in cycles of uncomprehending repetition unless the traumatic event is translated from repetition to the healthy analytic process of 'working through'" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 9).

For Freud, the repetition of the nightmares demonstrates the peculiar temporality of trauma with an event that has happened *too soon* to be fully grasped. Critics of trauma theory think that this is what Freud referred to 'belatedness', or the delay between the initial event and its activation in the psyche (Caruth, 1996; Forter, 2007; Luckhurst, 2008). Hence, we are dealing with: "a repetition of the *same*: a demonic impulse that turns development into reprisal, change into recurrence, temporal movement into the static circularity of myth" (Forter, 2007, p. 269).

In this regard, Freud's shift in position may be regarded as a shift of emphasis rather than total displacement. However, Forter noted that many texts witness both theories operating alongside one another for explanatory purposes (Forter, 2007). But more importantly, this dissertation focuses on Freud's second theory of trauma that would eventually enable us to escape the dynamics of patriarchal oppression for example. In addition, the second model of Freud's trauma theory uncovers a starting point for approaching the question of how we might *resist* trauma and "traumatic subject-formation" (Forter, 2007, p. 208).

Modern critics based their modern research on trauma on Freud's insights, even though they are quiet paradoxical. The field of psychology have invested in examining the complexities

of trauma. From Freud's hysteria to his theory of repetition compulsion, trauma meandered between the physical and psychical injury. According to Vickroy, understanding the mechanisms of emotions and behaviors might be beneficial for a social analysis. Such analysis "can account for the complex interrelationships among physiological, cognitive, and cultural contributions to the production and evaluation of emotion" (Vickroy, 2015, p. 15).

In this regard, repression and repetition offer valuable insights into the process of representation of trauma, especially in narrative texts. A crucial point to be taken into consideration is Ferrell's insight on trauma. Kirby Farrell articulated that trauma theory can function as a trope and argued that the very movement of trauma from psychiatric clinic to culture more broadly put forward that "trauma [can] be psychocultural, because the injury entails interpretation of the injury" (Farrell, 1998, p. 7).

Interpretation of trauma, according to Ferrell, reflects its shift away from the individual, event-based model to a more cultural understanding of the phenomenon, mediated by representation. In the same vein, he argues that trauma pervade whole cultures and this notion is based on his belief that "we are creatures susceptible to infectious fear and arousal" (Farrell, 1998, p. 12).

Meanwhile, David Becker practically warns us of the dangers of eagerly universalizing the term trauma. He explains: "trauma can only be understood with reference to the specific contexts in which it occurs", which means the focus does not only concern the individual's suffering per se, but also the institutions involved and which surround the individual such as cultural norms, political context, and the organization of the community (Becker, 2004, p. 7).

Becker, therefore suggests, "that in each different social context people should create their own definition of trauma within a framework, in which the basic focus is not so much on

the symptoms of a person but on the sequential development of the traumatic situation" (Becker, 2004, p. 7).

Becker's intervention reinforces the collective dimension of trauma theory, a point that will be discussed in the coming section, that have received increasing attention. With these theorists (Freud, Becker, Luckhurst), the focus of trauma theory shifted from the almost exclusive context of the holocaust to the private and domestic sphere. Moreover, the framework of the trauma theory helps explain the dynamics of trauma and resistance, recovery, and growth as well as locating the symptoms of trauma and elucidating how traumatic memory disturbs one's ability to bear witness to events (Felman & Laub, 1992).

As a point of conclusion, the rise of trauma theory was associated from the start with hysteria and with Freud's early and late formulation of trauma. Contemporary trauma theorists hold that trauma theory focuses on how traumatic events are remembered, represented, and transmitted (Herman, 2015; Lakehurst, 2008; Forter, 2007).

Moreover, trauma theory offers a new path to concepts like testimony and witness that are widespread in literature. Kennedy argues that these concepts offer "novel analytical frameworks which provide new insights into the construction and transmission of traumatic memory in cultural texts" (Kennedy, 2020, p. 58). 3

Yet, like any novel theory, trauma theory was heavily criticized as it privileges the western experiences and healing centers and methods are not available in less developed countries. In recent years, however, trauma theory has broadened beyond its origins in psychoanalysis and extended to literary theory to become an interdisciplinary approach.

In the *Empire of Trauma* (2009), anthropologists Didier Fassin and Richard Recthman used an ethnographic method to demonstrate how practices of psychology and trauma discourse have expanded around the world, creating in the process new meanings of violence and

cataclysmic events, while recognizing and legitimizing suffering of victims, both men and women.

Additionally, their Foucauldian framework offers methods for examining subjects created and represented by trauma discourse and can fruitfully be merged with literature to develop new approaches to reading, understanding, and writing the wound (Kennedy, 2020; Luckhurst, 2008). Preparedly, psychoanalysis and literature are specifically the most appropriate forms of writing that can represent the paradoxes of trauma theory.

1.2.1. Trauma in Literary Studies

One of the most influential theorization of trauma in the field of humanities is Cathy Caruth[17]'s *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). Her influential book gives crucial understandings for literary trauma theory. Caruth suggests accounts on how representations of trauma can facilitate understanding the wounded identity and how trauma, a concept that challenges conventional forms of narrative, might, ironically, be expressed through the failure of words and through the deconstruction of language.

Although Caruth's work might be a reference in literary trauma studies, some theorists have pointed to absurd and sometimes illogic insights in Caruth's understanding of trauma (Leys, 2000; Forter, 2008). In Caruth's approach, the meaning of the term goes to a broader sense that the dissimilarity between the traumatized and the non-traumatized, as well as between victim and perpetrator seem to dissolve[18]. In doing so, the history becomes, fundamentally, a "history of trauma" (Caruth, 1996, p. 18).

[17]The theorists who laid the ground for trauma studies in the field of humanities are Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman, and Dominick LaCapra. They are the leading figures in the field.

[18]For example, in Unclaimed Experience (1996) Caruth reinterprets Freud's approach of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in way that the character Tancred comes to represent trauma victim *par excellence*. A detailed discussion of Caruth's trauma theory is provided in this section.

Ruth Leys thinks that Caruth's theoretical arguments on the notion of trauma are "dilute[d] and generalize[d]", which might discredit victims who actually suffered from a traumatic experience, since Caruth have put both the traumatized and the non-traumatized in one category (Leys, 2000, p. 305). Nevertheless, Caruth's monograph *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) stays a point of reference as it was rapidly followed by a number of works conducted on trauma.

Trauma mutated from its original domain, that of medicine and then psychology, to find a relevant space in literary and cultural studies. Why does literary trauma matter? To answer this question, one finds it necessary to underline Laurie Vickroy's statement that assert "literary and imaginative approaches to trauma provide a necessary supplement to historical and psychological studies" (Vickroy, 2002, p. 221).

The literary imagination has the capability to symbolize, fictionalize, as well as to create space for experiences that are classified as inexplicable and defy verbalization, especially threatening experiences of shame and vulnerability, and can be explored from numerous perspectives. Fictional worlds in literary texts permit diverse engagements with the subject of trauma, which is often historicized, personalized, metaphorized, and contextualized.

Thence, literary approaches to trauma have the potential to engage readers' emotional identification and sympathy on the one hand, and critical reflection on the other hand. In this vein, Vickroy (2015) argues that trauma in literature challenges readers' perception of crisis and conflict, representing how emotional responses can be created out of traumatic experiences.

Besides of having a socio-cultural and political function, Vickroy asserts that literary texts are not only produced to "make terrifying, alien experiences more understandable and accessible", but also to provide a way of "witnessing or testifying for the history and experience of historically marginalized people" (Vickroy, 2002, pp. 221-22). In a similar way, Whitehead

highlights that trauma fiction often thematize "the denied, the repressed and the forgotten" (Whitehead, 2004, p. 82). Yet trauma narratives and "limit-cases"[19] explore self-narration and self-representation within a literary structure and permit authors to explore different perspectives on writing trauma and writing the self.

Likewise, Hubert Zapf contends, literary trauma writings elucidates the connection between the nature of trauma and fictional representation:

> [Trauma narratives] remain connected, at least in principle, to a long tradition of literary representations of 'other people's pain, whose ethical implications are tied to their fictional status and the fact that the other people and their fates whose pain the reader is witnessing or sharing are fates of imaginary people in a depragmatized and meta-discursive space of textuality, which however may paradoxically enhance its communicational intensity and its signifying power towards a collectively experienced historical reality. (Zapf, 2011, p. 166)

Thence, according to Zapf, literary trauma texts may have an impact on readers because they do operate in an imaginary realm. Laurie Vickroy agrees in her exemplary work *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (2002) that fictional trauma narratives "have taken an important place among artistic, scholarly, and testimonial representations in illuminating the personal and public aspects of trauma and in elucidating our relationship to memory and forgetting with the complex interweaving of social and psychological relationships (Vickroy, 2002, p. 1).

Vickroy here focuses on not only the impact of trauma as narrative but also on the multiple fictional techniques through which trauma is mediated, without forgetting that trauma

[19]Leigh Gilmore describes "limit-cases" as "contemporary self-representational text about trauma that reveal and test the limits of autobiography" (Gilmore, 2018, p. 14)

fiction varies from one text to another, depending on the sociocultural and sociopolitical context in which the writing is born.

Literary trauma texts often depicts the paradox in the nature of trauma. They communicate that which resists ordinary processes of remembering and narrating, and challenges representation and comprehension. Trauma narratives, thus, "raise important questions about the possibility of verbalizing the unspeakable, narrating the unnarratable, and making sense of the incomprehensible" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 30).

Trauma, in Luckhurst words, "issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 79), or, in general terms, a challenge to language, narration, and understanding. He also add that most trauma texts referrer to the tension between "narrative *possibility*" and "*impossibility*" (Luckhurst, 2008, pp. 80-3). The novels explored in this study discuss these tensions, placing a variety of emphasis on the potential and/or the limitation of language in relation to trauma.

One of the challenges in literary trauma writing is that it carry out a complex performance regarding the (un)speakability, (un)narratability, and (in)comprehensibility of trauma, and trauma theory shows an equally strong concern for the interrelations between wound and word, between trauma and literature, and also trauma and language (Sütterlin, 2020). These interrelations nonetheless have been conceived in significantly different ways. Caruth's highly influential work *Unclaimed experience* (1996) introduced an example on theorizing trauma based on the possibility/impossibility of narration. She further allows trauma to be possibly transformed into a narrative to try to make sense of the incomprehensible. However, she claimed that such process is likely to misrepresent the "truth" of trauma:

> The transformation of the trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated, to be integrated into one's own, and other's

> knowledge of the past, may lose both the precision and the force that characterizes traumatic recall. (Caruth, 1995, p. 153)

For Caruth, cultural representations is a salient point that preserves the full force of trauma, especially it incomprehensibility: "The danger of speech, of integration into the narration of memory, may lie not in what cannot understand, but in that it understands too much" (Caruth, 1995, p. 154). Caruth here thinks trauma needs a mode of representation to go beyond its incomprehensibility.

For example, gaps and silences, the repeated breakdowns of language, and collapse of understanding[20] (Caruth, 1996). Correspondingly, Geoffrey Hartman claim that words are insufficient and inadequate in the face of trauma, but he also argues that "literary verbalization, however, still remains a basis for making the wound perceivable and the silence audible" (Hartman, 2003, p. 259). Vickroy and Whitehead also demonstrate how trauma narratives do not only represent but perform trauma, that is, they "incorporate the rhythms, processes and uncertainties of trauma within [their] consciousness and structure" (Vickroy, 2002, p. 13; Whitehead, 2004).

These critics' main focus differs from Caruth's in that they do not put emphasis on the incomprehensibility and unspeakability of trauma. What Whitehead and Vickroy highlight is that traumatic experiences may be presented in narratives. They do acknowledge that trauma resists being fully remembered and represented, but they also assert that writers have the means to represent trauma in fiction thus facilitating its understanding.

[20]Ruth Leys in *Trauma: a Genealogy* (2000) claims that Caruth defines trauma as an "incomprehensible event that defies all representation" so that trauma "in its literality, muteness and unavailability becomes a sacred object or icon that it would be a sacrilege to misappropriate or tamper with [it] in any way" (Leys, 2000, p. 253-269). While I do agree with Leys statement and critical reading of Caruth's work, I find that, in this respect, that she tends to somewhat misrepresent Caruth's arguments.

Focusing on narrative impossibility rather than possibility, in Luckhurst conception, tends to be perilous in terms of not only understanding trauma but also in terms of recovery and healing. In other words, impossibility of narrating trauma means the impossibility of recovering form it (Luckhurst, 2008). In *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Caruth visibly marginalizes all means of recovery, focusing on what designates as "the new mode of reading and listening that both the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand" (Caruth, 1996, p. 6).

Leys (2000) critically explained that Caruth's readings of both theoretical and literary texts are centered on this "new mode", a mode identified by aporia, incomprehensibility, and fragmentation, which again, illuminate the possibility of recovering through literature. Shoshana Felman examines Caruth's approach to trauma in *Testimony*[21]. According to Felman (1991), Caruth emphasizes repetition as an important feature of trauma writing because it expresses the first-hand experience of trauma based on the ideas of compulsion and acting out, as well as of being caught in an endless cycle of suffering. Hence, neither trauma narratives nor Caruth's theoretical narratives allow language and healing.

Whitehead reads Caruth's approach in a similar way when she observed that Caruth "articulates concerns that the traumatic cure implies a dilution of the experience into the reassuring terms of therapy", she adds that "[t]here is, then, a distinct tendency in recent theorizations of trauma towards an anti-therapeutic stance, a skepticism regarding the inherent value of telling one's story" (Whitehead, 2004, pp.166-17) [22].

[21]In her first chapter of *Testimony Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1991), Felman discusses the numerous interlinks of testimony: her students' reaction to videotaped testimonies of the Holocaust as well as her own testimony as a teacher, and her students' written responses. All this to evoke a difference between first and second hand experience of trauma

[22]A similar theorist who read trauma the same way as Caruth is Jean-François Lyotard. Luckhurst argues that Lyotard based his ideas on Heidegger, and trauma for him (Lyotard) can "only be an aporia in narratives and any narrative temporalization is an unethical act" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 81).

The impossibility of narration and recovery from trauma is problematic for a number of reasons. First, theorizations on how trauma *interrupts* and *delays* narrations risk disorienting the fact that trauma also has a great propensity to *create* narration. Luckhurst asserts on this point, "[i]n its shock impact trauma is anti-narrative, but it also generates the manic production of retrospective narratives that seek to explicate the trauma" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 79). Moreover, Schönfelder observes that anti-narratives and anti-therapeutic stance produces ethical problems: "it is problematic for trauma theory to insist on the preservation of the "truth" and full force of trauma while ignoring trauma victims' needs, especially their need for narration and desire for integration and recovery" (Schönfelder, 2013, p. 33).

This brings the historian Dominick LaCapra's apposite criticism of Caruth's position regarding the acting out, working through and recovery[23]. He claims that a reading of trauma that narrowly focuses on "symptomatic acting out" or even the repetition compulsion becomes in danger of "intentionally or unintentionally …aggravating trauma" (LaCapra, 1996, p. 193). This implies reading the wound like "traumatic writing or posttraumatic writing in closest proximity to trauma", which may risk perpetuating trauma (LaCapra, 2014, p. 23).

Additionally, in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra criticizes trauma narratives for "prematurely (re)turning to the pleasure principle, harmonizing events, and often recuperating the past in terms of uplifting messages or optimistic, self-serving scenarios" (LaCapra, 2014, p. 78).

LaCapra, with an implicit mention of Caruth's theorization of literary trauma, finds the tension between narrative impossibility and possibility, as well as between acting out and working though problematic. One thus meanders between narratives characterized by the

[23]Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand describe acting-out as "action in which the subject, in the grip of his unconscious wishes and fantasies, relives these in the present", while working through "is to be taken to be a sort of psychical work which allows the subject to accept certain repressed elements and to free himself from the grip of mechanisms of repetition" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2006, p. 488).

"phantasm of total mastery, full ego identity, definitive close", (which Caruth rejects), and between narratives marked by "endless mutability, fragmentation, melancholia, aporias, irrecoverable residues or exclusions" (LaCapra, 2014, p. 78).

In view of that, LaCapra suggest the existence of trauma narratives between these two poles, which is to some extent, a remarkable shift in trauma studies. A notable example of this claim is Deborah Horvitz's reading of women's trauma in *Literary Trauma, Sadism, Memory, and Sexual Violence in American Women's Fiction* (2000), where she identified the female protagonists' capacity to use art, mainly writing, as a creative tool of 'working through' or healing from trauma.

She ends her book with a significant view about the positive outcome of narrating trauma, which is significantly different from the pessimistic view of Caruth or Felman:

> As I hope my study illustrates, power lies in the capacity to find or *create* individual, personal meaning from a traumatized and tortured past. If traumatic events are not repressed, they can be *used*: victims remember and imagine stories to be repeated and passed on. That is, when the stories of the past are consciously recognized, the cycle of violence can end, because the *narratives*, not the sadomachism or the trauma, are repeated and passed on. (Horvitz, 2000, p. 134)

Horvitz's claim serves this study's purpose par excellence, as this research tends to shed the light on the stories of the traumatized women and to demonstrate the possibility of telling and narrating trauma. With that being said, Horvitz here distances herself from Caruth's and Felman's idea that narrating trauma tends to be done through contagion or contamination.

Laurie Vickroy follows the same path as Horvitz, when she emphasized in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary fiction* (2002) a theoretical trajectory that moves beyond crisis, acting out and suffering. Similarly, Ann Kaplan spaces her arguments away from Caruth's 'unrepresentability' and 'unspeakability' of trauma and declares that "telling stories about

trauma […] ay partly achieve a certain 'working through' for the victim", she also adds, "permit a kind of emphatic sharing that moves us forward, if only by inches" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 37).

Jennifer Griffiths' *Traumatic Possessions* (2009) is a great example that explores ways of recovering from trauma and reconstituting the self. While Caruth's and Felman's theoretical approaches are crucial for the building up of a literary trauma theory, they remain complex and sometimes difficult to decipher. On a more optimistic view, critics like Horvitz, Vickroy, Kaplan, and Griffiths make literary trauma writing accessible in terms of its narration, reading, and recovery.

In particular, trauma in literary studies stresses the investigation of trauma writing. Indeed, methods of verbalization and narration have separated the above mentioned critics form the Caruthian trauma theory. Traumatic stress have forced literary critics to rethink their assumptions regarding literary trauma especially because trauma studies deal with inquiries like how trauma can be integrated into a narrative, whether or not narrating trauma can be a way of working through it (LaCapra, 2014).

Moreover, the comparison of three different women's narratives from the angle of trauma might cast new light on issues of recovery, especially because Postcolonial narratives tend to approach recovery in rather different ways. Instrumenting the complex relationship between wounds and words and between speaking about, and healing from the wound is a major concern in my readings of all my chosen texts; broadly speaking, postmodern explorations of methods of healing contrast with postcolonial skepticism, ambivalence, and somehow rejection of recovery.

In addition to the extremely critical attitudes toward narration and recovery from trauma, there are other problematic aspects in the trauma theories of influential literary scholars. Hartman asks, "What is the relevance of trauma theory for reading, or practical criticism?" then

he shortly answers, “in short, w gain a clearer view of the relation of literature to mental functioning in several key areas, including reference, subjectivity and narration” (Hartman, 1995, p. 547). Harman’s perspective tends to use trauma to discuss what it represents on individual and the collective aspect.

But most importantly, he emphasizes the major purpose behind literary trauma studies: “There is more *listening*, more *hearing* of words within words, and a greater openness to *testimony*” (Hartman, 1995, p. 541).

The narratives that this dissertation tackles, namely Malika Mokeddem’s l*’Interdite* (1993), Calixthe Beyala’s *Tu t’Appelleras Tanga* (1988) and Chimamanda Ngozi’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), with their detailed explorations of specific traumatic incidents and their effects on women, call for approaches that do justice to trauma as a life-shattering experience and do not reduce it to a universal human condition.

Indeed, the corpus of postcolonial women’s fiction I have chosen for this study, with their emphasis on psychological and cultural trauma call for an approach that focuses on narrating the wounds as well as discovering the dimensions of literary trauma. With that being said, literary trauma texts tackled in this dissertation, intersect in complex and revealing ways with psychological and psychiatric discourse. An interdisciplinary approach to trauma fiction is crucial not only for a critical response, but also for reconsidering theoretical assumptions and providing aesthetic tendencies with trauma theory.

Whitehead argues that literary studies often invite the act of interpretation that happens between an active subject (reader) and passive object (text) and literary trauma theory “readjusts” the relationship between the reader and the text, so that reading is done in an ethical way (Whitehead, 2004, p. 8). Similarly, Hartman (1995) contends that this new way of reading and listening makes trauma accessible to not only readers but also the general public.

In the light of these complexities and paradoxes of literary trauma theory, a number of questions arise, questions more specific to psychological and cultural trauma. While psychology focuses on the psychological traces left on the individual by a traumatic event, cultural trauma invites one to focus on the various process of cultural mediation of trauma for "individual traumatic experience is always culturally mediated" (Davis & Meretoja, 2020, p. 4). This implies the importance of the cultural discourse and its ways in giving meaning to particular forms of violence such as gender or racial violence. LaCapra's insight is useful in this context as he claimed that the discourse of trauma is an important aspect of culture, which can give individuals an opportunity to interpret the traumatic experience that will eventually lead to the creation of different meanings (LaCapra, 2014).

The following section, accordingly, discusses the psychological and cultural dimensions of trauma, and how they are represented in literature.

1.3. Typology of Trauma in Literary Texts

Trauma in literary texts may be structured in a psychological as well as a cultural way. The latter however received a lot of criticism and attention among trauma scholars due to its miscellaneous forms on the field of sociology. However, for the sake of simplicity and in order not to deviate from the purpose of this dissertation, psychological and cultural trauma are going to be tackled from a literary point of view, and how they are narrated in trauma fiction.

1.3.1. Psychological Trauma:

Terms like psychological, individual, or personal are added to 'trauma' to differentiate it from collective, political, or cultural trauma. Today, psychological trauma is taken for granted and is loosely used in the vernacular to signify mildly painful experiences. Yet, in spite of its

ambiguous use it the everyday use, psychological trauma calls into attention the diagnosis, treatment, and recovery from the posttraumatic suffering.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, psychological trauma experienced in childhood and within the family, such as sexual abuse, incest, and domestic violence, have emerged as permanent themes in fiction. Previously, psychological trauma was known as 'war neuroses', a term used to diagnose soldier who came back from war with an altered psyche. Psychological or personal trauma is usually the 'invisible' impacts on the mind caused by a traumatic event. Luckhurst (2008) described psychological trauma as a state of intense fear that chocks he nervous system and challenges the victim's self.

Consequently, anxiety and depression are often the result of psychological trauma. This development can be seen in connection with the construction of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a diagnostic category within the field of psychiatry. Moreover, psychological trauma is, as Herman (2015) emphasized, a *response* to an event. The event that is responded to is "a socially-mediated representation", that is, a narrative construction (Madigan, 2020, p. 49).

Judith Herman listen two prominent characteristics of psychological trauma, namely intrusion and constriction in *Trauma and Recovery* (2015). When the individual is always highjacked with the memory of the traumatic event, even when the danger has passed is called intrusion. Herman argues: "The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during wake states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep" (Herman, 2015, p. 37).

The intensity of the traumatic memories render the individual amnesiac and/or lacking verbal narrative. A survivor of Hiroshima describes the traumatic memory as an "inedible image" or "death imprint" that constantly intrudes in the individual's life (Herman, 2015, p. 38). Accordingly, the survivor is always buffeted with fear and terror.

Constriction happens when the individual is completely powerless, thus surrenders to the traumatic memories. Herman (2015) explains that the system of self-defense shuts down in this case, causing an alteration in the state of consciousness. A rape survivor describes her experiences as follows: "Did you ever see a rabbit stuck in the glare of your headlights when you were going down a roan at night. Transfixed –like it knew it was going to get it –that's what happened…I couldn't scream. I couldn't move. I was paralyzed … like a rag doll" (Herman, 2015, p. 42).

These alterations of consciousness are at the heart of constriction, or, in other terms, numbing. Sometimes, the response to an inescapable danger may evoke paradoxically a state of detached calmness, in which terror, fear, and pain dissolve into silence, "as though these events have been disconnected from their ordinary meanings" (Herman, 2015; p. 43). As result, the person may feel that the events are not happening to her/him, or as though she/he is observing from the outside what is happening, a resemblance to an out of body experience. Herman compares the altered state of consciousness to a hypnotic trance states:

> They share the same features of surrender of voluntary action, suspension of initiative and critical judgment, subjective detachment or calm, enhanced perception of imaginary, altered sensation, including numbness and analgesia, and distortion of reality, including depersonalization, derealization, and change in the sense of time. (Herman, 2015, p. 43)

This recalls Virginia Woolf's description of Septimus, a war veteran in *Mrs. Dalloway*:

> Beautiful," [his wife] would murmur, nudging Septimus that he might see. But beauty was behind a pane of glass. Even taste (Rezia liked ices, chocolates, sweet things) had no relish to him. He put down his cup on the little marble table. He looked at people outside; happy they seemed, collecting in the middle of the street, shouting, laughing, squabbling over nothing. But he could not taste, he could not feel. In the tea-shop

> among the tables and the chattering waiters the appalling fear came over him—he could not feel (Woolf, 2013, p.132).

Psychological trauma alters the perception of the individual, making him experience life from a different angle. The typical constellation of symptoms further include self-injury, suicidal tendencies, various forms of somatization, and dissociative disorder (Van der Kolk, 2014). Dissociation denotes experiences of depersonalization and derealization as mentioned in the previous statement by Herman (2015). In these states, the individual perceive the reality of their self and their environment in an abnormal way, which eventually triggers despair, abuse, shame, and blame.

When we speak of psychological trauma, we speak of repressed memories and experiences. These experiences may be silenced because of the cultural environment. Put differently, Alexander (2004) remarks that in order to define psychological trauma, one needs first to locate it within a context. The repressed memories of a war veteran are not for example the same repressed memories of a raped woman, or an abused child. Besides, the mechanisms associated with psychological trauma are the intrapsychic dynamics of defense, adaptation, coping, and working through as mentioned before, which can be unique and subjective to the individual in a given society.

Notably, an important feature of psychological trauma is its embeddedness and indelibility in the structure of personality. Charcot described the traumatic memories as "parasites of the mind" (Alexander, 2014, p. 41). The psychiatrist van der Kolk along with his colleagues described it as follows:

> When [psychological] trauma fails to be integrated into the totality of a person's life experiences, the victim remains fixated on the trauma. Despite avoidance of emotional involvement, traumatic memories cannot be avoided; even when pushed

> out of waking consciousness, they come back in the form of reenactment, nightmares, or feelings related to the trauma (van der Kolk et al, 2007, p. 5).

Nonetheless, this characterization must be regarded as relative because the degree of embeddedness varies according to the severity of trauma, as well as the vulnerability of the victim and most importantly the environment of the victim.

A similar point of view is that of Balaev who challenged the notion of the subjectivity of trauma. She suggested that all responses to trauma are similar among individuals, and that "universal neural-hormonal changes occur in response to a traumatic experience" (Balaev, 2012, p. 9). Although Balaev's statement is true to a certain degree, but to claim that the response to trauma is universal and similar is dangerous. The response to psychological trauma maybe similar when scientifically explained, in terms of neurology and how the brain functions. But the experience of psychological trauma is far from universal, a point that will be demonstrated throughout this dissertation.

Balaev's argument, however for a pluralistic approach to psychological trauma alludes to the importance of the social and cultural contexts in which trauma is caused. She connects the individual with society and with culture. In doing so, she calls attention to how the individual's experience of trauma "necessarily oscillates between private and public meanings, between personal and social paradigms" (Balaev, 2012, p. 17).

In literature, this context is often represented by the protagonists who "are shown to experience trauma within the context of a culture that ascribes different layers of meaning to the event" (Balaev, 2012, p. 18). Balaev concludes: "Therefore, the traumatized protagonist carries out a significant component of trauma in fiction by demonstrating the ways that the experience and remembrance of trauma are situated in relation to a specific culture and place" (Balaev, 2012, p. 25).

Balaev point of view is useful form my dissertation since it speaks to the central role played by context in the representation of trauma, namely that the *speakability* of trauma is dependent upon cultural context within which the event occurs. Furthermore, when cultural values and assumptions are contested or debated following an event, a multiplicity of responses succeeds, which makes the notion of the universalized approach to trauma challenged.

1.3.2. Cultural Trauma

Cultural dimension of trauma received increasing attention in recent years. Thus, it is important to discuss how this cultural dimension of trauma have been theorized. Generally speaking, the tendency to universalize trauma has been particularly prominent in treatment of the collective aspect of trauma. Some literary scholars have attempted to (re)introduce historical dimensions into their discussion of cultural trauma, but they often seem to remain caught up in the Caruthian structural paradigm of trauma.

Kaplan (2005) for example, discusses cultural trauma in a different way than that of Caruth: she is not supposedly interested in the traumatic elements inherent in all communication, representation, and history, rather, she is interested in the "cultural politics" of specific traumas such as colonialism, postcolonialism, and war. Yet she allows a Caruthian gesture of generalization in order to claim that media consumers, readers of stories, or viewers of films about trauma often suffer from "vicarious or secondary trauma" (Kaplan, 2005, pp. 21-39). She further maintains that "most people encounter trauma through the media", and, consequently, proposes to focus on "so called 'mediatized trauma'" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 2), escaping the question of whether or not the term trauma is still justified in this context[24]. It is

[24] The notion of vicarious trauma was first discussed in the field of psychiatry, in terms of the psychiatrist's response to her/his patient's trauma. However, Modlinger and Sonntag assert that while it is appropriately used in the context of psychiatry, "it becomes ethically problematic when transferred imprudently and without distinction to literature and literary and cultural criticism" (Modlinger & Sonntag, 2014, p. 8).

through this generalized lens of trauma that Kaplan diagnoses "entire cultures or nations" as suffering from the effect of trauma (Kaplan, 2005, p. 1). Similarly, Kirby Farrell (1998) argues in *Post Traumatic Culture* that trauma alters cultures in a contagious way:

> Because of our capacity for suggestibility, post-traumatic stress can be seen as a category of experience that mediates between a specific individual's injury and a group or even a culture. […] In cultural implications, then, it is useful to see post-traumatic experience as a sort of critically responsive interface between people. (Farrell, 1998, p. 12)

What one observes here is that Farrell's definition of trauma resembles Kaplan's approach to trauma, which is both historical and structural and, thus, exemplifies a tendency to "interpret more and more aspects of human existence under the sign of trauma" (Kansteiner, 2004, p. 177). Both critics in this case, put the focus on what should be termed 'cultural trauma' rather than 'collective trauma'.

The sociologist Kai Erikson was one of the first to explore how trauma can effect cultures and communities. In his remarkable article *Notes on Trauma and Community* (1995), he discusses how trauma can disturb and damage a community but also hold the community together. He argues: "So communal trauma, let's say, can take two forms, either alone or in combination: damage to the tissues that hold human groups intact, and the creation of social climates, communal moods, that come to dominate a group's spirit (Erikson, 1995, p. 190).

Cultural trauma thence, illuminates the obscure social phenomena, including how individuals might be traumatized by an event they did not experience, and why some events are collectively remembered, while others are forgotten. In this light of events, Jeffrey Alexander maintain:

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjugated to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marls upon their groups

> consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in a fundamental and irrevocable ways. (Alexander, 2004, p. 1)

In an important explanation of this definition, Alexander goes on to argue that it is not only the event that is traumatic, it is the interpretation of the event and how it is articulated with a social group, a community. This implies a contentious, often complex, social process through which the nature of the collective trauma is described[25]. The standard way to capture this mechanism is narration, which can be captured through multiple modes of discourse, namely political speeches, religious sermons, films, and of course literature. Indeed, literature plays an outsized role in its ability to broadcast and represent cultural trauma

In his seminal book on cultural trauma and slavery, Eyerman explores the formation of the African American identity through the lens of cultural trauma in a number of selected authors such as Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker and highlights the way in which these writers' works offer differing accounts of black American collective identity vis-à-vis slavery (Eyerman, 2001).

This narrated cultural trauma offers the ground of this study and reveals that such trauma is "made, not born" (Smelser, 2004, p. 37). In this sense, cultural trauma is different from psychological trauma in its nature, as it does not affect one member of a society but "occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves inedible marks upon their group consciousness …changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander, 2004, p. 1).

[25]For the sake of clarity and simplicity, I am not going to provide an exhaustive explanation of cultural trauma but a selective one because cultural trauma is a large field of study in sociology and if one delves in its deep complex process, one is afraid to deteriorate from the purpose of this dissertation.

Accordingly, psychological and cultural trauma reinforce one another, hence intensifying the experience of shock. Nonetheless the effects of trauma on the psyche is not similar to the effects of trauma on the cultural level, as Eyerman observes:

> As opposed to psychological and physical trauma, which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all. (Eyerman, 2001, p. 2)

In his deliberation of how cultural trauma works, Eyerman in the quote above clearly borrows from the psychological trauma the aspect of harm or injury, and most importantly, he deviates from the model that considers the response to traumatic events as unspeakable or unpresentable. Of course, individuals who experience trauma on the personal, psychological level (arguably, first-hand experience) might also experience trauma on the cultural level as part of a collective, or members of a community whose identity has been irrevocably altered due the cataclysmic event. However, the contrary is not true.

In a recent study conducted by a range of clinicians and theorists on the inheritance of suffering, it appears that children can inherent 'memories' of events they did not experience directly. However, the transmission in question does not happen through some mythic genetic inheritance but through the emotional and body language of the parents[26]. The same is applicable for the whole community.

Relying on a constructionist understanding of cultural trauma, one can say that the latter is built upon a process of mediation and meaning-making. That is, the coming generations who

[26]For more on the inheritance of suffering, see Kaplan on transposition in her book *No Voice is Ever Wholly Lost* (1995). She explained how parents unconsciously convey to their children a host of meanings that the child cannot process. See also Laplanche on how children receive "enigmatic signifiers" from their parents (1989, p. 126)

did not experience trauma per se, continue to identify, articulate, and acknowledge the wounds of the past as something that identifies their collective identity as a group. It is worth highlighting in this case the similarities and differences between personal (psychological) trauma and cultural trauma.

Cultural wound from the past do not manifest as PTSD, but are still recognized as an injury to the tissue of the social fabric and to the collective identity by successive generations. We might consider the Algerian crisis on the 1990s[27] as a good example. The protests and the clashes between civilians, the police and terrorists resulted in the homicide of more than hundreds of innocent individuals. This points back to the Algerian Independence from the French colonizer and the political sphere at that time. While none of the protesters of the 1990s crisis identify as traumatized by colonization, they do nonetheless still bear wounds from the historical past and continue to construct and classify these wounds as "a loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric" (Eyerman, 2001, p. 2).

In an article entitled *Notes on Trauma and Community* (1991), Kai Erikson suggests that when experienced as a group, trauma not only shatters the components of culture but can also create community, a paradoxical assertion that is quite different from psychological trauma that damage the psyche in an irrevocable way. Kai asserts: "trauma shared can serve as source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can" (Erikson, 1991, p. 185). In this way, cultural trauma sharply contrasts with psychological trauma, especially bearing in mind van der Kolk's (2014) claims to the solitariness and loneliness experience of psychological trauma.

[27]The events that took place in Algerian in the 1990s are known under multiple names. Sometimes refeed to as The Black Decade, or the Algerian Civil war. However, my supervisor and I are not taking any part of the naming whatsoever, but we are more interested in the events and their impact on the psyche of the Algerian Community. Thus we agreed to call it a *crisis.*

Remarkably, trauma can produce a kind of paradox: when individuals are traumatized, they feel set apart, alone in the experience, made special by the suffering they endure. However, within the community, this feeling of isolation can become, for some individuals at least, "a kind of calling, a status, where people are drawn to others similarly marked" (Erikson, 1991, p. 186).

Furthermore, out of one's deepest sense of isolation, a sense of kinship may be born, "there is a spiritual kinship there, a sense of identity, even when feelings of affection are deadened and the ability to care numbed" (Erikson, 1991, p. 186).

For Erikson then, trauma has "both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies", efficiently pushing one away from the center while often simultaneously drawing one back" (Erikson, 1991, p 186). Erikson explains that this sense of social connectedness is often considered as the controlling force in the community:

> Traumatic experiences work their way so thoroughly into the grain of the affected community that they come to supply its prevailing mood and temper, dominate its imagery and its sense of self, govern the way its members relate to one another. (Erikson, 1991, p. 190)

One notes that Erikson is carful in his words, it is not the atrocity that binds people together, but rather their shared experience of the event and the suffering that follow that serves as a link connecting one individual to another.

Another point of difference between psychological and cultural trauma is temporality. Erikson holds that psychological trauma "breaks through one's defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively", while cultural trauma has a more gradual effect, "working its way insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it" (Erikson, 2006, pp. 153-54).

Nonetheless, it is important to mention Kai's reading of temporality is not similar to Caruth's and Freud's temporality, or latency. Freud's temporality is described within pathological terms in his *Moses and Monotheism*: "The time elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the 'incubation period', a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease" (Freud, 2010, p. 84).

Similarly, Caruth argues that it is impossible to directly access the traumatic event, it is not known, understood, or even experienced immediately; but rather its force "precisely in [its] temporal delay" (Caruth, 1996, p. 9).

At last, one concludes by reaffirming that cultural traumas are not born by the event, but instead structured or identified over time by certain carrier groups or what Alexander (2004) termed agents of memory. The creation of cultural trauma depends upon the effectiveness of memory-making and meaning-making agencies; the more effective the voice, the more likely the event will affect the community at large, and for a longer period.

From this perspective, the construction of cultural trauma might be considered a precarious business, depending on who in the community has the most power, the loudest voice, the most effective platform, or the most compelling message. In terms of gender in the African communities for example, women has the least compelling and effective voice, which leads one to wonder, are their traumas even considered cultural, or even psychological? Are their traumas even voiced and recognized, a question that will be answered throughout the dissertation.

1.4. Trauma Theory in Postcolonial Narratives

In recent years, critics have increasingly paid attention to the relationship between the postcolonial and trauma, trying to find interlinks between the two by focusing on the manners in which the wound is experienced in non-Western cultures or minorities.

Jennifer Yusin (2018) has pointed out the failures of the western psychiatry that focused only on specific experiences of trauma, excluding the non-western experience of suffering. In other words, the very concept of trauma is a Western artifact according to Yusin and in order for it to fit in the postcolonial context, it must transcend the poststructuralist methods employed by trauma theory. She further holds:

> Such strategies aim to show how the theoretical thinking of trauma assumes the immediate applicability and adaptability of the event-based model to any and all forms of violent refractions, including forms of structural oppression such as apartheid and colonialism in which trauma is not a momentary intrusion one everyday life, but rather *a way of life*, a permanent state of things. (Yusin, 2018; p. 239)

Traumatic experience in the postcolonial context is understood not as a merely descriptive term but circulates based on the assumption that such an experience is universal and uniform phenomena. In this context, Yusin (2018) emphasizes the inadequacy and inaccuracy of classic psychoanalytic conception of trauma and of poststructuralism to illustrate today's ever changing forms of violence and responses to experiences of suffering.

She further maintains: "It is no longer sufficient to deal with trauma only in terms of momentary, violent interruptions to everyday life and modes of living that destroy but also weaves the symbolic texture of a subject's identity" (Yusin, 2018, p. 247). In this regard, Yusin wants to recover a non-Western structural basis of trauma theory that corresponds to all types of suffering and experiences of cataclysmic events. By this, she concludes:

> There is no pure trauma; there is only a mixture between exteriority and interiority, between the organic and the psychic, between the natural and the political that breaks the structure of transference as singularly constituting the urgency of response. The rallying cry of these critiques is that is it time to restore back to the

> other their loss, their pain, and their suffering, without taking their place. (Yusin, 2018, p. 247)

Yusin's bold statement calls for a postcolonial deconstruction of trauma theory, not to create a new meaning for trauma theory, but to exactly holds its actual structure where "no new subject is actually produced and no new knowing body of knowledge is invented" (Yusin, 2018, p. 247).

Similarly, Stef Craps holds in *Postcolonial Witnessing* heavily criticized the western formulation of PTSD for its apparent failures of inclusiveness. The definition of trauma in the DSM according to hi "tends to ignore the normative, quotidian aspects of trauma in the lives of many pressed and disempowered persons" (Craps, 2013, p 25). According to Brown, this is the result of "aversive bias" that denies the existence and impact of trauma resulting from issues like, heterosexism, classism, and racism for example (Brown, 2008, p. 7).

While trauma has made an appearance in postcolonial literary criticism in the last decades, its impact and efficiency are still a matter of debate. The individualizing, psychologizing, and pathologizing of trauma were anticipated by Frantz Fanon in his pioneering work on the psychology of racism and colonialism *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (2002). Rebecca Saunders remarks on the works of Fanon:

> Though rarely read as a trauma theorist, Frantz Fanon draws attention to crucial, yet often overlooked, episodes in the history of trauma: to the specific forms of trauma produced by colonial wars, by colonization itself, and more diffusely, by racism. (Saunders, 2007, p. 13)

Indeed, in the last chapter of The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon described lucidly the mental distress that colonial violence produced in both Algeria and their French colonizers through a series of psychiatric case studies. He observed that it was not just the war that left great psychological impact, but also the colonial situation which it seeks to end that

psychological damage: “The truth is that colonization, in its very essence, already appeared to be a great purveyor of psychiatric hospitals” (Fanon, 2002, p. 181).

Furthermore, Fanon goes to the extent to claim that “we need only to study and appreciate the scope and depth of the wounds inflicted on the colonized during a single day under a colonial regime” (2002, p. 182).

Fanon’s discussion of the psychological impact of colonialism in *Wretched of the Earth* (2002) extends his analysis of the psychological effects of racism in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008). In the latter, Fanon drags the attention to the social nature of the trauma caused by racial oppression, questioning the European psychoanalysis that focused exclusively on the white veterans and family units (Caps, 2013).

In fact, Irene Visser explores in her salutary article *Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies* (2011) the problematic around the European psychoanalysis and the efficiency of PTSD in the postcolonial context. Remarkably, Visser distances herself from the claim that trauma is not acceptable in the postcolonial context, and she suggests conceptual frameworks to make trauma more adequate in postcolonial studies (Visser, 2011). Basing her arguments on Hartman’s traumatic knowledge, she believes that trauma theory might bring “a change of perspective” in postcolonial narratives (Hartman, 1995, p. 544).

In addition, Visser takes a more simplistic approach to trauma in postcolonial narratives claiming that “there is at present no consensus about the question whether trauma theory can be effectively “postcolonized” in the sense of being usefully conjoined with or integrated into postcolonial literary studies” (Visser, 2011, p. 270). Certainly, one agrees with Visser’s point of view because trauma theory is unquestionably important in postcolonial narratives, yet it bears unresolved issues. These issues stem from the historical background of trauma theory and the PTSD diagnosis.

However, trauma theory has strengths that can be incorporated within the postcolonial literary studies, and weaknesses that ca be corrected or reconfigured. Visser (2011) emphasized the possibility of reconfiguration of trauma theory within the postcolonial context based on Luckhurst's claim that trauma is not necessarily a concept that aspire to full comprehensiveness. Paradoxically, trauma has become a dominant paradigm in cultural studies.

Arguably, today's culture is "saturated with trauma" argues Luckhurst (2008, p. 2), socially, it has invaded today's bestseller lists; it is hardly surprising that trauma has also affected literary studies where the trauma novel "has been constructed with the "postcolonial trauma novel"" (Visser, 2011, p. 271). In a similar claim, Visser maintains in *Trauma and Power in Postcolonial Literary Studies* that postcolonial literature "is a major contributor to the trauma process" which puts trauma in the right place to adequately engage with literature (Visser, 2014, p. 111). In this respect, Visser approach to trauma resembles Yusin's claim of no pure trauma, a claim that opens the way for possibilities and reconfiguration of trauma in the postcolonial context.

However, Anne Whitehead (2008) questions this practice of mislaying a Western construct like trauma onto the experience of wounding and suffering narrated in African postcolonial literature, claiming that some writers may force readers to encounter a trauma response that is based on western knowledge.

Yet, recent essays pointed out to the complex interrelatedness of trauma and recovery in postcolonial literature. Merlinda Bobis for example provided a convincing argument on how oral modes of literary expression in postcolonial narratives function as catalysts in processes of mourning, grieving, and recovering from a traumatic experience. In this respect, Visser contends that "resistance and resilience are to be seen not merely as responses of individuals but more importantly, as part of a communal process of living and working through trauma"

(Visser, 2014, p. 108). This is apparent in Chinua Achebe's comment in an essay published in 2009 that while colonialism:

> Was essentially a denial of human worth and dignity, it is important to understand that the great thing about being human is out ability to face adversity down by refusing to be defined by it, refusing to be no more than its agent or its victim. (Achebe, 2009, pp. 22-23)

In this regard, one can claim that trauma theory as formulated by Hartman and Caruth has lost its theoretical ground in postcolonial criticism due to its limitations. Craps (2013) reinforces this claim by adding that postcolonial criticism is still reliant on the earliest founding texts of trauma. This is to a certain degree not perilous because it can call for new modes of reading and even interpreting trauma.

Judith Herman (2015) argues that narrative is a great tool to recover and heal from trauma, a notion that has found resonance within literary criticism. Accordingly, Herman's account may hold a justifiable perspective for postcolonial trauma theory because it entails openness to the structuring of narrativization inclinations (Visser, 2011). In addressing this claim, Dominick LaCapra, a prominent figure in trauma studies, criticized trauma theory's "openness" for a postcolonial reconfiguration by rethinking its history.

Reconsidering the history of trauma does not imply changing it. Once again, Caruth's insights are a point of reference in this context. In *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Caruth speaks about the possibility of rethinking history by expressing an "atemporal" (universal) trauma (Visser, 2011, p. 275). Positing with postcolonial theory, this universality of trauma thus enables its expansion. In this vein, Craps (2013) argued that the expansion of trauma theory to the postcolonial narratives might promote a form of transcultural empathy. Similarly, Visser (2011) thinks that a more precise and comprehensive understanding of trauma is needed in order to reach this transcultural empathy.

Another point that demonstrates the need as well as the use of trauma in postcolonial narratives is Whitehead's claim on trauma fiction. According to Whitehead (2004), trauma fiction ascends out of three interrelated backgrounds: postmodernism, postcolonialism, and a postwar legacy. She further holds that postcolonialism has drawn the attention to the way in which works of fiction are influenced and shaped by trauma:

> Postcolonial fiction has often sought to replace the public and collective narrative of history with an interior and private act of memory …Postcolonial novelists seek to rescue previously overlooked histories and to bring hitherto marginalized or silence stories to public consciousness. (Whitehead, 2004, p. 82)

In this vein, it is safe to say that "trauma theory has always been postcolonial," maintains Durrant and Topper, but it is not yet postcolonial (Durrant & Topper, 2020, p. 187). In *Cosmological Trauma and Postcolonial Modernity* (2020), Durrant and Topper highlight the similarities and differences between Cathy Caruth's and Edward Said's readings of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* to show how trauma theory is rooted in postcolonial studies.

Furthermore, they suggest that Caruth's theory of implicated subjectivity "is much more in line with postcolonial theory" (Durrant & Topper, 2020, p. 187). However, a postcolonial approach to trauma studies cannot simply entail a shift of focus towards "non-Western" trauma victims. Stef Craps holds:

> [T]he founding texts of the field […] marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favor or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation […] and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas. (Craps, 2013, p. 2)

In other words, Craps argument suggest an expansion of trauma's gaze because there is indeed a connection between trauma and postcolonialism. Notably, both postcolonial and

trauma theory emerged at roughly the same moment, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Bother, according to some researchers are indebted to the poststructuralism that preceded and made possible their institutionalization within the humanities (Durrant & Topper, 2020).

Caruth's famous dictum that "history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (Caruth, 1996, p. 24) echoes Edward Said' insistence on a contrapuntal humanism, Homi Bhabha's emphasis on the belatedness of postcolonial modernity, and Gayatri Spivak's reading of the non-representable subaltern histories that haunt the annals of both colonial and postcolonial history. More explicitly than Said, Spivak and Bhabha cast the postcolonial as traumatic in what later becomes the Caruthian sense of the term. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1994) Spivak famously argues that subaltern subjectivity emerges as trauma, while Bhabha shifts the focus onto how such subjectivities traumatize the nation-state. Most notably, in DissemiNation (1990), he casts the postcolonial migrant as the return of the nation-state's repressed colonial history, someone who de-seminates or undoes a national community's imagined homogeneity, revealing it as "implicated" in the traumas of those it seeks to exclude.

As S.S. "Whiskey" Sisodia puts it in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, "The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means" (Rushdie, 2006, p. 317). For Rushdie and Bhabha colonialism is constitutively traumatic for the colonized and the colonizer, albeit, we would hasten to add, in asymmetrical ways.

For the development of a non-Eurocentric trauma theory, the writings of African women may well prove of major importance. Increasingly, the African moral imagination reflected in contemporary writing offers an "intrinsically transformational impulse," as Kurtz states (2014, p. 421). It is evident that trauma theory stands to gain substantially from a broader and deeper engagement with non-Western literary studies.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the modern history of trauma from mid-19th century onward by considering, in the form of an engaged literature review, the major sources and commentaries on the genealogy of trauma. The books discussed in this chapter include those by Judith Herman, Allan Young, Ruth Leys, Roger Luckhurst, Ann Kaplan, Cathy Caruth, and Bessel van der Kolk. This review is not exhaustive since what is attempted here is not a detailed account of the history of trauma, and does not enter into the debates on 'what trauma is' or try to adjudicate on competing models of trauma. Rather, by indicating the key episodes, players and issues in the history of trauma, this chapter highlights the major phases of trauma theory through key literature on the topic.

The last section of the chapter discusses a movement of trauma from the western niche to a more universal framework. It is not surprising, perhaps, that non-Western criticism has provided a strong and valuable rejuvenation of trauma theory. It is well placed to explore literary trauma fiction and analyze its cultural metaphors, area-specific use of language, rituals, symbols, and archetypes, throwing fresh light on the literary representation of human experiences of trauma.

Chapter 2

Feminism, Trauma and the Politics of violence and Silence in Women's Postcolonial Literary Endeavor

Introduction

The multi-layered pervasiveness of trauma culture indicates that trauma is constantly present among us, even in the private space. This chapter introduces the feminist interpretation of trauma and how can words, particularly the words of women, describe psychological wounds. Using a postcolonial feminist analysis, one argues that the activity of narrating one's self and trauma is implicated in entrenched power relations, and even those facets of oneself that one might assume to be the most private and intimate are shown to be greatly influenced by socio-political factors. What this chapter also reveals is that, importantly, writing as a creative act holds the possibility of resistance for Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi.

This chapter also examines how creativity expresses the inexplicable *non-dit* through narrative rupture, silence, memory, trauma, pain and the "resistant" subjectivities of three African women writers from different backgrounds and cultures. These women refuse to accept the unacceptable dictates of intellectual chauvinism and social submission by engendering discursive chaos in text. As stated by El Saadawi:

> Creativity channeled in such a way paves the way for change, demolishes outmoded, reactionary antidemocratic structures, and strengthens political and social movements grounded in the struggle for peace, democracy, justice and gender equality … Creative women know how to live with chaos because they understand that every creation is an inspiration that surges up out of chaos. (El Saadawi, 2010, p.73)

For this reason, Mokeddem's, Beyala's, and Ngozi's writings occupy an interstitial space between dismemberment and embodiment to demonstrate how the act of writing against violence revives the historical and social traumas of marginality and invisibility in an inescapable landscape of pain. These wounded narratives are inscribed in socially vibrant texts that reveal the intersectional positioning of violence in prismatic contexts of war, sexual subalternity, and social exclusion. Literature in this case, breaks the chains of imposed silence, as stated by Chantal Kalisa:

> For women writers, literature offers a privileged medium through which they attempt to resolve the tension between historical or state forms of violence associated with colonialism and postcolonial conditions and internal forms of violence that result from unfair cultural, social, and political rules based on gender. (Kalisa, 2009, p. 3)

2.1. Feminist Perspective on Trauma

One of the most influential contribution to feminist trauma studies is Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Violence to Political Terror* (2015). Herman links the history of trauma research to social justice movements, particularly feminism. When the second wave of feminism put forward women's private experience into the public space, the personal became political, and close analysis revealed that the relationship between woman/man is based on hegemony. Herman's trauma analysis echoes the history of collective struggle within feminist politics to integrate the aspects of identity, race, class, and ability (Herman, 2015).

Feminism in this regard help the shift away from the uncanny, the isolated, and private experience, sharing many individuals, men and women, struggle narratives to patterns indicating systematic abuses, which would then support a call for collective action in relation to political struggle and to see trauma as a symptom and tool of patriarchy. Furthermore, according to Griffiths (2018), the feminist agenda discussed trauma by connecting it to a dominant culture and sources of power that are prior to the traumatic event. In other words, the society in which women experience trauma affects the experience itself, the exposure, and the reception of the trauma.

Recovery from trauma in this case provides a political opportunity in refusing the violence and silence imposed on women. Feminism helps "placing the individual crisis within the larger framework of political oppression, and in resisting the cultural forms that perpetuate second-class citizenship" (Griffiths, 2018, p. 181).

It is also important to mention that Herman analyzed the history of psychoanalysis[28] through the feminist lens and criticized the research conducted by Freud on hysteria. First, early works on trauma, as mentioned in chapter one, started with war neurosis, shell shock, and railway accidents. Symptoms of shock, disconnection, and the re-experiencing of horrific events were associated with horrors encountered in war. Nevertheless, when these symptoms were found also in women and children, the public events and grand narratives of trauma related to war and holocaust mutated to the personal and individual sphere. As is often noted in feminist scholarship, the label *hysteria* itself connects pathology to the uterus, and this early work demonstrates the ways the female body is read to conform to a patriarchal narrative that relies on its diminished value. The pathology is not attributed to a catastrophic event, such as a railway accident, but to excesses in the female body's already inherent instability or corruption.

This controversial reversal demonstrates the way in which women's bodies serve as the site of political struggle. Indeed as women gained a political voice in the fight for suffrage, the theories around their experience contained their actual voices less and less. The study of hysteria developed as women's political rights also gained international focus.

Feminist literary criticism shares this enterprise to uncover the previously silenced or marginalized aspects of women's creative experience. Within feminist literary criticism, representations of hysteria and 'madness' provide an opportunity to examine possible sites of resistance against oppressive gender norms and practices that regulated female behavior.

Canonical texts in feminist literary criticism such as *The Madwoman in the Attic* suggest that female madness should be read as transgressive, undermining the law of the

[28]With Herman on top, numerous feminist scholars think that psychoanalysis is a patriarchal branch of criticism because it built its realm on other women's experiences and considering hysteria, the first mental disorder, to be diagnosed only in women. For further queries, see *Violence a*nd *the Cultural Politics of Trauma* (2007) by Jane Kilby

father/patriarchy (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000). As Elaine Showalter explains, “Mental pathology was suppressed rebellion” (Showalter, 1987, p. 147).

In *The Female Malady,* Showalter (1987) establishes a clear link between feminist literary criticism and trauma studies by considering the way femininity has been constructed in patriarchy, specifically within the field of psychiatry. Similarly, Greg Forter argues that trauma of sexual abuse and domestic violence is a trauma “induced by patriarchal identity formation, rather, say, than the trauma of rape, the violence not of lynching but of everyday racism” (Forter, 2007, p. 260).

Forter here raises a crucial element that is necessary in this dissertation that is the concept of patriarchy and how it can be an element that creates traumatized women. Actually, patriarchy does not traumatize women, it is the repetition of the direct/indirect forms of violence, silence, discrimination, racism, oppression, submission, the legalization and the normal control and dominance of male power that makes the trauma experienced by women invisible. In a her distinguished memoir, Zeba Talkhani explains how patriarchy can be a traumatizing experience for women in the following passage:

> For the patriarchal structure to work, women can’t have choices…I use the word oppressed often when sharing the experiences of women in my community, but I wonder of the correct word is traumatized. Conforming to the patriarchy can be traumatic experience and often women and men go along with it because they believe they don’t have a choice. So when a younger person comes in, confident about their place within the family and secure in their marriage, it must surely bring up their past trauma. It probably reminds them of their own experiences as a new bride and they too might wonder why this younger daughter-in-law gets an easy rid; why shouldn’t she suffer like they did. (Talkhani, 2020, p. 181)

Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1994) for example depicts this image. It reflects the social condition of women in the 1890s era, where they are depicted as happy, harmonious

members of society, even when beaten and humiliated; behaving like a women is to behave: like an inferior, invisible being. Another example is Malika Mokeddem's l'*Interdite* (1993) which highlights Sultana's persistent ambivalence about whether or not to use her voice and her increasing feminist awareness in order to talk about her traumatic past: "mon cri de panique sonne incongru dans le silence" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 21).

In examining trauma theory's development since the late nineteenth century, feminist scholars have primarily considered the ways in which women's experience has been read and misread within the context of patriarchy. In clinical studies, women's voices remained largely silenced, even as their bodies were inscribed with meaning to support their status as the second sex.

The early foundational research involving traumatic experience and response focuses on white, predominantly middle-class women, and within this context women of color have been marginalized or ignored. Although their stories have been employed politically at key historical moments, such as within the Abolitionist movement, these testimonies often occurred in relation to white advocacy. Although early hysteria research focused mainly on middle-class white women, the stories of women of color or working-class women became a critically important part of social justice movements, and the feminist rediscovery of propaganda literature highlights the plight of women under patriarchy.

Women's trauma testimony[29] also entered the public sphere through slave narratives presented to support the Abolitionist movement. Slave narratives such as Harriet Jacobs' (2001) *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* document the terror of sexual exploitation under which Black women lived during slavery.

[29]Testimony and witnessing as part of women's resistance is thoroughly explained in chapter three

2.1.1. Undoing the Force of Violence

In her discussion of the *The Rise of the Victorian Madwoman*, Showalter connects representations of female madness that she finds in nineteenth-century women's writing, including Bertha Mason in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, with responses to social and political restrictions. These representations respond to Victorian psychiatry's attempt to "manage" women, and they demonstrate literature as potentially threatening to the status quo (Showalter, 1987, p 75).

For trauma theory, it is important to consider how this *madness* might be distinct from post-traumatic responses and whether it is possible to identify those distinctions when the underlying causes, because they are linked to sexual exploitation and interpersonal violence, remain taboo and largely silenced. In feminist literary criticism's efforts to disentangle femininity from mystique and inscrutability, the analysis moves from male-authored representation to finding the unpublished, out-of-print, or under analyzed work by women writers and in many cases *decoding* these texts in relation to the political contexts in which they originated.

Such discovered or rediscovered writing represented women's experience, but often in the coded terms allowed during the period in which the work was produced, which adds a layer of complexity when one considers the already complicated representation of trauma. This focus on personal writing forms allowed voices and experiences into the public space that had previously remained private and marginalized and includes the expansion of literary criticism into letters, diaries, and other forms available to women for telling their stories (Griffiths, 2018).

The second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s returned attention to the political efficacy of women's testimony about gender-based violence. In her introduction, Herman (2015) highlights second-wave feminism's consciousness-raising efforts, "speak-outs on rape"

in 1970s, research, policy initiatives, activism on "incest/sexual abuse" and domestic violence (Herman, 2015, p. 2), along with the combination of political climate and research that allowed this connection to emerge. The response to soldiers' experience after the Vietnam War and the coalescing of the Women's Liberation Movement both included "informal rap groups" or consciousness raising sessions. The issue has always involved both recognizing experience and acknowledging its impact: "When the victim is already devalued (a woman, a child), she may find that the most traumatic events of her life take place outside the realm of socially validated reality" (Herman, 2015, p. 8).

In the case of rape, antiracist women activists such as Ida B. Wells and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching focused on the ways in which sexual violence against women receives value only in service of white supremacist legal and extrajudicial proceedings. In her 1972 *A Letter to White Southern Women*, Anne Braden describes the legitimacy offered to white women once they consent to participating in this system:

> For the fact is that rape traditionally has been considered a crime in the South – if the woman was white and the accused black. But it has not been seen as a crime – and is not now – if the woman is black, or if both parties are white. Nor is it considered a crime if the victim appears to be an independent woman – not visibly someone's wife, someone's sister, or someone's daughter. Most real rapes go unpunished – and often unreported – because of the contempt with which police treat the complaining woman. Police and the society generally extend "protection" only to women who are willing to be pawns in their game. (Braden, 1972)

Literary efforts to express the way this history related to rape complicates feminist solidarity across racial lines include Alice Walker's short story *Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells* and Marilyn French's *The Woman's Room* (2009). Susan Brownmiller's (1993) *Against Our Will* contributed significantly to discussion around the rape as political and military strategy, linking it to implicitly state-sanctioned violence and not only a rare and personal event.

In addition to Herman's work, some of the most notable contributions to feminist trauma theory are attributable to Laura Brown, Maria Root, and Jennifer Freyd. Their insights led to new understanding to the notion of CPTSD[30].

Laura Brown (2004) emphasizes on traumatic events as "not outside the range" of every day, common events occurring to women living under patriarchy. In *Feminist Paradigms of Trauma Treatment*, Laura Brown reinforces how the feminist value that the "personal is the political" plays out in the way "certain forms of trauma are viewed by feminist theory as representing, at the individual or interpersonal level, the intended consequences of institutionalized forms of discrimination" (Brown, 2004, p. 96). In her discussion of the relationship with feminism and trauma theory, Brown identifies two major developments: Maria Root's notion of insidious trauma and Jennifer Freyd's model of betrayal trauma[31].

During and following the period of feminism's second wave, women of color organized in solidarity with institutional efforts that would inform intersectional feminism, such as *The Kitchen Table Press*, whose *Combahee River Collective* statement addresses explicitly the relationship between racism, sexism, and violence as a tool of domination and foretells more recent statements of intersectionality:

> We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression, which is neither solely racial

[30]Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This notion is part of Herman's examination of PTSD, which addresses prolonged exposure to trauma such as domestic violence and child abuse (Herman, 2015).

[31] Root's work on insidious trauma identifies the culminative impact of racial bias in addition to sexism, and Jennifer Freyd explores the complex responses in memory systems to trauma committed by caregivers or others on which victims depend. For the sake of clarity, we did not tackle their work in depth because the types of trauma they explain does not go in accordance with this dissertation's goal. For further information on this type of trauma, see Root's *Reconstructing the impact of Trauma on Personality* (1992) and Jennifer Freyd's *Betrayal Trauma* (1997).

> nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression. (Collective, 1986)

Addressing what was seen as a largely white middle-class movement, women of color formed collectives engaged in resistance and education about their specific experience. Furthermore, according to critical race feminist Kimberle Crenshaw, feminism must always prioritize intersectionality, particularly at moments of cultural crisis violence, and traumatic experience:

> As feminists, we recognize how racism has been – and is still – gendered. Patriarchy continues to be foundational to racial terrorism in the US, both in specious claims that justify the torture of Black men in defense of white womanhood, and in its brutal treatment of Black women and girls. We also recognize that while patriarchy and racism are clearly intertwined, all too often, our struggles against them are not. This call for sustained focus on issues of race when considering gender equality echoes a long history. Women of color have intervened in white feminism and called out for more careful consideration and inclusion of issues impacting women outside of a white, middle class framework. (The Charleston Imperative, 2015)

Intersectional feminism, as represented in texts such as The Charleston Imperative, disrupts the formation of a public narrative that would erase the relationship between identity, *daily violence*, and *extreme acts* within a system using trauma to oppress, a sentiment echoed throughout feminist interventions in the research on traumatic experience.

This emphasis on changing public spaces and the dynamics of listening means not exploiting the stories, not only recovering and discovering, but also ensuring that they enter the realm of meaning within an intersectional framework that acknowledges the way power works, shaping the narrative as it enters into public discourse, and making sure that the entrenched patterns, denials, and elisions are recognized (Griffiths, 2018). In addition, feminist literary criticism finds representations of rape and its aftermath coded in earlier texts, a phenomenon represented by Lynne Higgins's edited volume *Rape and Representation* (1991). This analysis

often includes rape representations and the way they may promote or complicate societal norms, aligning with Brown's assertion that "the private, secret, insidious traumas to which a feminist analysis draws attention are more often than not those events in which the dominant culture and its forms and institutions are expressed and perpetrated" (Brown, 1995, p. 102).

Within theory, criticism, and activism, old and news texts representing women's experience with violence or abuse and its aftermath provide opportunities to see trauma as ideologically imbued. According to Brown, "A feminist perspective on trauma requires us to move out of our comfortable positions, as those who study trauma, or treat its effects, or categorize its type, to a position of identification and action" (Brown, 1995, p. 105).

This position of 'identification and action' connects to feminist literary criticism and its efforts to enact a kind of witnessing encounter between reader and text, in the act of reading itself and receiving previously unspoken and private truths. In the area of testimony, it is always central to consider the role of voice and how the victim's identity and subject position factor into the availability of a receptive audience and the language with which to frame the totality of the trauma.

African women novelists, poets, and diarists, female authors challenged critics who focused on the way women were seen as helpless, or permanently damaged, and that the abuse was exaggerated and left survivors feeling permanently marked. Writers like Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie sought to depathologize women's experiences and expression of trauma. On this note, Laurie Vickroy asserts that "these works attest to the frequency of trauma and its importance in a multicontextual social issue, as it is a consequence of political ideologies, colonization, war, domestic violence, poverty, and so forth" (Vickroy, 2002, p. 2).

Postcolonial feminists, thence, reinforce the normality of traumatic responses and effectively open the doors for the unheard voices of traumatized women. They allow the *validity* of stories other than the stories of white privileged women. Like Elaine Showalter, who claims that "recovered memory is primarily a white woman's phenomenon" (Showalter, 1998, p. 151), Haaken also identifies a difference she sees in the way African women respond to the testimonial encounter. She claims: "While African women writers have woven accounts of sexual violence into a larger fabric of cultural critique, the trend within the incest recovery movement has been toward a more narrow psychologizing of sexual abuse" (Haaken, 1996, p. 1073). For African women writers, thence, writing was the fitting medium through which they voiced and shared experiences of trauma.

2.2. Writing the Uncanny, Writing as a Creative Feminine Act

The problems about writing or speaking about female creativity is that the language of a patriarchal world is restricted to speaking *about* women and not *for* them. For the longest time, limits and conceded territories were fixed by the patriarchal ideology for women's writings: they only had to voice the complaints of the badly married, or the chronicles of everyday life, or even the delicacies of the heart and tears of passion. Man wanted to see "des ouvrage de dames"[32].

The struggle to show adequacy and to prove worthiness results in an internalized identity which makes women feel less of a person, and less of an author. Probably that is why writing has always been a revolutionary act, an act to write their gender. Beatrice Slama writes on this

[3232] In *De la Littérature Féminine à l'Ecrire-femme*, Béatrice Salma explained how men wanted to see limited texts of women in a very restricted domain, she used the term 'ouvrage de dames' to demonstrate that women should only write about the known struggles of other women (Béatrice, 1981, p. 51).

matter : “les femmes écrivains ont le sentiment profond qu'elles ont quelque chose de différent à écrire : seules, elles peuvent dire *les femmes*” (Slama, 1981, p. 54).

Exploring the connection between trauma and the mind of women emphasized the fact that women are naturally wounded. In other words, and as stated before, incomplete beings. In this line of thought, one thinks that here lies the roots of cultural trauma for women. This rejection from the human constellation that is drawn by ideologies set by men is very much traumatic because promises of equality and acceptance were crushed by the reconfiguration around the views of man and woman. A collective female identity and a collective female memory are thus crucial for the female resistance of the phallic society.

Correspondingly, Twentieth century knowledge about traumatic disorder resulted from studies on war veterans. It was not until the women’s movements of 1970s that recognized the most common traumatic disorders are those of women in domestic life, and not those of man at war (Herman, 2015). Herman further states:

> The real conditions of women’s lives were hidden in the sphere of the personal, in private life. The cherished value of privacy created a powerful barrier to consciousness and rendered women’s reality practically invisible. To speak about experiences in sexual or domestic life was to invite public humiliation, ridicule, and disbelief. Women were silenced by fear and shame, and the silence of women gave license to every form of sexual and domestic exploitation. (Herman 1992, p. 41)

There is no doubt, then, that traumatized women belonged to what Herman called the private sphere. Notably, in a masculine society, traumatized women have little room to either withdraw or express their feelings. Usually, they tend to be silenced by culture and traditions. According to Cheung, silence is articulated in many tongues, fluctuating from one culture to another. In her description of fiction narrated by three different Asian women, she noticed that each writer speaks of silence differently: “Silence can be imposed by the family in an attempt to maintain dignity or secrecy, by the ethnic community in adherence to cultural etiquette, or

by dominant culture in an effort to prevent any voicing of minority experiences" (Cheung, 2019, p. 84).

Accordingly, women's exclusion from the social and political platform resulted in their exclusion from the literary discourse. Women silenced their traumas as well as their ability to voice it creatively. In this light, it is fair to say that women and trauma are two entities entwined with the overarching social context. Women who have experienced trauma are continually repressing it because of the patriarchal system, silencing, thence, their female creative voice.

Notably, Miller contended that the female creativity tends to slip undetected into the privileged male position because language itself accepts the male viewpoint as the universal truth, thereof, limiting women's creative voice (Miller, 2008). Put differently, the feminine creativity is subjected to cultural and archetypal implications because "there is no universal female reality that can be taken as read, except for the culturally institutionalized one of reading women as lacking in relation to man" (Miller, 2008, p.7). Similarly, De Beauvoir held boldly that "there is a whole region of human experience that the male deliberately chooses to ignore because he fails to *think* it: this experience, the woman *lives* it" (de Beauvoir, 2011, p. 666). If male's experience, then, is considered as the ultimate experience, this consequently makes narratives about it universal, excluding women's experiences as well as their writings from the human constellation. In other words, male discourse takes the voice of women, she is, in essence, the "silent other" (Hoeveler & Decker, 2007, p. 31).

By the same token, other scholars reported that male authors such as Coleridge, Shelly, and Keats praise the male authorship, emphasizing lucidly that "the male quality is the creative gift" (Gubar 2014, p. 250). Consequently, women writers have been constructed by a discourse that privileged their nature as nurturers, rather than favoring their creative femininity.

A distinguished example would be the ivory girl from Pygmalion's myth[33] that represents a paradigm of the re-creation of woman in the male's image. The male quality, in other words, is not just an analogy, but also the essence of literary works. However, women writers have chosen to transcend this male dominance and articulate their feminine creativity through fiction not only to challenge patriarchal values, but also to assert their autonomous social position, because through writing, one can raise her/his social status.

In this sense, one employs Helene Cixous's remarkable essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976) that suggests that writing or, *écriture feminine*, can be the creative tool with which women resist the patriarchal discourse and male dominance. Cixous inspires women to write, to write herself –to write for herself– to write from her body and to voice the unspeakable, the unbearable (Cixous, 1976). Indeed, Cixous pushes women to write about their trauma and on trauma: "woman must put herself into the text –as into the world and into history by her own movement" (Cixous, 1976, p. 875).

In doing so, women writers not only excel the patriarchal language, but they also transform the trauma through literary texts. However not processing it to the point that trauma can or ever will disappear; residues of trauma is in fact the origin of their writings, which persists in repeated images from the past that becomes excessive, obsessive, delusional, hyperbolic, indeed, hysterical. Ultimately, and in this line of this reasoning, one is urged to investigate how is the feminine creativity shaped by trauma, and how is it manifested through women's writings.

[33] A Greek myth written by the poet Ovid. King Pygmalion is a talented sculptor, and hates women. He creates a statue of woman out of ivory and falls in love with it. After so many prayers, the gods bring life into the ivory girl. From a feminist perspective, this has been related to the creation of women in the image of man, where woman lack autonomy and therefore has no voice and no identity of her own. For more information, check https://www.greeka.com/greece-myths/pygmalion-galatea/

In an essay on women's resistance and creativity, Egyptian feminist and writer Nawal El Saadawi emphasizes the interconnectedness between women's creative thought and rebellious actions. Notably, she describes creativity as a dangerous phenomenon capable of destabilizing social and political matters through the search for new epistemologies (El Saadawi, 2010). According to Mehta, creativity can be a rebellious act against inscriptions of violence by manifesting in "revolutionary" literary forms (Mehta, 2014, p. 1). El Saadawi states: "I believe there is no dissidence without struggle. We cannot understand dissidence except in a situation of struggle and in its location in place and time. Without this, dissidence becomes a word devoid of responsibility, devoid of meaning" (El Saadawi, 1995, p. 2).

Creativity in this sense is the quest for meaning in a chaotic and alienated world. It is also what Mehta described as "the logical consequence of political and social consciousness" (Mehta, 2014, p. 1). In drawing the link between the act of resistance and creativity, El Saadawi argues that in order to be creative, one has to free her/himself from patriarchy. She asks: "Can we be creative if we submit to the rules forced upon us under different names: father, god, husband, family, nation, security, stability, protection, peace, democracy, family, planning, development, human rights, modernism or postmodernism?" (El Saadawi, 1995, p. 2).

Similarly, Franco-Algerian author Albert Camus tackles the concept of creativity in one of his lectures given at the University of Uppsala in Sweden: "To create today is to create dangerously. Any publication is an act, and that act exposes one to the passions of an age that forgives nothing" (Camus, 1957).

Creativity is thereby a perilous act of public disclosure that risks censorship and denunciation by the established social and political canons. In this regard, Mehta claims that creativity must be inscribed urgently "within a certain timeless and social relevance to debunk the inappropriateness of the bourgeois "art for art's sake" aesthetic" (Mehta, 2014, p. 2).

Nevertheless, this approach loses its relevance in the fractured postcolonial context that carries violent marks of coloniality and the tactically rooted power structures: “The theory of art for art’s sake … [is] … a voicing of irresponsibility”, holds Camus (1957). In this way, women writers manifest their resistance through their discursive ruptures in texts for more responsible forms of literariness to “revolt against everything fleeting and unfinished” (Camus, 1957).

It is safe to say that creativity for women writers is an invitation to transform reality of the unspeakable through the power of discursivity. Additionally, to be creative is to be able to produce socially committed texts by combining literary activism with ethical consciousness (Mehta, 2014). In other words, the creatively produced texts by women are not only a stance against patriarchy, but also a way to articulate traumas, as Salma Rushdie states: “Works of art, even works of entertainment, do not come into being in a social and political vacuum; … the way they operate in a society cannot be separated from politics, from history. For every text, a context” (Rushdie, 1984, p. 2).

Even though explorations of women’s writings on trauma across cultures are rare, the topic gained critical inquiry and had been on the feminist agenda for the past two decades. Miller, adapting a Jungian analysis, held that female creativity is inaccessible to women and needs to be dethatched from patriarchy, hence she made an account on the feminine creativity from a female perspective (Miller, 2008).

Similarly, Hoeveler and Schuster draw the link between trauma and the feminine creativity in women’s literary works. According to them, the feminine creativity is imbued with male standards, ergo making the literary criticism focus on the texts of men (Hoeveler & Schuster, 2007).

In fact, Hoeveler and Schuster have found a close link between creative women and their cultural contexts; notably, women "enter from the margins and create from their marginalized contexts" their own creativity (Hoeveler and Schuster, 2007, p. 10). In this sense, women enter what Terry Eagleton termed "alienated logic"[34] of their cultures, using their creativity to turn the patriarchal logic on itself.

In doing so, women can ultimately use their creative femininity to represent trauma in their writing, away from the patriarchal language. However, it is necessary to trace back the complex intersections between the masculine ideology and the female body. It has been mentioned before that women were commodified, objectified, and placed as objects of consumption for men. In this light, feminist critics have responded to this issue by making woman as the central focus for women's creativity, to move from "the male ideological constructions of the 'female'" (Hoeveler & Schuster, 2007, p. xii).

Sketching an overview on creativity in this case is necessary. Creativity intersects with patriarchal ideologies starting from Aristotle who gendered creativity as male, excluding women by their bodily reality. Freud who attempted to explain creativity as a psychological process, most notably in his essay *The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming* (1908). Freud noted that the literary artist created a world of fantasy or fiction –that is very different from reality– where the male hero compensates for all life frustrations and difficulties (Hoeveler & Shuster, 2007; Freud, 1908).

In *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Hélène Cixous revisits Dora as a feminist literary icon. She holds: "You, Dora, you the indomitable, the poetic body, you are the true 'mistress' of the Signifier. Before long your efficacy will be seen at work when your speech is no longer

[34] In *Nationalism: Irony and Commitment*, Eagleton (1990) believed that women did not avoid marginalization of their cultures, but they entered "the alienated logic" of nationalism to turn marginalization and patriarchy on itself.

suppressed, its point turned in against your breast, but written out over against the other" (Cixous, 1976, p. 886).

For Cixous and other feminist theorists and critics, the return to Dora and the "madwoman" involved a shifting away from pathological to more radical or subversive interpretations of hysteria and its key figures. Within literary analysis, Dora's experience with thwarted testimony offers a way to interpret female characters who find their experiences misread and their narratives shaped by male authority. When considering the constraints of femininity for plots and characters, a feminist lens would view hysterical symptoms as gestures of rebellion to disrupt – through their excess and instability – the seamless imposition of patriarchal signification.

Helene Cixous, then, encouraged women to write because she considers writing as a form of defiance. Writing often means, directly or indirectly, daring to write of one's life. It means asserting the right to break the silence imposed from the inside, as well as from the family and culture.

In this light, African women are too often presented in scholarly and media accounts as passive, pathetic victims of harsh circumstances, rather than as autonomous creative agents making positive changes in their lives. Confronting entrenched social inequality and inadequate access to resources, they look unblinkingly at the challenges they confront while also creating visions of a more positive future, using writing to bear witness to oppression, to document opposition struggles, and to share successful strategies of resistance. African women writers such as those included in this dissertation are moving beyond the linked dichotomies of victim/oppressor and victim/heroine to present their experiences in full complexity.

2.3. The Bond of Shared Suffering: Algerian, Cameroonian, and Nigerian Women Writing (about) Wounds

Algerian, Cameroonian, and Nigerian women writers share an important point that is crucial to this dissertation. Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Each of the mentioned writers have experienced a traumatic incident and her life. The trauma became eventually a creative source of inspiration to voice wounds despite the patriarchal, cultural, and societal repressions. In addition, these writers have a shared personal background as African writers, wherein each tackles different type of psychological trauma in their selected novels, namely trauma of unbelonging, sexual abuse, and domestic violence.

According to Bernard Mouralis, the affinity of anthropology and psychiatry in the Western discourse about Africa has excluded the latter from the concept of reason. Mouralis sums up his analysis by saying that the *topoi* of madness envisages the Western incapacity to think about the Other (Mouralis, 2011, p. 50). When African responses to this exclusion reject the position of the mad assigned to them, they reluctantly take up the logic of Western discourse, and, without intending to do so, situate themselves in opposition to the Western view. To escape these mechanisms, Vumbi Yoka Mudimbe has pleaded for a “coup de folie” in writing: i.e. an act of madness which invents a logic of its own, a logic that does not attempt to position itself in relation to Western attitudes (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 100).

2.3.1. Algerian Women Writing Beyond Trauma

Algerian women's post-independence produced literature describes the psychological and physical consequences of the Algerian Dark decade[35] on the population as a whole and women in particular. The repercussions of the 1990s crisis are numerous on the social, political and economic scale where trauma and exile are listen on top of the list. Assia Djebar, Maissa Bey, and Malika Mokeddem are among those women writers who voiced the violence and fear that prevailed in this era. Fear and anger are two features that these female writers have attributed to their female protagonists, with little emphasis on the way in which identity and experiences of trauma are linguistically and culturally structured (Daoudi, 2016).

In an introduction to the second edition of her book, *The Eloquence of Silence*, Marnia Lazreg wrote: "to the memory of all the Algerian women whose lives changed forever on July 3, 1830" (Lazreg, 2014). Change in this context might carry negative implications because Marnia believes that the process of colonization and decolonization has greatly effected the Algerian woman psychologically, socially, and politically.

With this in mind, it is interesting to note that the path of Algerian women writers towards literary production was not a linear one. The political and economic crisis of the 1990s had an impact on every Algerian, particularly women intellectuals. The latter were subject to assassinations, kidnaping, violence, and rape that cause a profound collective chock and a sense of loss and unbelonging. According to Salhi, "extremists issued death threats against feminist leaders who claimed the most basic civil rights for women in Algeria's misogynous culture" (Salhi, 2001, p. 103). Salhi's claim is pertinent in the novel of Maissa Bey *Nouvelles d'Algérie*

[35]Dark Decade, or Black Decade is the period between 1990s and 2000s that is mostly characterized by social and political upheavals. For the sake of clarity, and to serve this dissertation's purpose, the origin of the term is not explained in depth because is still debated as some call the period crisis, event, or not naming it at all.

(1998) where she highlights the traumatic shock of the terrorist attacks. To use her words, Bey wrote:

> To kill, to slaughter, to eliminate… how many words to say the same thing, words used having often been read and heard, like in those much too violent action movies that she refuses to watch. But this wasn't a film. She had before her a man, her husband, condemned to death by a phantom government before which he didn't even have to appear. (qtd.in Belkaid, 2018, p. 129)

In fact, Algerian women were not only victims of political ideologies, but also the Family Code that subjugated women to the Algerian patriarchal customs. The Family Code of 1984 primary goal was to abolish Algeria's heterogeneous cultural identity and "purify the structure of the family from all its un-Islamic elements" (Lazreg, 2014; pp.142-43; Hamil, 2004). However, the aftermaths of political regimes and the Family Code in Algeria included only social and political effects on the status of the Algerian women. Scholars like Hamil, Khaled, Lazreg, and Evans have usually described psychological effects as silence, neglecting the effects of the traumatic experience on one's identity.

Saibi confirms in her dissertation that the literature by Algerian women in the 90s in unique and packed with testimonies of the 1990s crisis, hence the label "the literature of emergency" [36](Saibi, 2021, p. 81).

2.3.2. Cameroonian Feminist Writers

Researchers argue that Cameroonian feminist literature dates back to *Ngonda,* a novella written by Marie-Claire Matip in 1955 (Toman & Ebossé, 2002). When translated from the African native language, *Ngonda* means "young woman at her rebirth" (Toman & Ebossé, 2002, p. 296). Matip made significant contribution to the Cameroonian literature and has a remarkable

[36]For further information on la littérature d'urgence, see Détrez *Les Ecrivaines Algériennes et l'Ecriture de la Décennie Noire* (2008)

influence on the writings of Cameroonian women writers such as Thérèse Kuoh-Moukoury, Philomène Bassek, Lydie Dooh-Bunya, and Calixthe Beyala. These writers have developed the idea of the empowerment of women through African tradition.

Like any other African women writers, Cameroonian writers struggled to appear on the literary scene. Thérèse Kuoh-Moukoury is the first Cameroonian female novelist. She struggled to gain visibility and appreciation for her work. Notably, she finished her book *Rencontres Essentielles* in 1956, but it was not published until 1969. Critics appreciated more Cameroonian male writings, which is centered around anti-colonial themes and paid little attention to literary production by women. According to some scholars, "Matip and Kuoh-Moukoury essentially became the first two links in the chain of Cameroonian women writers, and were thus responsible for demonstrating the value and necessity of feminine expression" (Toman & Ebossé, 2002, p. 296).

Nonetheless, Cameroon's women appeared relatively silent in the literary scene after Kuoh-Moukhoury's *Rencontres Essentielle.* Between 1972 and 1977, a few works like *La Brise du Jour* by Lydie Dooh-Bunaya and *La Reine* by Nana-Tabitha Youko appeared but received little attention from the public. It was not until the 1980s that works of Cameroonian women writers like Werewere Liking and Calixthe Beyala started to gain national and international visibility, paving the way for more prolific period for Cameroonian feminist writers.

According to Toman and Ebossé, this nonlinear flow of Cameroonian feminist writers is due to the transition from a French colony to an independent state (Toman & Ebossé, 2002). Furthermore, Cameroon's first women writers like Matip and Kuoh-Moukoury came from families of intellectual elite who had access to schools, and did make a difference between males and females when it comes to education.

However, after independence, such opportunities disappeared and further complications were posed by culture and traditions of villages which often did not value formal education for females (Halimi, 2007; Toman & Ebossé, 2002).

These first women writers, thence, reflected the image of an educated woman and her attempts to integrate into the modern African society. Post-independence women writers reflect a deeper angle of Cameroonian women; they reveal the psyche of the African woman, her feelings and emotions and her life's experiences. Writers lie Calixthe Beyala are more ambitious in expressing their life philosophy, vision, and their hopes for building an open and equal relationships with men. Beyala in *Tu t'appelleras Tanga* (1988) illustrates women's experiences in a bold and brutal way in an effort to transgress social values and sexual taboos. According to Toman and Ebossé, the writer represent the most subversive feminist writing of Cameroon (Toman & Ebossé, 2002).

Similarly, Halimi argues that Cameroonian women writers like Calixthe Beyala have helped to create a feminine voice in literature that is different form their male counterparts. In fact, they went beyond metaphoric representations and addressed real issues of the feminine experience (Halimi, 2007). In this way, Cameroonian feminist writers are actively redefining women's space to fit in the changing society of Cameroon.

2.3.3. Nigerian Women Writers

Nigerian women writers have been absent from the literary scene prior to the 1960s. even when women writers started to publish their work, little attention and recognition was given to them[37]. When Florence Nwapa published her first novel *Efuru* (1966), critics like Eustace Palmer and Gerald Moore argued that the novel was too feminine and did not carry

[37] Florence Nwanzuruahu Nwapa published her first novel *Efuru* and it was not very well welcomed not recognized.

narrative density (Palmer, 1972). Fortunately, African feminist critics like Florence Stratton and Chikwenye Ogunyemi revealed that Nigerian women writers were harshly marginalized by the male-centered literature. They argued that Nigerian women were forced to be silent and live in the shadow of men (Stratton, 1994; Ogunyemi, 1996).

Nigerian literature consequently became more or less a product women consumed. However, with the numerous waves of feminism, women became more conscious about the importance of their experience and meaning-making, which drove them to use their voice to share their words and wounds. Saibi holds on this point that: "women have reached a positive consciousness and began to doubt their position" (Saibi, 2021, p. 83).

With the marginalization of Nigerian women from the literary scene, two generations of writers was created; however, both generations aimed to voice women's suffering. Saibi (2021) gave remarkable example of women writers who deconstructed the myth of symbolic violence[38]. In her dissertation, she compared first and second generation of Nigerian women writers like Zulu Sofola, Ifeoma Okoye, and Zaynab Alkali and how these writers reviewed patriarchy in their novels. In its essence, patriarchy did not only create gaps between genders, but it also traumatized Nigerian women and deprived them from voicing their trauma.

Another crucial point is that Nigerian women writers felt the pressure to write about events dictated by societal norms. In other words, to write about "what society expects a woman to write" (Saibi, 2021, p. 84). Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo for example takes an activist stance and claim that women writers are not supposed to focus on liberation and equality matters only; it is also important for women to talk to each other after having experienced trauma (of war, violence, and abuse).

[38] Pierre Bourdieu (1993) called the action of one class trying to oppress another class by symbolic violence. See *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*

More than that, she highlights the vital need to these women to document their experiences in writing and deplores the lack of female creativity in the Nigerian literature (Veit-Wild, 2005).

In order to restore the Nigerian female creativity and literary endeavor, Nigerian women writers had to go beyond the examination of women's images in the male-centered literature. However, according to Saibi, writers like Nwapa did not provide a challenging new image of Nigerian women in their novels. They "rarely contribute in suggesting alternative ideas and changing attitudes towards some practices like polygamy and marriage" (Saibi, 2021, p. 85).

Nevertheless, this perception changed with the rise of feminisms and women's political and social activism. Women writers now try to deal with the pain of the past and the memory of painful events. Adimora-Ezeigbo (2005) insists that Nigerian women writers need to break the silence imposed on them by sharing their experiences of suffering and trauma[39]. This turn of events gave rise to a third generation of Nigerian authors who are mostly likely younger and who challenged the masculine literature and the patriarchal system.

Among these writers, Lola Shoneyin, Unoma Azurah, and Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie stand on the top of the list. The latter projects in her novels, particularly in *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) two extremes of feminism, African feminism, which is liberal, accommodationist, and more tolerant of the follies of men, and radical feminism, which advocates separatism and rebellion for self-actualization. Thus, the mother of the protagonist Kambili, Beatrice goes through the gamut of both ideologies. Firstly, she accepts and tolerates Eugene's domination, brutality and victimization in order to preserve the sanctity of her marriage. Then, she progresses from the liberal at the beginning of the novel, to a radical feminist, who destroys the

[39] In *From the Horse's Mouth* (2005), Adimora-Ezeigbo demonstrated that only two Nigerian women writers shared their experiences of the Nigerian Civil War: Leslie Ofoegbu's *Blow the Fire* (1986) and Rose Njoku's *Withstand the Storm* (1986) among fifty creative writers who published books of fiction, poetry, and drama. The Number of women did not surpass ten.

obstacles and barriers to her survival, positive progress and fulfilment, at the conclusion of the novel.

Adichie also highlights a very important aspect of family life - parenthood - and points out, through *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), that the decisions parents make about their roles in families will have a deep and lasting influence on the lives and personalities of their children. She draws attention to the fact that motherhood is an important role in the family on which the well-being of the family and the nation may be justifiably claimed to depend. Women, mothers especially, should, therefore, be appreciated, respected, loved and cared for, and these privileges should be allowed them from the home by the parents, husbands and all males of the clan or group who must ensure that their lives are peaceful, just and humane.

2.4. Re-thinking Violence and Silence in Selected African Women's Writings

In the last decades, postcolonial feminist scholars have been re-thinking concepts of violence and silence in women's literary texts. The two interconnected concepts are no more characterizations of submissiveness and victimization. This assertion is mediated through a number of dissertations, research papers, and books.

Particularly, Jane Evans, Varies, Weber, and Saibi, to name just a few, discussed the interconnectedness of violence and silence in women's postcolonial writings. The scholars also argue how these concepts are manifested as tools of resistance and resilience through the medium of writing.

For African women writers, writing is indeed a privileged medium through which they attempt to resolve the tension between the unspeakable and the violence generated from unfair cultural, social, and political rules based on the prevailed patriarchal system. Remarkably, they

do not seek to 'uncover' violence for its essential value or for aesthetic purposes; instead, authors like Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explore violence and silence in different and creative ways to resist patriarchy and forms of trauma.

In *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination*, researchers notified that the question of violence has been itself renewed "with the collapse of the bipolar system of global rivalry" (Vries and Weber, 1997, p. 78). In other words, in literary endeavors, violence is more than the simplistic construction of power of a subject/other upon another subject/self, it is rather what Saibi called in her dissertation "a form of language" that is manifested in different features, namely "a frequent use if indigenous terms, recurrent borrowing and references, lexical creations…and narrative codes" (Saibi, 2021, pp. 131-134).

In her noteworthy book *Tactical Silence in the Novels of Malika Mokeddem*, Jane Evans sees violence and silence as manipulative and discursive ways in which female protagonists in the works of Malika Mokeddem use cleverly to navigate through violence and to challenge hegemonic discourses (Evans, 2010). Overall, these scholars think that the use of violence and silence in creative way may shatter the patriarchal system and end old myths about women's submissiveness.

It is also important to mention Deirdre Lashgari, who underscores multiple insights crucial in understanding women's literary responses to violence in particular in *Violence, Silence, and Anger: Women's Writing as Transgression*. Notably, she pinpoints women's refusal of the patriarchal system and celebrates a multiplicity of discourses and voices by women who transgressed through writing (Lashgari, 1995). Accordingly, through writing, African women lift taboos over traditionally silenced discourses about domestic and intimate

violence[40]. Their writing often examine the effects of rape, sexual violence, and physical and psychological abuse on women. In doing so, they remove intimate violence from its private and domestic sphere and interweave it with public discourse of violence (Kalisa, 2009).

Moreover, these writers have shown how their societies and cultures contribute to implementing violence by shedding the light on the uniqueness of women's experience of violence and silence. For example, Malika Mokeddem explores in l'*Interdite* the unspeakability of unbelonging to the country of origin, while Calixthe Beyala and Chimamanda Ngozi examine the impact, and how these experiences are silenced, of rape and domestic violence on women in *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* and *Purple Hibiscus*, respectively. Certainly, through the female protagonists, Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili, one discovers the extreme, as well as the systemic or everyday forms of violence the African woman endures in her life.

On another hand, Sharon Rosenberg (1989) thinks that many feminists render certain forms of violence as irrational, extreme, unthinkable, and/or bounded within an exceptional moment of space and time. Her understanding of violence is useful to my thinking in this section for several reasons. Importantly, her 1989 essay underlines that when it comes to women's experiences, violence in all its forms[41] is often silent and silenced, made secret and unspeakable. However, not always because of its extremity, but rather because of its everydayness, including the way that is often unseen, or made invisible, hence silenced (Rosenberg, 1989).

Almeida and Saibi both agree that to be silenced is a forced act where the subject feel the desire to speak yet afraid of the circumstances of this simple act of humanity (Almeida, 1994; Saibi, 2021). Nevertheless, it is this imposed silence that lead African women writers to

[40]In an introductory section of her book, Kalisa differentiates between types of violence manifested in writings by African and Caribbean women. Notably, she names intimate violence to locate women's experience of violence within the public discourse of violence. Kalisa did so because she thinks that women are marginalized and their experiences of violence are denigrated (Kalida, 2009)

[41]In her essay, Rosenberg (1989) explains that violence can be religious, racial, or sexual. See *Intersecting Memories: Bearing Witness to the 1989 Massacre of Women in Montreal*.

subvert against the historical muting of women. In Beyalean terms, women write in order to destroy the silence, "tuer le vide du silence" [destroy, literally kill, the emptiness of silence] (Beyala, 1988, p. 13). Correspondingly, Halimi (2007) thinks that women who accessed the medium of writing, they are most likely to face patriarchal speech. This is explained in Angèle's statement:

> La problématique de l'existence d'une feminine africaine ne peut s'analyser sans tenir compte de son context d'émergence. Ce contexte d'émergence renferme un topo, celui du silence, limite un espace, celui de la marginalité. Le discours des femmes qui s'élabore après une trop longue période de silence porte les marques de l'ostracisme et se conforte au discours hégémonique patriarcal. (qtd.in Halimi, 2007, p. 109)

This understanding of silence as neither singular, exceptional, nor 'elsewhere', but rather as at once instutionalized and every day is key lesson that these novels provide. Malika Mokeddem treats silence in l'*Interdite* as an inexpressible malaise that is manifested in Sultana's anorexia. Comparably, Beyala in *TTT* demonstrates that silence is what makes Tanga's body invisible and therefore she cannot tell her story. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda highlights that silence is a patriarchal tool that normalizes domestic violence, something that explains Kambili's shyness and lack of speech. Notably, lack of speech, voicelessness, and silence are all sites to think about trauma.

Trauma often alternates between silence and uncontrollable repetitions. Survivors of traumatic experiences are silent for two reasons: they are either in denial of the happening of the traumatic experience in the first place, or they are silent(ed) because speaking about the experience of violence is a taboo[42].

[42]This is especially true for survivors of rape in certain cultures and societies. In Algeria for example, there is no clear statistics of rape because simply people do not denounce this act because of shame and the general look of society towards this act.

What complicates the expression of the wounding of violence is not merely that the psychological pain renders one wordless, or that there is no common language to describe what has happened, but also that the Other's exclusion from structures of meaning-making has literally resulted in being without a language that can tell of these things.

While the Other exists outside language, in the sense of being located within the definitions of overarching the power structures, there is no language that readily gives voice to oppression, as in terms of the dominant ideology it does not exist. For African women writers in this case, silence is used as a form of power as well as a form of protection, a useful tool when voice is either silenced or inoperative. Silence, however, is not only about being silent or silenced: it could also be a form of power, as well as a strategy of survival. It can be a form of resistance and a coping mechanism (Saibi, 2021; Kilby, 2007; Ferguson, 2003).

Moreover, silence can also be a platform for strategizing and organizing resistance to oppression. It can provide the mental and physical space to think calmly and critically, and to develop strategies for challenging oppressive forces (Ferguson, 2003). As Adrienne Rich points out, "Silence can be a plan/rigorously executed …. Do not confuse it / with any kind of absence" (Rich, 1993, p. 22).

On an interesting note, Glenn reminds us that "silence can be a specifically feminist rhetorical act, often one of resistance" (Glenn, 2002, p. 262). She cites Anita Hill's decision to remain silent about Clarence Thomas's sexist behavior towards her in the workplace, until he was nominated for the Supreme Court. Only then did she decide to speak publicly about his abusive behavior. Furthermore, her deliberate use of silence and voice demonstrates the power of both, reminding us that purposeful silence "resonates with meaning and intention – just like that of the spoken word" (Glenn, 2002, p. 282).

Accordingly, many African women writers have used silence to consolidate their internal resources and strategies in order "to cope with and, in many cases, transcend, the confines of intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality" (Hill Collins, 2014; p. 98).

In addition, silence is used eloquently to voice women's words, wounds, and experiences in a male-dominates space. In her dissertation, Saibi argues based on Eni Pulcineili-Orlandi's *Les formes du silence*. *Dans le Mouvement du Sens* (1996) that silence is indeed a tool for meaning making for African women writers, as it is not an equivalent to nothingness. She adds:

> This conception has redefined our traditional understanding of silence as an expression of absence and in order to analyze it, one has to observe it using discursive and deconstructionist methods because it is impossible to understand silence without taking into account the historicity of the text and the processes of the construction of meaning and its effects. (Saibi, 2021, p. 48)

With that being said, the selected African women writers carefully craft their stories by exploring elements of the ambivalence that characterizes the experience of trauma. In accordance with the conflict of silence and violence, we find tensions between remembering and forgetting and between silence and witnessing. Even as women's silence punctuates much of the narratives, writers emphasize the characters' paradoxical "imperative to tell" their stories (Laub, 1995, p. 63).

Conclusion

This chapter provided an understanding of trauma and trauma theory through the lens of feminism. Trauma then, is an event that also occurs in women's experiences and is not excluded to only studies of genocides and the holocaust. It can occurs from social injustice and oppression. In this vein, this chapter demonstrated that even though the African women writers, namely, Calixthe, Chimamanda, and Mokeddem, come from different countries and backgrounds, they share the same vision of the world and the same project that consists of exposing the feminine condition and the rejection of social norms that keep, Cameroonian, Algerian, and Nigerian women estranged in and outside their homelands. Their aptitude to dig into the depths of the characters' minds and analyze them morally and mentally show their willingness to explain the intricacy and the tensions of stifling and muzzling on the psychology of (African) women.

These tensions highlight the particular wounds inscribed on women's bodies as a result of historical fractures, traumatic memory and patriarchal ideology to demonstrate how it is impossible to disassociate gender from questions related to conquest and colonization, cultural and religious identity, "modernity" and historical violence.

Telling one's story is the act of remembering that opposes the act of forgetting. In so doing, listening and witnessing carries the potential to rethink violence and rework silence into spaces of resistance, desire, agency and transformation. Through their selected writings, Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie bear witness to violence and silence that might offer, and even provoke, new reading strategies that would offer closer attention to what trauma can do to women, especially in a society that does not really open up about psychological disorders.

Chapter 3

Rising from the Ashes of a Wounded Identity: The Construction of Sultana's, Tanga's, and Kambili's Identity beyond the Wound

Introduction

Issues concerning identity have preoccupied both feminist theorists and women writers from the beginning of the women's liberation movement in the late 1960s to the present. In other words, in patriarchal societies, a woman's identity is constructed as the projection of men's fears and desires, it is a 'distorted mirror', which shows a woman not what she is but rather what she should be. In the course of history, it has been this male-constructed feminine identity that women have had to internalize, colluding with the hegemony of the oppressive system. Consequences of this internalization is psychological trauma that alters one's identity and self. In *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman contends that traumatized victims remain with almost a dehumanized and stigmatized identity (Herman, 2015). How can, then, a traumatized individual make sense of her/his fragmented identity?

Through a thorough examination of different psychological traumas, namely trauma of unbelonging, trauma of sexual abuse and rape, and trauma of domestic violence, African women writers describe the journey of traumatized female protagonists, and how they resist the unrepresentability of trauma through testimony, witnessing, and memory.

Notably, researchers have understood that there was a relationship between traumatic experiences and testimonies produced by traumatized people. In 1893, Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud observed from the testimony of their hysterical female patients that their symptoms comprised "the recurrence of a physical state which the patient has experienced earlier", a definition similar to the one used to diagnose PTSD flashbacks today (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart, 1991, p. 430).

Definitions of testimony orbit around two key characteristics: *evidence* and *attestation*. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "personal or documentary evidence or attestation in support of a fact or statement; hence, any form of evidence or proof" (Simpson & Weiner 1989, p. 833). Testimony, in this reading, is not a thing but a process: a very specific kind of speech

act that vows to “tell, to promise and produce one’s own speech as material evidence for truth” (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 5). Whether justiciable or otherwise, testimony is never simply “the observing, the recording, the remembering of an event” as evidence, because it must also attest to its “utterly unique and irreplaceable topographical position” with respect to that evidence (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. 206).

Testimony is always an act of memory, removed in both time and space from the evidence to which it attests and can, therefore, never confirm “I prove”, but rather states “I swear” (Derrida, 2005, pp. 75–6).

3.1. Towards the Validation of the Female Self through Testimony, Memory, and Witnessing in l'*Interdite, Tu t'Appelleras Tanga,* and *Purple Hibiscus*

In the selected novels, each protagonist suffers from different psychological trauma that has eventually a cultural outcome. In Malika Mokeddem's l'*Interdite*, for example, the investigation of trauma of unbelonging and loss of identity is based on the complex poetics of intertextuality, while in *TTT*, trauma of rape and sexual abuse makes the protagonist almost unaware of her trauma. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili goes through a tormented history of domestic violence that has shaped her identity as a teenager. These texts may differ in their traumas, but in this difference of traumatic experience that these women have built there selves out of the unspeakability of trauma through witnessing and testimony.

Trauma writers such, as Vickroy, highlights that regardless the type of trauma, victims who encounter trauma are not trying to "make terrifying, alien experiences more understandable and accessible", but they are also trying to provide a means of "witnessing or testifying for the history and experience of historically marginalized people" (Vickroy, 2002, pp. 221-22). In this vein, Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili are asserting their selves through witnessing and testimony not to make their traumas accessible, but to voice the denied, the repressed, and the forgotten; something that women in postcolonial contexts are deprived of.

In the act of witnessing, there is remembrance, and in the act of remembrance, there is testimony. The practice of testimony is not only a matter of speaking out against the silence and the silencings as Tagore explained in *The Shapes of Silence: Writing by Women of Color and the Politics of Testimony* (2009), it is also an act of making space, or creating space as mentioned in the last section of chapter two.

In the context of testimony, memory proves to be a key site of testimonial evidence in political and historical reparations, especially for women who have been silenced or erased from the official public sphere or within colonial records (Tagore, 2009). Taken together, testimony,

witnessing, and memory helps one to chart an analytical trajectory that engages testimony first as a process of witnessing and accountable listening, then as a form of memory, a mode of subaltern resistance and agency. In l'*Interdite*, *TTT*, and *Purple Hibiscus*, memory and testimony become a process of self-discovery, ending in a better understanding of oneself as well as one's surroundings and situations. Moreover, the multiple ways in which acts of literary testimony can intervene –effectively, ethically, politically, critically– in situations of personal trauma, violence, and Othering.

In his work on trauma literary theory, Hartman (1995) explains that testimony is a way of *receiving* the story, as well as listening to it. Similarly, Whitehead highlights in *Trauma Fiction* (2004) that testimony requires a "collaborative" connection between speaker and listener where the latter bears a double responsibility: "to receive the testimony but also to avoid appropriating the story as his or her own" (Whitehead, 2004, p. 7). Legally, a witness is someone who observes an event and testifies to this observation in a court law under an oath to validate the 'happening' of the event. In its religious sense, to testify is to affirm the truths of religious faith. However, in more secular terms, the act of witnessing necessitates declaring, on the basis of first-person observation or eye-witness to affirm that something is real and true (Jensen, 2020; Henke, 2000). According to John Beverley, women's writing in the Third World context emerge out of conditions of subalternity, oppression, and political injustice, and these writing are a form of witness to the injustices and the traumas women experience and which remain invisible under patriarchal rule (Beverley, 1989).

Moreover, for Beverley testimony becomes a privileged site for documenting and voicing the psychological trauma and the struggles of the oppressed. In similar veins, George Yúdice defines testimony as "an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (war, oppression, revolution)", and further adds that within a testimony,

"Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising or setting aright official history" (Yúdice, 1991, p. 44).

Testimony in the context of marginalized women's writings may involve discovering the words behind certain kinds of inarticulations, but crucially also entails finding alternate strategies of tracing and presence-ing the very encounters or shapes of trauma. In this sense, the complex and multifaceted ways in which writings by women, to be more precise, postcolonial women may be read, collectively or individually ,as practices of bearing witness and creating form to such moments of non-discursivity which may challenge the unspeakability of trauma, since it defies language and ways of representation. Accordingly, marginalized women writers such as Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi have developed their storytelling to resist voicelessness and marginalization attributed to them. In undertaking their writings in a testimonial framework, one would understand the violent imbrications of gender, race, class, sexuality, nation, and colonialism these women writers tries to convey creatively at once to challenge the patriarchy and to voice their traumas through female protagonists.

3.1.1. Witnessing as Testimony in L'*Interdite,* Tu T'appelleras Tanga, and Purple Hibiscus

For the most part, l'*Interdite* (1993), *TTT* (1988), and *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) may be viewed as telling tales of various, and often extreme, forms of trauma –and, yet, these writings also challenge any laidback distinction between *extreme* experiences of violence and the systemic or everyday forms of violence that structure the lives of marginalized women.

Furthermore, the selected novels seek to give due weight to lives, experiences of trauma, events, and realities that, otherwise, seem to have been 'invisible' in the current critical terrain of mainstream postcolonial literature.

In numerous ways, postcolonial writings by women constitute and offer testimonies to what Lorna Goodison evocatively refers to as "the half not told" (1995, p. 4). As such, the examination of such narratives demands much more complex, attentive, and more accountable practices of listening and critical engagement than what has been offered by prevalent postcolonial models of literary analysis and interpretation.

Ranging across, and sometimes between, the genres of novel, autobiography, and historical fiction, the writings under scrutiny are examined as particular forms of testimonial writing. First, Malika Mokeddem's l'*Interdite* (1993), set and written amidst the context of the Algerian crisis of the 1990s and 2000s, explores the trauma of unbelonging that Sultana, the protagonist, experiences because of the political regime and the patriarchy prevailing in Algeria at that time. Sultana practiced medicine in France, and found herself in a crossroad where she must go to Algeria to face the origins of unbelonging.

Second, Calixthe Beyala, in *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* focuses largely on the unspeakability of rape and sexual violence, among other things. Lastly, Chimamanda Ngozi in *Purple Hibiscus* sheds the light on the marginalized stories of children through Kambili, the protagonist, who have been silenced though trauma of domestic violence. In these texts, Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi explore the various somatic and non-linguistic modes of testimony and witnessing for example, in the form of watching, observing, hearing, internalizing, or otherwise sensing and embodying the different traumas, violence, pains, and desires that are constructed within locals of familial intimacy.

Nonetheless, these writings also offer ways of critically transforming trauma through their linking of isolating and individualizing experiences of abuse and unbelonging to larger, systemic, and historical processes of sexual, racial, gendered, and classed violence –including the ways in which these are always articulated through each other. Moreover, these texts also

highlight that the practices of listening are important to which testimonies are heard, and how they are responded to.

Like Mokeddem's text, Beyala's narrative asks readers to consider the ethical and effective dimensions of speaking about, listening to, or writing and reading about narratives of extreme violence and injustice. In particular, the novels are concerned with situations of rape, and sexual violence that take place within a locale of familial and/or intimate relations. The three novels compel readers to grapple with and bear witness to various dislocations of identity that result from violence, trauma, and yet do so using language, imagery, and narrative techniques that are consciously evocative, sensuous, and eve, seductive. Using the conceptual and organizational tools of a secret, and often told through a series of memories or flashbacks, these texts do not simply speak from the sites of their traumas but rather reproduce and re-enact the very experience of traumatization through their narrative trajectories. As Julia Kristiva (1987) write, one of the risks of literature that bears witness to violence.

The process of investigating these words may also involve a certain re-living or passing on of violence and trauma, since to be witness to such a tale is to enter into it, come to inhabit it, and be haunted by it. at the same times, I argue that it is precisely this very visceral, affective response of listeners that holds the potential for historical and individual silencings to enter into a realm where they may be collectively acknowledged, reworked, and ultimately, transformed in ethically and politically actionable ways.

In this case, l'Interdite, Tu t'Appelleras Tanga, and Purple Hibiscus are powerful examples of literature of witness and, in particular, that they are fiction which offer understandings of ethical witnessing as a particular modality of testimony.

What gathers these novels under one umbrella is their ability to convey to readers what it means to witness in remarkably immediate, somatic, and everyday ways. In it no coincidence that these novels focus on the experiences of women, from different range of age. Malika's, Beyala's, and

Ngozi's fictions raise questions about what it might mean to be a witness to a set of events, histories, and circumstances that one may not necessarily yet understand, articulate, put into words or thoughts.

Witnessing in these texts takes the form of watching, observing, and listening, often over acts of speaking or telling about violence that is neither singular, exceptional, nor 'elsewhere', but rather as at once institutionalized and embedded in the everyday life. Witnessing in this case involves not simply listening for what is being testified to –the word of testimony –but also listening for the silencings of the self

3.1.2. Testimony: towards the Politics of Listening

Although some criticism seems to ask for fewer stories in the public space about women's trauma, other trauma scholars want instead to change the role of the listener/receiver of testimony and the public space in which the testimony emerges. Critiques of trauma studies' earlier formations, including feminist interventions, emphasize a focus on the receiver of testimony and the public space in which the testimony occurs, in an effort to avoid universal theorizations about post-traumatic experience.

One observes then testimony does not simply offer a documentation of reality for Malika, Calixthe, and Chimamanda, they rather seek to establish new political realities through the act of narration, to asset one's feminine self beyond patriarchal definition of the feminine self. The presence of the voice is thus crucial in testimonial, that is, affirming one's self through witnessing and memory.

However, in their book *Testimony* (1991), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub converse Holocaust testimony in literary, historical and psychoanalytical terms and argue that a central

peculiarity of both individual and social traumas has to do with trauma's essential inaccessibility because of the way it effaces voice and memory.

For this, Cathy Caruth argued that trauma cannot be thought of as any simple form of forgetting. For instance, the experience of the individuals who were diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder after World War II did not only suffer from amnesia, but also situations where the original traumatic event came back to haunt them in the form of flashbacks, repetitive behaviors, phantasmal dreams, and other moments of remembering (Caruth, 1996).

This line of thinking is what let critics such as Felman, Laub, and Caruth to conclude that trauma is not forgettable because it comes back in other forms to the survivors, which gives the possibility of voicing it, the possibility of its speakability. Sultana in l'*Interdite* for example, faces existential questions about her belonging to neither Algeria, nor France; she is stunned by a trauma of unbelonging, yet eloquently voices this trauma:

J'ai fait un infarctus de mon Algérie. Il y a si longtemps. Maintenant, mon cœur frappe de nouveau son galop sans algie. Mais une séquelle de nécrose reste : sceau de l'abandon à la source du sang à jamais scellé. J'ai fait une hémiplégie de ma France. Peu à peu, mon hémicorps a retrouvé ses automatismes, récupéré ses sensations. Cependant, une zone de mon cerveau me demeure muette, comme déshabitée : une absence me guette aux confins de mes peurs, au seuil de mes solitudes. (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 82)

Unlike Sultana, Tanga, the protagonist in *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* (1988), could not voice her trauma because she cannot remember her name: "ma mémoire s'est fermée sur lui" (Beyala, 1988, p. 6), let alone her story. This amnesia and loss of identity seem to be the result of trauma of rape and sexual abuse, which Tanga translates to silence and emptiness. Tanga in voices a different type of psychological trauma than Sultana that is trauma of rape and sexual abuse. Among all the types of psychological burden, Herman confirms that trauma of rape and sexual abuse is the most challenging because it haunts the victim in different ways as it alters memory and the self. In her *Trauma and Recovery*, a rape victim describes this detached state:

I left my body at that point. I was over next to the bed, watching this happen…I dissociated from the helplessness. I was standing next to me and there were just this shell on the bed… There was just a feeling of flatness. I was just there. When I picture the room, I don't picture it from the bed. I picture it from the side of the bed. That's where I was watching from. (Herman, 2015, p. 43)

Tanga, a victim of sexual abuse, is detached from her memory and her identity. This amnesia and loss of self is the result of trauma. Nevertheless, Tanga is determined to break the miserable chain of violence that links her life to that of her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother through testimony and telling her story. While Mokeddem stressed the impact of violence on women's ability to speak, Beyala considers the capacity of the violated body to tell the story of violence when words fail.

In similar stream of thoughts, Chimamanda Ngozi in Purple Hibiscus sheds the light on the psychological effect of domestic trauma on women. Kambili defies her father who dominates, subjugates, and batters his wife and kids, Kambili included. As a result of her father's psychological abuse, Kambili is severely handicapped in her interaction with others, lacking the ability to communicate openly, but she is able to "whisper" her thoughts and fears to Father Amadi.

Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili are protagonists who seek to affirm their selves by telling their traumas through testimony. Felman writes on this matter:

The specific task of the literary testimony is … to open up in that belated witness, which the reader now historically becomes, the imaginative capability of perceiving history –what is happening to others –in *one's body*, with the power of sight or rather insight that is usually afforded only by one's immediate physical involvement. (Felman & Laub, 1991, p.108)

These testimonial narratives are not only inscribed with symptomatic evidence of the unequal power dynamics in which they were produced but also with the hesitance, fragmentation, incoherence and/or emotional detachment characteristic of traumatic storytelling. However,

since testimony is embedded in the Holocaust studies[43], like Felman and Laub, Giorgio Agamben (1999) comments that testimonies of Holocaust survivors by emphasizing the inaccessibility of trauma and describes the impossibilities of witnessing. He further notes that in the case of the experiences of the concentration camp, the "true witness" or "complete witness", that is those who endured the traumatic event, bear no witness at all because testimony, by definition, is structured by a discrepancy:

> Testimony contains at its core an essential lacuna; in other words, the survivors bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to. As a consequence, commenting on survivors' testimony necessarily meant interrogating this lacuna, or, more precisely, attempting to listen to it. (Agamben, 1999, p. 13)

This absurdity, Agamben contends, calls into question the very meaning of testimony in literature and language, since:

> What is borne witness to cannot already be language or writing. It can only be something to which no one has borne witness. And this is the sound that arises from the lacuna … the non-language to which language answers, in which language is borne. (Agamben, 1999, p. 38)

In this vein, Agamben and other scholars such as Laub, Felman, and Caruth are thus important to this section for their insistence that in examining testimony it is as important to pay attention to the various traumas and non-languages that characterizes the selected novels of Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi. The moments of trauma, of not-saying, including the spaces of fictionality that disrupt these texts' authorizations of any straightforward, singular, or unmediated truth, may in fact, at times contain more precise renderings of truth that the words, themselves, are capable of.

Testimony in this case in compelling for African female protagonists to voice the silence that resulted from a traumatic event for it holds aspects of linking everyday forms of trauma and

[43]For further quires on the Holocaust studies, see LaCapra's *Representing the Holocaust: History, theory, trauma* (1996)

different shapes of silencing with political and cultural dimensions. However, the lack of engagement with postcolonial histories of gender and race on the part of testimony scholars has created repercussions for how testimonies of African women, who are positioned along multiple and often shifting lines of power/violence, are read, or whether or not they are even see-able or hear-able, or comprehensible to others (Tagore, 2009). Understanding these experiences according to their political, social, and historical specificities is crucial to shed the light on what has been pointed as *unspeakable*, especially for African women writers who witnessed and been part of numerous psychological traumas.

3.2. Trauma of Unbelonging in Malika Mokeddem's l'*Interdite*:

3.2.1. Malika Mokeddem, an Algerian Women Writer Between Two Tides:

Malika Mokeddem is among the few Algerian women writers who voiced the violence and fear that prevailed in the era between 1990s and 2000s. By raising questions of what is like to be a woman in Algeria in her novel, Malika sheds the light on the psychological trauma as well as the stress women go through, especially in the 1990s and 2000s, an era that is characterized by tension.

Malika Mokeddem was forced into exile like many other Algerian intellectuals during the Dark Decade to become an *émigré*[44] Algerian author living in France. She embedded her novels in between the desert and the Mediterranean Sea, two geographical spaces where she often draws her female protagonists as either longing for a culture of freedom, or a culture that has its roots

[44]In a comparative study between Malika Mokeddem's work and Chika Unigwe, Saibi (2021) used the term to depict not the identity of these writers, but as a descriptive status.

in the patriarchal system. Moreover, she felt that it was her duty to express the trauma and the acts of violence committed against civilians in general, and women in particular.

Malika Mokeddem built her identity, personality, and writings on the amalgam of the north and the south. France, the country that welcomed her after leaving her country of origins: Algeria. She cannot separate her being and existence in both, claiming that "on ne peut me scinder en deux justement parce que c'est très ramifié et que chaque partie de moi, chaque fibre se nourrit de l'autre" (Helm, 2000, p 40). Mokeddem, thereof, communicates a *métissage* both linguistic and cultural in her writings, which engages a dual identity: "…pas deux moitiés juxtaposes ou accolées, mais c'est intimement imbriqué en [elle]" (Helm, 2000, p. 40).

In her writings, she unveiled the violence and atrocities committed against women by the failed political regime, and voiced the traumatic experience of women in the 1990s and the 2000s era. In all her novels, she shows female characters that try to challenge the patriarchal ideology set by the society they were brought into, and mostly these female characters are caught between two cultures, namely French and Algerian. The reason why all her protagonists are females is that she attempts to provide a multifarious interpretation of Algeria's eventful history.

Like many Maghrebian francophone writers, Malika Mokeddem claimed an exilic self-identification in her notion of belonging and not belonging because "the very ideal of nationhood and nationality have become problematic –even violent" (Orlando, 2011, p. 81). Similarly, Christopher Miller indicates in *Nationalists and Nomads* (1998) that the sociopolitical volatility of the postcolonial countries "have made issues of nationalism, nation, and nationhood come to the forefront of our attention" (p. 118). Accordingly, Mokeddem delivers discontent and unbelonging to the postcolonial Algerian government in her writings by denouncing the violence that prevailed. She writes in *La Transe des Insoumis*:

Je noircis des pages de cahier, d'une écriture rageuse. J'en aurais crevé si je n'avais pas écrit. Sans ces salves de mots, la violence du pays, le désespoir de la séparation m'auraient explosée, pulvérisée. Les

intégristes menacent de faire périr par le sabre ceux qui pèchent par la plume. Je fais partie de ceux qui, cloué à une page ou un écran, répondent par des diatribes au délabrement de la vie, aux folies des couteaux, aux transes des kalachnikovs. (Mokeddem, 2003 ; p. 39)

In another context, this passage by Nawal El Saadawi recalls a similar affirmation:

Writing is like killing, because it takes a lot of courage, the same courage as when you kill, because you are killing ideas, you are killing injustices, you are killing systems that oppress you. Sometimes it is better to kill the outside world and not kill yourself. (El Saadawi, 2010, p. 163)

Writing, according to Nawal El Saadawi, is the only weapon that breaks silence and violence against women. Practically, Mokeddem's entire oeuvre, including Des *Rêves et des Assassins* (1995), *N'zid (2001), Le Siécle des Sauterelles* (1992), and *L'interdite* (1993) expose the silence and the traumatic experiences that women go through to build their identity. However, what makes her protagonists different, is that they do not represent what Miller called the "cultural purity" (Miller, 2004, p. 33), but they display different degrees of hybridity in which their new identities are nuanced. Malika Mokeddem's protagonists, thence, are ambivalent as they oscillate between two poles, "in-between the claims of the past and the needs of the present" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 219).

In fact, most of her protagonists are brought into a milieu in which identities are defined as definite and static. However, these protagonists are characterized with identities that are in the process of becoming, even after facing trauma. From this perspective, a traumatized identity is intimately linked with the state of belong, being, an exile. Besides, Mokeddem's experiences of "unhomeliness", to use Bhabha's term, depict "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 9). These experiences are thus defined by reasons for exile and traumatic memories.

Equally, Mokeddem writes from the vantage point of 'third space', i.e. she displays a state of cultural in-betweeness, she is not limited to the geographical setting in which she writes.

Arguably, in Homi Bhabha's conceptualization, Malika Mokeddem develops a 'third culture' out of the already existing established cultures, namely Algerian and French.

In this state of in-betweeness, she takes some aspects from one culture (Algerian) and other aspects from another (French), which makes her detached from both, and neither cultures are fully accepted nor rejected. However, a discussion on the question of the language is necessary.

The use of the colonizer's language by most North African writers is still a debatable topic of discussion. Francophone writers molded the French languages to their own purpose, "rendering the French reader foreign in his own language" (Orlando, 2011; p. 86).

In other words, the languages is not an ideology, it is a means for francophone Maghrebian authors to express the sociocultural multiplicity of their societies. Moreover, Orlando argues that the language employed by these authors delivers "something more protean, changeable, and diverse, something able to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries precisely because of its ability to assimilate an ever-increasing diversity of speakers" (Orlando, 2011; p. 86).

This argument parallels with feminist scholars like Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristiva's ideas on re-appropriating the language to construct new identities. Schlosser holds: "Writers, and women writers in particular, must deconstruct linguistic rules and norms in order to make language work for them" (Schlosser, 2018, p. 20).

Accordingly, Malika Mokeddem sought to cope with trauma by writing in French. In fact, writing in French may also be seen as a resistance to the oppression of Mokeddem's country of origin –that is postwar Algeria. Writing in French does not however make Mokeddem less Algerian; she chose to write in the colonizer's language to embody her 'Algerianess' that is a separate entity of the ensemble oppression in Algerian (tradition, patriarchy, and neocolonial politicians) (Hamil, 2004; Miller, 2004).

Malika Mokeddem's novels are set in what Reiss called "paradoxical" geographies (Reiss, 2001, p. 81). What he meant by this statement is that Malika's female characters grow in a well-

loved geography that is also a place of captivity and torture. The paradox is in fact that this site of entrapments contains the means and tools for freedom and liberation.

Most of her novel are built in the desert, a space that belongs to the past of the nomadic immediate ancestors of her main characters, wherein the sea is the space of freedom and unbelonging, the space where her female characters are free and bound to no place. The desert is more of an embodiment of patriarchal culture and society whose violence has been perpetuated into temporary Algeria that is often aimed against women.

Furthermore, the desert's multilayered topography creates a palimpsest-like narrative that explores the cultural space of scripted knowledge that keeps memory alive despite the internal and external threats of trauma. The desert, according to Mehta (2014) has been view as a harsh space as well as the very source of growth by Arab writers and African writers. Malika expresses a very personal and intimate relationship to the desert in which she integrates the complexity of the human emotions and feelings in the form of nostalgia, fear, love, alienation, and liberation. Mokeddem's novels induce the power of the great *Sahara* as an immovable presence in her psyche by making it a dominant theme in her writings.

Malika Mokeddem inscribes the real and the imaginary in her writing as a literary testimony to the tragic events that Algerian went through during the 1990s and the 2000s. In fact, l'*Interdite* (1993) is inspired mostly by the author's life. The story of Sultana is also a testimony of a society torn between prejudice and progress, religion and fanaticism.

Indeed, the author depicts the picture of the woman, with the trauma she endures and all the sacrifices she makes to build herself and take back her freedom. She relates the *fate* reserved for women in Algeria in the 1990s marked by obscurantism, fanaticism and violence where a free woman, like Sultana the heroine, deserves death in the country of the fundamentalists.

However, she goes back in time well before the black decade and "remembers" the birth of this fundamentalism that has ravaged minds and lives. Thus, l'*Interdite* (1993) reflects in a rather

realistic way the life during this black decade. Mokeddem grafts the imaginary to the reality of a society that is in full mutation. In this sense, Sultana, the protagonist expresses her unbelonging to the place that once took her mother away from her. Sultana is separated from her mother (la mère) and her mother-country by the sea (la mer), which she crosses both literally and figuratively in loneliness and despair.

3.2.2. Trauma of Unbelonging and the Internally Displaced Identity of Sultana

In recent decades, comparatists like Laurie Vickroy and Bruce Robbins have documented a shift away from the exclusively national literatures and notions of place-bound culture. Increasingly, we are dealing with what Bruce Robbins calls "different modalities of situatedness-in-displacement (Robbins, 2009, p. 320) as exile, migration, and globalization have separated people from places and made conceptions of identity and origins less static and more mobile, fluid, and hybrid.

These conditions, however, raise questions on the relationship between self and culture, and feelings of belongingness to a place and/or places that dome people experience, particularly if the separation from the homeland is traumatic. This applies for Sultana, the protagonist in l'*Interdite* (1993), who was born and raised in the Algerian desert and fled to France after her mother was murdered by her father, and also by what Sultana considers a partner in this murder the socio-political crisis of the 1990s.

In this situation of displacement, Sultana ensured and fostered her survival though cultural adaptability and testimony. In the context of traumatic exile, Laurie Vickroy (2005) argues that a lost home can remain not only internally embedded as a place of origin and identity, but also of anguished unbelonging where the self is in a state of tormented chaos. Sultana in l'*Interdite*

(1993) is exemplary, specifically in how the traumas of oppression, dislocation, and unbelonging produce a fragmented, isolated, and dissociated self that is near to madness.

L'*Interdite* is Malika Mokeddem's third novel that narrates the tumultuous sudden return of a North African woman, Sultana, to Algeria, specifically to her village Aïn Nekhla, a marginal place that is situated "au sud des Suds" of the Algerian desert after hearing about the death of her former lover Yacine, a doctor like her (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 168). Sultana takes the next plane to Algeria, her country that she left fifteen years ago to study medicine in Oran and then in France, where she currently lives.

Her trip to Algeria during times of violent crisis illuminates her about her situation as a *femme interdite* and an exile. The opening sentence of the novel captures the entire essence of unbelonging and displacement of Sultana: "Je suis née dans la seule impasse du ksar[45]. Une impasse sans nom" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 11). This dead-end street is at once spatial and metaphysical because it projects a kind of imprisonment beyond which stretches the limitless space of the desert.

Sultana's life from the beginning progresses into an allegorical flight from restrictive definitions of the self. According to Hamil (2004), most Maghrebian novels written in French turn against their city of origin because it carries the traumatic past that led them to escape in the first place. In Le Passé Simple (1954), for example, Driss Chraibi, the Moroccan author, rejects the city of Fès, his city of origin: "Je n'aime pas cette ville. Elle est mon passé et je n'aime pas mon passé" (Chraibi, 1954, p. 54).

Accordingly, for writers like Chraibi and Mokeddem, the notion of home, belonging, homeland, and origins fell into pieces and dissolved for there is liberation of the self from the shackles of the patriarchal and traditional space that was once home. In l'*Interdite*, abandoning the *ksar* means abandoning or denying the trauma that caused Sultana to leave to France. Furthermore,

[45]Ksar is a village or a compound of small houses built of dirt that is famous among Sahara inhabitant.

her own displacement also mirrors other Algerian women's fragmented cultural and psychological life.

Like many trauma writers, Malika Mokeddem adopts a testimonial approach to bear witness for a suppressed past. L'*Interdite* for example carries imprints of overwhelming, psychologically disruptive events, where Sultana attempts to reshape cultural memory of these events in her focus on survival. In this context, Laurie Vickroy suggests that trauma narratives are personalized responses and do not follow a rigid path. In the case of Sultana, unlike Tanga in *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* by Calixthe Beyala and *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi who both experience different types of psychological trauma, her reaction to the emerging crisis of the 1990s, poverty, oppression in Algeria made her flee the country as a sense of unbelonging grew in her.

Vickroy contends that such traumas are human-made situations that implicitly "highlight postcolonial concerns with rearticulating the lives and voices of marginal people, and reveal trauma as an indicator of social injustice or oppression, as the ultimate cost of destructive sociocultural institutions (Vickroy, 2005, p. 110).

One, thus, considers l'*Interdite* as a testimonial narrative of not just one woman who has a certain type of trauma, but rather a voice of women that seeks to create a feeling of lived experience and express a "problematic collective situation" through a representative individual, that is Sultana (Beverley, 1989, p. 11).

Indeed, in listening to the testimonies of the other women in the village who have come not only to support her but also to support themselves, and by talking to Dalila, Sultana momentarily recovers from her past so she can start narrating this "rupture" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 50), that is losing her mother (and mother country at the same time) as well as losing her previous lover Yacine.

Through testimony, Sultana revisits memories of her father as well as her mother, and feels like she is home, but this fantasy ends at the strike of the memory of her mother's death, as well as her childhood. Traumatic memory, as stated in chapter one, is not stored like an ordinary memory, it is fragmented, dissociative, and lingers at the tip of consciousness to bring unpleasant sensation and feelings to the victim. This is seen in Sultana's multiple self because of a trauma that she experienced as a young girl. Going back to Ain Nekhla, Sultana re-plunges in anorexia and old traumatic memories came back to haunt her, especially when she read the sign that said "[Yacine], mort cette nuit" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 13). Sultana's traumatic memory disturbs her, as tries to resist it:

> Ma nausée s'était mise à bouillir, à me cuise. Pour l'apaiser, je me suis bercée aux souffles de la tramontane et du vent de sable, en moi mêlés. Je me suis menti : ce n'est qu'un cauchemar, un bélier noir entré par effraction dans le champ blanc de mon indifférence. Ce ne sont que mensonges ou hallucinations, nés de la rencontre de deux vents déments. Ce ne sont que des réminiscences, des ruades du passé sur le désert du présent. (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 13)

When Sultana was younger, she witnessed the accidental death of her mother after she has had a fight with her father. Sultana's father was influenced and grew fond of the extremist political party, what Sultana called "les faux dévots et des prophètes de l'apocalypse" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 148). Her father had already stopped playing with the pomegranates he bought for her: "il m'avait acheté des grenades…Il s'était mis à jongler avec des grenades. J'essayais de l'imiter. Il riait" (Mokeddem, 1933, p. 152), when her mother came back home. He accused her of cheating when Sultana's mother screamed: "Qu'est-ce qu'on t'a raconté? Ne comprends-tu pas qu'ils essaient de t'empoisonner la vie? Avec quel voisin j'étais cette fois ?" (Ibid, p. 152). After a huge fight with her husband, Sultana's mother fell on the ground, spilling her last breaths: "une repture la séparait désormais de nous. J'ai crié: *Oummi*[46]*! Oummi*" (Ibid, p. 152).

[46] Mother.

Sultana's tragedy did not stop when her mother passed away, her father left her, Sultana and her ailing sister, who passed away two days after her mother's interment. Ever since, Sultana developed a sense of detachment, and unbelongingness from her mother (country), her village, her origin, and herself.

Malika Mokeddem portrays this trauma of unbelonging as a narrational trope in an attempt for Sultana to come to grips with the lingering traumatic memories that still engulf her. Denial is certainly Sultana's first reaction to this trauma as she tries diligently to forget what happened, but it still haunts her: "mes yeux se sont effaces de tout. Je me suis effacée du présent" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 153). Consequently, when Sultana thinks about pomegranate, she cannot help but think about what her beloved father did to her, to her entire family. She also compares the growing pomegranate tree with the hackberry trees in her garden in that lose their leaves every autumn. Thinking about this "jardinage intérieur" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 161), these trees separated by space and time but mingled in Sultana's identity highlight her multifaceted self that is "à la fois ici et là-bas, l'autre et celle-là" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 161).

Sultana feels connected to Algeria and France at the same time, yet she is not attached to either, and she does not feel like she belongs to these places. Exile then, compounds her sense of fragmented self, which disturbs her deeply, and, like several traumatized individuals, she goes to the length to create or maintain a sense of agency or order. As Herman contemplates in *Trauma and Recovery*, traumatized victims have mixed feelings in their sense of belonging as well as their system of belief, that is why a traumatized person:

> faces a double task: not only must she rebuild her own "shattered assumptions" about meaning, order, and justice in the world but she also find a way to resolve her differences with those whose beliefs she can no longer share. (Herman, 2015, p. 178)

Thus, Sultana engages in repetitive behaviors such as going back to her past memories in order to act and feel a greater sense of wholeness, to overcome helplessness and fear, to resist oppression that she feels from the village's *fundamentalists.* Like other trauma narratives,

Malika testifies to her pain through Sultana, and calls readers to be the witness, that was unavailable for women in Algeria in the 1990s. Moreover, Sultana is haunted by her past and when the traumatizing memory revisits, its apparent on her body: "Sultana apparaît dans la lumière…Elle est assise au milieu des décombres. Ses yeux grands ouverts sont d'un vide terrifiant, hallucinant", "…Salah s'agenouille, la secoue, la frotte, la gifle. Elle ne bronche pas…elle ne réagit pas…elle ne bouge pas…elle grelotte et caque des dents. À la lumière, son visage est marbré et ses yeux dans l'insondable" (Mokeddem, 1993, pp. 150-51).

The trauma of unbelonging, both outside and inside Algeria, pervades Sultana's consideration of Algeria:

> Si l'Algérie s'était véritablement engage dans la voie du progrès, si les dirigeants s'étaient attelés à faire évoluer les mentalités, je me sis sans doute apaisée…mais l'actualité du pays et le sort des femmes, ici, me replongent sans cesse dans mes drames passés, m'enchaînent à toutes celles qu'on tyrannise. (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 155)

The situation in Algeria takes her back to the traumatic past that she tries to escape from to another country that ends up questioning it too: "la France pontifiante, tantôt Tartuffe, tantôt Machiavel, en habit d'humaniste, qu'importe" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 82). The result is a culturally hybrid Sultana, an Algerian who dwells internally in a cloud of nearness to the French culture. Vickroy contends that this kind of cultural hybridity is the result of a traumatic change shaped by a crisis or a revolution (Vickroy, 2002).

Mokeddem, then, associates here the plight of Sultana with that of other Algerians, women and men. In a way, Sultana is predestined to become an exile, a hybrid, a stranger, a *déracinée*: "j'ai grandi seule, anorexique et traquée avec une âme de saltimbanque tragique" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 154). As a nomad herself, Mokeddem comprises her writings with the psychological and cultural trauma germane to the condition of being an exiled writer (Hamil, 2004).

Notably, the complex issue of identity, and the general sense of lack, anxiety, unbelonging and displacement is reflected in most of Mokeddem's heroines. In l'*Interdite*, traumatic features of

exile are noticeable. These features include suffering the loss of homeland, but at the same time loathing it, a fragmented or diminished sense of self, a sense of homelessness and dislocation, isolation, and alienation. Much of this is represented through Sultana's attempts in retaining her identity as a doctor, a woman, and as Algerian. Her response to her trauma of unbelonging is manifested in an attempt to master this trauma, Freud and other have observed, but also can be an indicator of the emotional attachment to the past.

A significant trauma trait is that the victim feels helpless, diminished, and tainted, all apparent in Sultana. She is indeed disconnected from the place that had formed her life view and imagination, and she only carries "des fantômes sans visages" of her parents (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 154). According to Hamil (2004), disconnection and exile, be it voluntary or imposed, makes one obliged to detach her/himself from the place of origin (mother tongue and motherland). He argues: "Mokeddem is at once a North African woman who writes in French, and an exile who writes about her homeland from a distance" (Hami, 2004, p. 55).

This is reflected in Sultana's birth at the *ksar*, that is a site of ruin and abandoned by the villagers. The *ksar*, becomes what Bakhtin described as a chronotope in which time and space collapse to degree zero and it would allow the author, as well as the protagonist to turn against it (Hamil, 2004).

In this space, culture and identity become interchangeable without losing their relevance. In other words, identities and cultures can travel in time and space, and home becomes an imaginary space, a mental invention. For Sultana, home is a fractured memory, that even though it moves through space and time, it is still a traumatizing memory of a self that is lost and a country that is abandoned: "le feu de la nostalgie ne s'éprouve que dans l'éloignement. Revenir, c'est tuer la nostalgie pour ne laisser que l'exil, nu. C'est devenir, soi-même, cet exil-là, déshérité de toute attache" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 81).

Home for Sultana is an absent territory, and an "invention of the mind" (Hamil, 2004, p. 55). To express this unbelongingness and this state of exile, Sultana expresses that leaving, or staying are irrelevant:

> Partir encore? Quitter alors la France et l'Algérie? Transporter ailleurs la mémoire hypertrophiée de l'exil? Essayer de trouver un ailleurs sans racines, sans racisme ni xénophobie…Il n'est de refuge que précaire, dès que l'on est parti une première fois. Ailleurs ne peut être un reméde. (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 82)

This state of unbelongingness seem to haunt Sultana wherever she goes. However, she does not seem to let go of her origins: "je la sentais (her mother) toujours dans mon ombre, bruit silencieux, accroché à mes pensées et je ne parvenais pas à couper le fil invisible" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 153). Sultana's memory is at its peak when she is in this state of unbelonging, like Michel de Certau puts it: "like those birds that lay eggs only in the other epecies' nest, memory produces in a place that does not belong to it" (1984, p. 86). That is why Mokeddem represents exile as a painful experience that led Sultana to flirt with madness: "je ne me suis jamais sentie bien éloignée de la folie" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 154).

In l'Interdite, Mokeddem portrays Sultana as a figure who rejects the illusion of a stable origin and identity: "comment leur faire entendre que ma survivance n'est que dans le déplacement, dans la migration?" (1993, p. 161). Her trauma of unbelonging seperated her from her mother country, but it made her a rootless wanderer which is helping her overcome her anorexia and anxiety: "mon retour ici m'aura servi au moins à cela, à détruire mes derniers illusions d'ancrage" (Mokeddem, 1993, p. 161).

3.3. Trauma of Sexual Abuse and Rape in Tu t'Appelleras Tanga

3.3.1. Calixthe Beyala Breaking the Silence

Calixthe Beyala is one of the first African women writers who lifted the veil on the perilous issues regarding women's femaleness and her corporeality. In fact, her feminist stance on taboo subjects has shocked especially the male African readership with her *L'écriture dans la peau*[47] (Veit-Wild, 2005). This underlines Beyala's consideration of women's bodies as a gift not in a sexualized way, but more like feminized. In this way, as Halimi (2007) put it, Beyala breaks the patriarchal conceptions of the female body and draws the attention to women's self-awareness.

In doing so, Beyala highlights through her writings women's ability to articulate their experiences, and their understanding of the exterior as well as the interior world, and that this articulation cannot be done unless the silence imposed upon women is totally destroyed. Moreover, Beyala's plea to destroy the silence has been uttered through her definition of the act of writing. For her, writing is a weapon that allows means to find, define, and redefine one's place in the world. In an interview, Beyala contends :

> Je crois que dans l'écriture, on cherche avant tout à se connaître, à communiquer quelque chose qu'on a découvert et qu'on ne peut garder pour soi. C'est à la fois un accomplissement, une remise en cause permanente de soi et des autres. (Diallo, 1988)

It is obvious, in this way, that the Cameroonian writer Calixthe Beyala resists the silence imposed on women through writing about women's bodies. Halimi reflects on this matter: "The bodies, conceptualized as sites of resistance, then become for women, either individually or in

[47]Title of an interview with Calixthe Beyala by Tirthankar Chanda, in *Notre Librairie* (2003)

groups, ways through which they challenge the ideologies that perpetuate the unequal power distribution or the way power is implemented in a society" (Halimi, 2007, p. 16).

On the ways Beyala breaks the silence, exploring the concept of geographies of pain by depicting intimate space, language, and the body as sites of pain, exile, trauma and resistance to violence seem prominent. She turns her attention to internal sources of violence and, through her protagonists, condemn those who still focus solely on the external factors of violence. She asks questions like how can women successfully re-territorialize their violated bodies within the intimate spaces from which they have been exiled? How can they overcome linguistic limitations in expressing pain? Beyala sees linguistic violence as a means to liberate women and language obtains a healing role because writing itself functions as an act of resistance to trauma and an exercise of freedom (Halimi, 2007; Brown, 2008).

To resist this violence and trauma, Calixthe Beyala reveals how her protagonists empower themselves and other women through the act of witnessing and storytelling. In *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* (1988) for example, the protagonist Tanga, gives her body to the while Jewish woman Anne-Claude after so the latter become Tanga. This act shows women's empowerment, regardless their race, identity, color, or culture. According to Pius Ngandu Nkashma, the description of the psychical body in African texts "n'es pas seulement un cadre du décor, elle procède même de la thématique essentielle par laquelle se fonde la construction du roman" (Nkashma, 1997, p. 107).

In *TTT*, the discourse on the female body refers to the woman's desire to re-appropriate a body that has been somehow disassembled. Beyala's words describe a non-unified subjectivity whose foremost desire is the reunification of its mind and physical body. Her narrative explore extreme and painful connections between the violated female body and the search for a female subjective voice. Cultural taboos deny women a voice, a prohibition that leads most female

protagonists to madness and silence, like Tanga (Almeida, 1994; Halimi, 2007; Veit-Wild, 2005).

Cameroonian writer, Calixthe Beyala is well known for her depictions of psychological and graphic sexual violence inflicted upon her protagonists. Within the postcolonial framework, she is not only one of the most prolific women writers, but also the most controversial. Accordingly, Beyala's novels, especially *TTT* (1988), transgresses aesthetic boundaries as her protagonists, Tanga and Anna-Claude surpass the restrictions imposed by hegemonic discourse of femininity. In her 1988 novel, *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga*, Beyala Writes about the psychological trauma that drives women to madness in Western and African phallocratic societies.

On another interesting note, Calixthe Beyala has consistently confronted challenging topics as such of sexual violence her fiction. With the publication of her first novel *C'est le Soleil qui m'a Brûlée* (1987), it was noted that "la violence scripturaire du premier roman de Calixthe Beyala…a bousculé les habitudes du petit monde feutré de la littérature féminine africaine" (Chevrier, 2001 p. 22).

Beyala successfully redirected literature on violence that if one thinks about portrayal of violence in francophone African women's writing, Calixthe Beyala is among the first authors that come to mind. Gallimore goes so far as to propose that "la violence du texte comme moyen de réclamer le corps violé" (Gallimore, 1997, p. 92).

Moreover, Gallimore, like many other critics, in her extensive work on Beyala focuses on the atmosphere of violence that Beyala seeks to render: "pour la romancière camerounaise, la violence physique ou sexuelle fait partie de la vie de tous les jours dans l'Afrique post-coloniale" (Gallimore, 1997, p. 100).

Tu t'Appelleras Tanga is one of her earlierst novels that mostly represents violence and sexual assault, but mostly, in my opinion, shares the importance of remembering rape and sharing its narratives in a way that accommodate the victim-survivor model.

3.3.2. Sexual Abuse and Traumatic Loss of Tanga

If l'*Interdite* by Malika Mokeddem draws on the choice of displacement and unbelonging for women to find themselves and help the healing process, *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* exposes what happens to women when they are not privileged with having choices. However, this absence did not stop Tanga, the protagonist, from creating alternative and unconventional form of bond through a woman she encounters while imprisoned in an unnamed African country.

Several critics have noted a shift from the political to the psychological in Beyala's fictional oeuvre, especially in her novel *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* (Kalisa, 2009). Following the structure of a first-person confessional tale, Beyala's 1988 novel *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* is framed around two protagonists who have been imprisoned as a result of their "actions subversives" and both are arguably "folles". According to Bouchard (2007), their madness and hybrid identities is a result of past traumas. Nevertheless, this madness is considered as a form of resistance to both patriarchal norms as well as to the normative female construction of identity. Beyala's novel relates the story of these women's encounter, Anna-Claude and Tanga merge to become one woman, a surrealist depiction by Beyala who aims in drawing a universal picture of women's traumas and suffering. In addition, this image helps understanding the novel in a victim-survivor narrative that is rooted in the use of voice and testimony as narrative devices. The novel's psychology of the wounded mind resonates with contemporary trauma theory not only with regard to its representation of the pathological, but also with regard to issues of working through.

One reads Beyala's narrative as enacting a complex trauma of rape and sexual abuse, characterized by excessive indulgence in written self-expression and closely connected to the desire characteristic of trauma survivors to put into words the fragments of the past and the self. Moreover, the desire implicit in Beyala's narrative to (re)gain control though the process of

writing through point to a core concern of the novel: the text depicts and enacts different attempts at anatomizing, containing, and curing mental illness in women.

The novel opens with a conversation between Tanga, an African woman and former prostitute and Anna-Claude, a Belgian Jewish woman who has recently arrived in the African colony after leaving her job as a philosophy teacher in Paris. The dialogue takes place in a prison cell where Tanga is dying and Anna-Claude has been beaten badly by the prison guards. Both are imprisoned because they are considered as "element subversif et incontrôlable" (Beyala, 1988, p. 12).

While dying in a prison cell, Tanga shares her stories with Anna-Claude, a European woman. when one looks at Tanga's story, how she tells it, why she tells it, and what was it about, one notices that there is a relationship of transmission, whereby Anna-Claude will become her: "entre en moi…Donne-moi la main, tu seras moi…Tu t'appelleras Tanga" (Beyala, 1988, p. 14). Tanga's story only functions because there is the empathetic listener (Anna-Claude) who enables the trauma survivor (Tanga) to talk about her wounds and feel understood, in Hesford words, there is the necessary "audience to witness the survivor's story" (Hesford, 1999, p. 26). As she shares her story, Tanga suffers noticeably from characteristics of rape trauma syndromes. These include, but are not limited to, nightmares, flashback, fear of sex and fear of empty spaces. For example, Tanga recurrent nightmares, where she is haunted by the image of someone grabbing her, penetrating her, taking her inside and turning her around. She describes one nightmare in the following:

> Certaines nuits ou le sommeil râleur tient à distance, je vois surgir des fantômes qui m'entraînent dans leur paralysie… Ils me suivent, ils me persécutent, me heurtent. J'appelle mon père, j'appelle ma mère. Ils ne m'entendent pas. Je crie plus fort. Des monstres s'agglutinent autour de moi. Deux vautours à la place des yeux. Des cornes à la place des ongles. Ils me pénètrent, ils me lacèrent. Je vois mes tripes dans leurs mains. Ils rient des trous béants de leurs dents absentes. Ils attachent mes boyaux sur des amulettes et les suspendent au cou de mes parent. (Beyala, 1988, p. 42)

The nightmares says two things about Tanga's condition. She is unable to sleep and she is overwhelmed by these nightmares. The abuse that Tanga suffers at the "hands" of these monsters replicates the experience of sexual violence. Later, on learns that these monsters resemble her parents. Shortly after this, Tanga goes on to tell Anna-Claude about her father's abuse, although it is disclosed in ambiguous terms that describes the act of rape rather than naming it explicitly. Moreover, Tanga does not say that her father has raped her, instead, she describes the circumstances surrounding her rape and the atmosphere in her home and what happens later. Tanga describes her father as:

> Ainsi que l'homme mon père, qui plus tard, non content de ramener ses maîtresses chez nous, de les tripoter sous l'œil dégouté de ma mère *m'écartèlera les jambes au printemps de mes douze ans*…cet homme, mon père qui m'engrossera et empoissonnera l'enfant, notre enfant, son petit-fils, cet homme ne s'apercevra jamais de ma souffrance et pourtant cette souffrance a duré jusqu'au jour de sa mort, jusqu'au jour de ma mort. (Beyala, 1988, p. 46)

This brief description revolves around the perpetrator rather than on the actual rape or what the violates subject endures. Rape is not represented here, instead, it is implied as Tanga becomes more conscious and considers her father in relation to herself, rather than just her rapist. When she describes him as "cet homme, mon père", who impregnated her and poisoned the child, the accent is placed on a genealogy borne of violation. In some ways, this description demonstrates that Tanga nuances her view of the violation.

The core concern of the text is tracing the destructive impact of father-daughter incest and the loss of the father. This trauma of incest is manifested in a series of physical symptoms that Tanga endures and depicts a nuanced psychopathology of trauma that puts special emphasis on Beyala's complex identity crisis, calling attention to the tensions and paradoxes within an identity disturbed by trauma. Besides, incest remains "a taboo subject that has been historically denied or veiled by society, it is no wonder that the protagonist circumvents the topic", as Gisela discusses the ways that characters disclose in literary texts (Gisela, 1995, p. 116). According to

this view, is comes to no surprise that Tanga never utters the words rape or incest, even when she says her father violated her.

At the same time, it is important to note that this ambiguity is only in the first references to her violation, later on Tanga states clearly that her father raped her, which suggests that some form of progression takes place for her to frame what happened to her as rape. This evolving progression is fundamental in the witnessing and testimony process, as well as to the rape-survivor narrative.

Ultimately, the coupling of Tanga's dream and the incest foreground the psychological effects of rape because it presents her as a rape victim-survivor who still suffers from rape trauma syndrome (RTS), a specific form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to sexual violence. When Tanga dreams and redreams the assault, she asks herself if what she remembers is fantasy or reality—"est-ce le rêve qui m'assaille aujourd'hui ou est-ce le souvenir?" (Beyala, 1988, p. 43). Her inability to distinguish between the two shows that she has been traumatized by the events to the point that it collapses dream and reality into overlapping experiences.

Likewise, this hesitation reflects common emotions, such as self-blame and self-doubt, that surface in the aftermath of rape. Much of the scholarship on trauma in the aftermath of violence details how survivors relive trauma and are, at times, unable to discern whether or not they were actually violated or if it is the dream that violates them.

As it has been elaborated in chapter one, trauma studies' focus on the unspeakability of the event is more challenging when applied to sexual violence. Van der Kolk (2014) contends that the inability to express this trauma act as another way to deny the testimonies of victim-survivor. That is why, in this case, psychoanalysis is the preferred frame through which trauma studies specialists have made claims about the role of the traumatic past in the living present (Herman, 2015; van der Kolk, 2014; Horvitz, 2000). On the one hand, it is true that "psychoanalysis recognizes that the question of what was real and what was imagined is often

difficult to determine, particularly in regard to traumatic events," as Tanya Horeck argues in *Public Rape* (Horeck, 2004, p. 6).

Yet in *Tu t'appelleras Tanga*, the dialectic between real and imagined is more than one of the impacts of trauma, it is also a literary device that hazes the lines of the novel and calls into question the survivor's experience. By questioning herself whether what she experienced actually occurred, Tanga calls attention to how rape victim-survivors function in society where their stories are evaluated based on believability. This dynamic evokes the problem of victim-blaming, a social practice that has become one of the most common ways of dealing with those who disclose sexual violence. As Sharon Lamb (1999) has argued, victim-blaming not only deprives victims of their power, but also refuses the perpetrators of their agency.

When Tanga is sexually assaulted again in the novel (this time, as an adult), the horrendous event serves as a trigger that brings back the abuse of her childhood. Tanga subsequently relays an episode that occurs as she sleeps with her father one night as "l'enfance égorgée. La vie éventrée. Un souvenir" (Beyala, 1988, p. 92). She begins with a story that is the result of a trigger revealing a pattern of brokenness that is textual and thematic.

The fragmented nature of these phrases emphasizes Tanga's broken memory. Here the sexual interaction with another man in the present reminds Tanga of the violent childhood sexual trauma in her past. By showing the imbrications of the past on the present as a result of trauma, I am evoking the inextirpable relation between traumatic memory and everyday experience. While this instance can clearly be cast as a trigger indicating "[trauma's] very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on," in the context of Tanga's life, they are extended in length and duration (Caruth, 1996, p. 4).

The example of Tanga's remembering of the past shows that it is an unassimilated event—she cannot differentiate from the experience of sexual assault and her current sexual interactions.

Remembering in this way, Tanga displays one of the most common features of survivors of sexual assault, who experience triggers throughout their lives. At the same time, this example demonstrates the failure of the word "trigger" to capture this experience.

If triggers are especially recurrent and traumatic in the case of survivors, such as Tanga, who is forced into a life of sexual exploitation, they also suggest a brief, punctuated experience with trauma whose temporality is not extended. In contrast, the recurrence of trauma in Tanga's life in both its number and length offer a different type of return to the traumatic event. This view of the extended trigger and the moments of respite from them support my conceptualization of the victim-survivor, for whom healing is attainable and yet elusive.

A significant element of the victim-survivor narrative is how the protagonist is positioned in relation to the story's telling. The novel's progression centers around the notion of *histoire*—Tanga's retelling of her own story. As the dying protagonist responds to Anna-Claude's questions, she stitches together memories that constitute her life.

The creation of her story is rooted in one traumatic memory after another and, as she passes the story on, Tanga often refers to the phenomenon of remembering that gives energy to her narrative. Her experience is both the collection of her own memories and a history of brokenness—a personal history of trauma and violence that combine to form her narrative.

This process of telling embraces both definitions of the word *histoire,* which in the original French is translated as "story" and "history." Tanga alternates between each definition, vacillating seamlessly between the two.

In Beyala's novel, history is brought in where Tanga begins her story—by providing the background of her mother and grandmother. The history that Tanga's story also invokes is a genealogy of suffering across three generations of violated women.

Like Sultana, Tanga is initially a reluctant storyteller because Anna-Claude must beg her to speak any words at all and more so to tell her story. According to Anna-Claude, telling and

retelling empowers the speaker; by allowing her story to live on through Anna-Claude, Tanga empowers herself.

In this view, passing the story on allows her to heal and allows her story to be remembered. As the book's title indicates, it is only when she becomes convinced that her story can be carried on in Anna-Claude that Tanga decides to share, so that she can transmit it to Anna-Claude in order to be rid of it. Anna-Claude even offers herself as someone who can take Tanga's burdens up for her. Tanga's initial reluctance is not her only misgiving, shortly after beginning to speak, she interrupts herself because she is displeased by *how* Anna-Claude listens. Her interruption signals that Tanga occupies the position of power as she tells her story.

This relationship is especially important when we consider the problematic politics of listening in the context of survivor stories. Listening calls for a speaker and a listener and often, in the case of survivor stories, personhood is construed in relation to being heard. According to this dynamic, recognition is conferred on the speaker, who is in need of the listener to validate her story and, by association, her self. By intervening in her own story to correct her listener, Tanga refuses to be a mere spectacle of suffering consumed for Anna-Claude's humanity.

Although Anna-Claude is the catalyst for unleashing the narrative, as the speaker, Tanga is in the position of privilege to decide whether or not to share her story and how much of it she should disclose. Tanga appears as an empowered, speaking subject, endowed of her own personhood, who can choose whether or not the text advances. This version of the protagonist is quite different from the tortured and suffering Tanga that emerges throughout the course of the novel.

By refusing to speak and then disclosing her past, Tanga displays the ambiguity that victim-survivors may feel about telling their stories. Beyala puts the pace of telling in Tanga's hands, allowing her to move between the modalities that suit her in different moments. Language also plays a crucial role, because Tanga expresses her story in the idiom that suits her. Throughout

Beyala's work, a brash use of language is also deployed to convey violence and the harshness of the urban space.

According to Nicki Hitchcott, in *Calixthe Beyala: Performances of Migration*:

> Describing women as *les fesses* and men as *la crasse*, Beyala's writing is designed to shock. Her writing is packed with expletives, slang, and sexually graphic vocabulary. . . . While the language is violent and crude, it is necessary to convey the brutality of the situation. (Hitchcott, 2006, p. 23)

Ultimately these interactions between Tanga and Anna-Claude disturb our ability to read the latter as a Western-designated subject or vehicle for the articulation of Tanga's story.

Memory forms the cornerstone of how *histoire* composes the rape victim-survivor narrative, *histoire* is the profound product of memory, the place where trauma lurks. By reconstituting memory from this evaluative perspective, Tanga reexamines the trauma in an effort to surmount what she endured. It is tempting to forget and obliterate the memories, an impulse she conveys as occurring violently, "pour survivre, il faut enjamber le gouffre de l'oubli. TRANCHER. Couper. Donner un coup de pied dans la famille " (Beyala, 1988, p. 103).

Tanga's words highlight another point that further establishes her story as a victim-survivor narrative, the use of memory as a motor for healing processes. Despite the desire to forget, she encourages herself to remember by telling her story, demonstrating the significance of acts of remembering. Yet to remember at all means that she must see herself as a victim even though memory, when linked to healing, can also mark her as a survivor. Psychoanalyst Judith Lewis Herman aptly describes how survivors handle trauma remaining in the aftermath of sexual assault:

> The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. . . . Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word "unspeakable. . . ." Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried . . . Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims . . . far too often secrecy prevails, and the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom. (Herman, 2015, p. 54)

In contrast, for Tanga, the story of the traumatic event is both a verbal narrative and a symptom, marking her as both a victim and a survivor. In the contours of her *histoire*, there is *fuite*/flight—the possibility of escape represents another space of hope for Tanga, because of which we understand her as a survivor.

For her, *fuite* is not simply running away to escape her problems, it is also a wildly improbable solution to them that is anchored in an imaginative leap. We know that, for Tanga, the chance to flee is actually an implausible option because "within the framework of her village, Tanga has no alternatives; she is trapped by an economic system that enshrouds her in the fiercest indignities known to girl-children" (Darlington, 2003, p. 47).

This is evident in the circumstances of her life—as her parents' only source of income, the likelihood that Tanga would be able to go free diminishes. *Fuite* becomes an even more elusive concept when we consider that the protagonist is trapped within her prison cell; contained in every situation, Tanga has very few realistic options. Moreover, our protagonist is also slowly dying, a predicament that makes fleeing physically impossible. Yet Tanga repeatedly entertains the notion that she will be able to flee and appears to find great solace in even pronouncing these thoughts:

> Fuir. Fuir. Fuir. J'aime la fuite. J'aime mon corps de fuite. Je ne sais plus en ces moments-là si je suis folle ou simplement étrangère à moi-même. J'aime les moments où je pars sans avoir préparé mes bagages ou acheté un titre de transport. Je ne trébuche plus sur les couleurs, le corps ne m'exalte plus. Seul compte l'esprit. Être l'esprit, regarder le monde, attester, conserver les vrais pas. J'aime ces moments où je peux me pencher sur l'enfant que j'aurais pu être, soulager ses peines de mon soufflé. (Beyala, 1988, pp. 57–58)

The three-way invocation of the infinitive form reads as a type of instruction and an imperative. The separation of each iteration into its own sentence emphasizes the isolated nature of the thought. As Tanga artfully reflects on her deepest desires, the structure of the passage closely resembles a poem. There is the transition from the action verb to the noun to the embodiment

of the action itself, wherein Tanga's body becomes a "*corps de fuite*." The embodiment of flight, she becomes what is created in her imagination. As an embodied movement, flight becomes linked to both healing and survival. This fleeing that Tanga longs for can also be read as a fleeing from the body, mirroring the act of disassociation that allows her to separate from the experience of sexual trauma. Within this system, she is not only prone to flight, but is also in the midst of fleeing.

The possibility becomes more real as we go from learning that Tanga is fleeing to knowing that she possesses a body of flight. She embodies the concept of flight, because of which she is able to overcome her current circumstances. Flight allows her to reach back into the past and relive her childhood. Flight is an imagined ideal. Thus, we see that Tanga is able to escape because of the imaginary, something that exists far outside of the realm of possibility, but that nonetheless is able to offer her comfort. Both the daydreams and the desire to flee bring to light the significance of the subconscious in the formation of her *histoire*.

For the protagonist, *histoire* is a fluid, dynamic mode of thinking rather than a fixed comprehension of her life and place on the earth. Tanga constantly formulates and edits her *histoire*, as she has been doing for the duration of her life. Reconfiguring her *histoire* enables a type of *prise de conscience*—Tanga transforms when she realizes that her *histoire* has repeated itself. The realization is profound and instrumental in the creation of her victim-survivor narrative ". . . je comprends soudain que jusqu'ici, je suis entrée dans des histoires qui se ressemblent . . . mais qu'aujourd'hui je veux les épisodes suivants, ceux qui libéreront la femme et enterreront à jamais l'enfance morte" (Beyala, 1988, p. 32).

The "suddenly" she mentions is the present moment, her reality in the prison cell and decision to share her story with Anna-Claude. Recognizing the patterns within her own *histoire* provides Tanga with critical distance from her life—having undergone shock therapy, she can consider her narrative more objectively than before and claim ownership of it according to her own

terms. Through self-definition and from this distance she is able to contemplate the events in her life and achieve a better understanding of her entire self—a *femme-fillette*, abused, impoverished, imprisoned, violated, prostituted, and dying, but with budding self-awareness. This enhanced understanding of self allows her to self-actualize and reach a subjectivity that was heretofore unavailable to her.

In this final recognition, Tanga literally imagines a world without violence through stories that do not overlap and intersect the traumatic experiences of violence. Tanga's words, here, give voice to a sentiment that takes us even beyond the victim-survivor narrative to a newly formulated possibility that accounts for both without limiting her to either one.

In *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* (1998), Beyala carefully tread the path between voice and voicelessness, silence and speaking, and survival and victimization, while actively showing the possibilities that creative writing offers in the representation of rape.

In this context, rather than thinking about the novel in the context of war or in terms of its graphic descriptions of violence, which have, according to Halimi (2007), come to characterize much of Africa, women's writing, my purpose lays in isolating 'victim-survivor' narrative as a literary trope.

3.4. Trauma of Domestic Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi's *Purple Hibiscus*

3.4.1. Chimamanda Ngozi and the West African Voice

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is easily noticed by her engaging voice that has bridged the gap between new and old Nigerian literature. She, indeed, introduced new motifs and narrative varieties that has energized contemporary African fiction since her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). According to Emenyonu (2017), Ngozi has established herself through *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) and *The Thing Around your Neck* (2009) as "Africa's pre-eminent story teller who

uses her tales to give meaning to the totality of the world as she perceives it" (Emenyonu, 2017, p. 1). Moreover, Adichie has been able to represent needs, dreams, traumas, peculiar circumstances, hopes, and aspirations to different people across racial and linguistic boundaries. Most of all, she inspires young people through her talks, blogs, and musings of social media. She even held workshops for creative young writers (Emenyonu, 2017).

'We should all be feminist' she powerfully proclaimed in a TED talk on 29 April 2013, providing insightful and somehow controversial feminist perspectives on different aspects of life. Reportedly viewed more than two million times, the influential speech became a published work form (Adichie, 2014) and was selected in December 2015 by the Swedish government to be distributed for free "to every 16-year-old student in the country to validate and enhance gender equality as one of the cornerstones of the Swedish society" (Emenyonu, 2017, p. 2).

In the speech, Adichie delivered salient points on new perspective on feminism. She holds:

> Gender matters everywhere in the world. And I would like today to ask that we should begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. And this is how to start: we must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently. (Adichie, 2014, p. 25)

Throughout the 48-page booklet, Adichie demonstrates the pragmatic ways every individual should follow to raise their children in a different way to achieve 'fairness'.

Through her novels, Adichie examines the tragic marks of the Nigerian History and recalls Africa in general. Although she did not witness the Nigerian war (she was born seven years after the war), her creative imagination brought together her visions to bear on a most complicated and unprecedented event in Nigerian History. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, she narrated the ugly parts of the war based on the memories of her parents. She acknowledged her parents in these powerful words:

> However, I could not have written this book without my parents. My wise and wonderful father, Professor Nwoye James Adichie, *Odelu Ora Abba,* ended many stories with the words *agha ajoka*, which in my literal translation is 'war is very ugly'. He and my defending and devoted mother, Mrs. Ifeoma Grace Adichie, have always wanted me to know, I think, that what matters is not what they went

through but that they survived. I am grateful to them for their stories and for so much more. (Adichie, 2007, p. 542)

Indeed, Adichie brought incredible impetus on the writings of the Nigerian Civil War, its content, narrative, and historical relevance, points that made her book *Half of a Yellow Sun* a great Nigerian Civil War novel. Similarly, Anyanwu stresses the importance of Adichie's contribution to the remaking of the Nigerian History. He postulates:

Adichie emerges one of those great reminders in a Nigeria where collective amnesia has become a major malaise, with History pushed aside as a subject in secondary schools; and, like a faithful disciple in adherence to the master's voice or, rather, a literary offspring who grew up in the same house her forebear lived in at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Adichie dubs Half of a Yellow Sun 'my refusal to forget'. (Anyanwu, 2017, p. 149)

Comparably, Malika Mokeddem expressed similar thoughts in l'*Interdite*. In Sultana's return to Algeria, Mokeddem refuses to forget and be part of the collective amnesia of the 1990s crisis imposed on Algerian, and on women in particular. In *A Kind of Paradise,* Silvana describes Achidie's uniqueness and artistic skill:

The creative singularity of the work of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie seems resistant to theoretical interpretation, being always already informed by the translation of complex thoughts in a language and a form of writing whose goal is to communicate to her public, a vast audience, a global readership. (Carotenuto, 2017, p. 169)

In this sense, Adichie finds the perfect and just language to utter and narrates stories of trauma and difficult realities, which Carotenuto (2017) describes as best manifestations of agency, responsibility, and writing. Furthermore, she compares Adichie to spectacular names in the postcolonial discourse like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Fred Moten, and Hélène Cixous. Each of these names offered a platform to read and represent the postcolonial subject. Edward Said for example offers configuration of "intellectual organicity" (Carotenuto, 2017, p. 170). Spivak invites one to investigate the limits, and sometimes the limitlessness of literature. Cixous recounts women's resistance to the patriarchy through laughing in its face.

For her part, Adichie is a remarkable storyteller with an enjoyable language who challenges the single story of the West, that remains to her patriarchal. To challenge, and most of all to resist this patriarchy, Adichie offers her audience themes of memory and utopia to highlight the 'multitude'[48] of women's stories. In doing so, she exposes the dangers, erasure, disengagement, contradiction of history and society toward women. In fact, Adichie does not exclude other individuals from her arguments. In an article entitled *The Role of Literature in Modern Africa*, Chimamanda Ngozi voices the experience of many formerly colonized people, stating:

> We are people conditioned by our history and by our place in the modern world to look towards 'somewhere else' for validation, to see ourselves as inhabitants of the periphery. I am not merely referring to political expressions like 'Third World', but to the phenomenon of being outside the centre in way more subtle than mere politics, in ways metaphysical and psychological. (Adichie, 2010, p. 26)

Adichie in the quote above contends that the notion of the centre/periphery has shaped the history of Africa and created the concept of otherness. This disjuncture is represented through Adichie's mastery of "ambiguous and oppositional language carefully delivering critical social issues through over and implied meanings" (Ndula, 2017, p. 31).

The Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has also great impact on voicing and resisting the silence imposed on Nigerian women. Notably, Terry Eagleton (2002) described women's silence not as not being "incapable of adequately speaking a language, rather they are referring to social and cultural pressures" (Eagleton, 2002, pp. 16-17).

However, Adichie does not interpret silence as a negative disposition, she creates protagonists like Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* who are silenced, yet able to demonstrate that silence and resist it.

Being a natural storyteller, Adichie tackled different themes in her novels, from motherhood and parenthood, to the body image, to the family and private life, and to forms of internalized

[48]In her *The Dangers of a Single Story* (2013), Adichie points to the multiple angles and facades of women's stories. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

violence and silence. As a result of the latter, trauma of domestic violence characterizes her protagonist Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus*, who has been abused by her parents' decisions, especially by her catholic father. As a result of her trauma, Kambili is extremely shy and crippled by silence, which does not only affect her, but her entire family.

3.4.2. Trauma of Domestic Violence in *Purple Hibiscus*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is one of the recent African literary texts that deploy a testifying child to provide insightful looks on the physical and psychological abuse and forms of domestic violence to which many African children are exposed.

The exploration of Kambili, the protagonist in *Purple Hibiscus* is an exploration of the psychological state of the child hero. Adichie's 2004 novel explores the consequences of domestic abuse on Kambili Achike, a maturing Nigerian teenager entrapped in a home with an abusive zealot of a father, a passive mother, and an older brother who is also helpless.

Like Tanga in *TTT* and Sultana in *l'Interdite*, Kambili's selfhood becomes dictated by her relationship with trauma, in her case, her father's physical and psychological abuse. It is only once the psychological and physical trauma is temporarily relieved through a visit to her Aunt Ifeoma's house that Kambili is able to be herself in her own terms rather than submit to her father's patriarchal requirements of womanhood.

Purple Hibiscus belongs to the genre of Bildungsroman, a story that "chronicles the transition from self-ignorance to self-discovery and self-awareness" within the formative years of psychological growth (Eromosele, 2013, p. 99).

The novel follows Kambili's journey from a voiceless disciple of her father's extremist Catholic doctrine to an agent of her own emotions, thought processes, and well-being. Kambili's self-discovery is catalyzed by the time she spends in Nsukka under the influence of the surrogacy

parenting of her Aunt Ifeoma, a widowed lecturer raising three kids, and Father Amadi, a local Nsukka Catholic priest.

By temporarily escaping her father's abuse and militant Catholic parenting, Kambili's gender performance undergoes drastic changes, and she is able to find her voice and reinvent her identity once she enters the democratic environment. Kambili narrates the novel, and her narration is that of an eighteen-year-old woman looking back on her journey for selfhood over the past three years.

The novel is divided into four sections, each describing a different part of Kambili's journey of redefining her gender performance. The largest section depicts Kambili as a voiceless, asexual teenage girl who blindly loves her father despite his abuse. Kambili repeats the phrase, "my words would not come" throughout the first half of the novel in reference to situations where Eugene's conditioning has made her too afraid and incapable of producing language amongst her peers and within the domestic realm (Adichie, 2004, pp. 48-97-139).

Simple tasks, such as saying the pledge at school, render Kambili speechless because of her father's indoctrinated idea that having a voice equates to a transgression against his authority and ultimately God's authority. This inability to vocalize thoughts and emotions leaves Kambili without friends because her silence causes her peers to deem her a "backyard snob" (Adichie, 2004, p. 51).

The girls in Kambili's class believe that Kambili's silence is a consequence of her family's aristocratic position rather than a consequence of the constant threat of physical abuse that leaves "parallel marks on [her] face and ringing in [her] ears for days" (Adichie, 2004, p. 51).

Eugene's patriarchal rule and the impending threat of violence renders Kambili literally speechless, and it is not until Kambili distances herself from her father's power that she begins to find her ability to use language. The escape from Eugene's patriarchal power and entrance into democracy leads to Kambili's discovery of her subjectivity.

Eugene's reign of terror extends past stifling Kambili's voice; it additionally paralyzes her sexuality, which she should begin to discover at the age of fifteen. Through violent punishment, Eugene ensures that the female reproduction systems of Kambili and Beatrice, Kambili's mother, are always considered subordinate in relation to religion (Ashcroft, 2012, p. 315).

Eugene justifies his "persistent emotional and physical abuse [by suffusing it] with the vocabulary of love and faith" (Wallace, 2012, p. 471). In other words, Eugene abuses his family members but justifies this abuse through excuses of love and his desire for his family to remain pure in God's eyes. This is exemplified when he beats his entire family because they allowed Kambili to break the Eucharist fast in an attempt to relieve her menstrual cramps (Adichie, 2004, p. 102).

Similarly, Beatrice asks to remain in the car when visiting a British priest after mass because of morning sickness due to pregnancy, and Eugene meets this request with a brutal beating that results in the death of an unborn child. After this abusive episode, Eugene forces the family to pray for the forgiveness of Beatrice's sins because Eugene believes she deserved the beating and he is merely assisting God in keeping Beatrice morally pure. Thus, feminine sexuality becomes stifled in the Achike home by "Eugene's abuses [that] connect Christian fundamentalism with a fear of the body and sexuality" (Eromosele, 2013, p. 100).

Eugene relates sexuality with sin, meaning that Eugene's rigid religious beliefs negate any type of sexuality within the developing Kambili and within Beatrice. The body is a source of power for both women, a power that Eugene is threatened by and must smother in order to maintain patriarchal power. Eugene's attempt to strip away Kambili and Beatrice's sexuality means that a significant part of their gender performance is rendered mute, and they cannot fully embody womanhood without access to their own sexuality.

Under the strict living conditions engrained into her by her father, Kambili's gender performance also becomes controlled by Eugene through her physical appearance. Eugene's

religious beliefs dictate Eugene's fear of the body and cause him to obscure Kambili's physical body through modest clothes and a ban of anything that could enhance beauty (Eromosele 100). Kambili is always expected to wear skirts and dresses in order to conceal her legs because any kind of "vanity was a sin" (Adichie, 2004, p. 175).

In addition, Kambili never wears makeup and has never even attempted to use makeup while living in Eugene's home. Eugene manipulates Kambili's gender performance within the psychological, sexual, and physical through his religious zealousness in order to maintain his patriarchal power.

Eugene permits Kambili and Jaja to visit their Aunt Ifeoma and cousins, Obiera, Amaka, and Chima, and the limited time that Kambili spends there is enough to catalyze her rebellion against complete acceptance of Eugene's dictatorship and to develop her personal identity as a woman, Nigerian, and Christian within her own terms. The experiences of movement and contact with other worlds expose Kambili to the possibilities of womanhood because she begins to see how other women, women who are not continually abused by men, perform their daily lives. However, Kambili's fight for autonomy takes place gradually, and her first experiences in Nsukka are surrounded by fear, fear of her father finding out about the "sins" occurring within Ifeoma's household, as well as the fear of being away from Eugene because of the love she feels for him regardless of his abuse. Eugene's patriarchal power impacts Kambili until she is exposed to the democratic values practiced within Ifeoma's home. Kambili's gender performance becomes altered because of her exposure to role models such as Ifeoma and the "freedom to be, to do" that accompanies the environment of Ifeoma's household (Adichie, 2004, p. 16).

In order to best understand the catalyst of Kambili's self-discovery, it becomes necessary to compare and contrast the private home environment in Enugu, where Kambili has lived her entire life under her father's control, with the private domestic environment that Ifeoma creates

in Nsukka. Adichie deliberately chooses Aunt Ifeoma, a woman, to be the incendiary agent that provokes Kambili's identity awakening because Ifeoma is a self-sufficient single mother who provides for her family and parents her children through negotiation and explanation, rather than the violence that Eugene uses within his home (Kearney, 2012, p. 140).

This demonstration of independence and democratic values exposes Kambili to a new performance of womanhood. Ifeoma becomes a feminist figure within the novel and fights for the autonomy for women through the system of belief that women must maintain elements of independence. This is illustrated when she reflects on the fact that her female students are getting married at young ages:

> What is the use of a degree, they ask me, when we cannot find a job after graduation…Six girls in my first-year similar class are married, their husbands visit in Mercedes and Lexus cars every weekend, their husbands buy them stereos and textbooks and refrigerators, and when they graduate, the husbands own them and their degrees. Don't you see? (Adichie, 2004, p. 75)

Ifeoma advocates her belief that women must have some type of independence in order to have control of their own life. Meanwhile, Eugene strips women of all autonomy within his home, and Kambili lacks any independence until moving into Ifeoma's home. The reader's first interactions with Ifeoma include a description of her "cackling, hearty" laughter and a scene in which Ifeoma tugs at Kambili's breast, remarking, "Look how fast these are growing!" (Adichie, 2004, pp. 71-72).

Ifeoma refuses "Eugene's unbridled religious hegemony," and she challenges his expectations of women's gender performance, in Eugene's own home, within two pages simply through laughter and the acknowledgement that Kambili is a maturing young woman (Okuyade, 2011, p. 250).

Thus, Ifeoma immediately becomes recognizable as an example of an alternative model of the way women perform gender in Nigeria, meaning that Kambili's exposure to this new type of performance will ultimately have a significant impact on her identity and personhood.

Conclusion

This chapter looked into the different psychological traumas of selected African women's writings. In the case of post-traumatic testimony, Sultana's, Tanga's, and Kambili's sense of identity is produced in two ways: first, privately, through the construction of a coherent, listenable narrative of a traumatic experience, and second, publicly, by sharing that narrative through a testimonial act.

However, this was not possible for the protagonists to voice their wounds until they found another individual who listens. Notably, in l'*Interdite*, Sultana could voice her trauma when she started practicing medicine in the village Ain Nekhla. Listening to the traumas of other women made her open up about her own. Sultana suffers from trauma of unbelonging. When she was younger, her father murdered her mother in front of her eyes, and since her mother's dead, she felt detached from her (mother)country, as well as from herself.

Tanga in *TTT*, becomes vocal about her trauma when another woman was there to listen. Anna-Claude provided comfort for Tanga so she can slowly destroy the silence around her rape. This particular image demonstrates women's empowerment, regardless of race or religious orientation.

Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* represents an every young woman's struggle in a patriarchal society. This novel was particularly useful because it depicted domestic violence and its impact on young women. In societies like Nigeria and Algeria, family is regarded as a sacred and spiritual realm, wherein the father, or any male in the family has the last say. This patriarchal understanding is described in *Purple Hibiscus*, and how it affected Kambili psychologically. Kambili is traumatized by her father's behavior, who beats her, her mother, and her brother. She only becomes vocal about her trauma when she is at her aunt Ifeoma who provides save haven for her.

Indeed, understanding experiences of psychological trauma demands listening to the wounds according to their political, social, and historical specificities. At the same time, those listening may have certain expectations regarding the testimony they are about to hear, so that survivors, anticipating those anticipations, may further edit and construct their painful experiences into a form they consider *bearable* for their audience. This point will be further elaborated in chapter four, especially in relation to the reader and s/he interprets the wounds of others.

Chapter 4

African Women's Trauma Narratives as a Cultural Negotiation: Towards New Ways to Reading Cognition and Emotions of Oppression

Introduction

This last chapter studies approaches of narratology that provide analytical tools to help identify how women writers produce textual material that stimulates readers to envision mental states of the characters. Through the medium of writing, that is, in essence, a process that involves negotiating culture in one way or another. The written text is a result of the interplay of culture, negotiation and the scriptural process that gives it form.

Narratives occupy an important role in literature, particularly when it is seen as a site in which individuals narrate personal experiences. Various cognitive-oriented narrative scholars such as Suzanne Keen, Martin Hoffman, and Alan Palmer regard narrative as an important organizing principle through which human life and the self can be understood. Such narrative scholarss have argued that challenging experiences, such as traumatic episodes, create a rupture in the self-narrative in such a way that the practice of narration is seen as unaccomplished, thus unnarratable.

In this chapter, an examination of the way in which the relation between the self, narrative and trauma is theorized in different psychological theories, paying particular attention to how narrative coherence activate readers emotions and cognition. Deploying familiar literary elements, trauma fiction creates constructs of the trauma experience through prototypically imagined situations and symptoms. Furthermore, it highlights how trauma is enacted in different cultures and societies, and how it creates an empathic relationship between the women author, reader, and protagonist. The chapter thus connects the two main insights of the dissertation: firstly, that practices of writing are embedded in various power relations that regulate and influence how one narrates one's self and experiences, and secondly, that such imagined traumas and wounds may creates feelings of empathy.

In this vein, this chapter attempts to answer questions like do authors' intended effects, such as creating awareness or empathy in readers succeed? And how do readers' understandings depend on contending with narrators' and characters' viewpoints ?

4. From Unnarratability to Narratability of Trauma in the Selected Novels of Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi

In an article entitled When *We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision*, Adrienne wrote:

> For writers, and at this moment for women writers in particular, there is the challenge and promise of a whole new psychic geography to be explored. But there is also a difficult and dangerous walking on the ice, as we try to find language and images for a consciousness we are just coming into, and with little in the past to support us. (Rich, 1972, p. 19)

As it has been discussed throughout the three previous chapters, giving voice to the experience of trauma is fundamentally an act of re-telling, re-structuring, and re-forming through the medium of writing. However, as Rich's quote indicates, trying to find the right words to voice the wounds is not an easy task, especially for women writers. In fact, trauma narratives, as discussed in chapter one, question the possibility of verbalizing the unspeakable, narrative the unnarratable, and making sense of the incomprehensible. Luckhurst remarks at this point that trauma "issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 79). In other words, trauma is a challenge to language, narrative, and understanding.

Most trauma texts, in one way or another, point to the "narrative/anti-narrative tension at the core of trauma", that is, to the tensions between "narrative *possibility*" and "*impossibility*" (Luckhurst, 2008, pp. 80-83). L'*Interdite*, *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga*, and *Purple Hibiscus* negotiate these tensions, placing varying degrees of emphasis on the potentials and limitations of language and narration in relation to trauma. In this vein, Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi seem to have understood that traumatic experiences demand engagement, dedication, and discerning on the limits of representation.

The traumatic events in the selected novels are presented in each writer's own way; Mokeddem chose to voice the trauma of unbelonging and the displacement of most women in the period following the Algerian independence. Beyala's novel tackles the deep effects of sexual abuse

and rape, and how it can alter women's psyche through Tanga. Tanga in this case is not just a woman sharing her traumatic experience of rape, but the story of every women who endured such events, especially when society considers these topics as a taboo. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie expressed the necessity the shed the light on the consequences of domestic violence in the Nigerian society.

These African writers were able to capture the different psychological traumas in each novel parallels with Caruth's statement on the transformation of trauma. Remarkably, Caruth allows for the possibility of trauma to be transformed into a narrative that tries to make sense of the incomprehensible but claims such a narrative is likely to distort the "truth" of trauma and weaken its impact:

> The transformation of the trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated, to be integrated into one's own, and other's knowledge of the past may lose both the precision and the force that characterizes traumatic recall. (Caruth, 1995, p. 153)

These novels can be said to be about the struggle to tell what supposedly should not be told, that which has been repressed both from history and from the protagonists' own consciousness. Critics like Caruth, Hartman, and Luckhurst have shown what began as the unnarratable trauma in literary works ultimately becomes narratable, in a narrative process moving towards wholeness for the protagonists, and for the text itself (Caruth, 1996, Hartman, 2003, Luckhurst, 2008).

Notably, the activity of narrating one's experiences is a significant component of social life that enables the individual to understand oneself, to make oneself understandable to others, and survive in the society. However, for Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi, the activity of narrating their selves is limited, circumscribed and constrained, or demanded in specific forms because of the patriarchal system. Narration for these women writers is not a mere form of aesthetic and expression, it is rather what Foucault called the self-narration, the activity of narrating one's

self and her/him trauma that is implicated in entrenched power relations. Moreover, Foucault believed that self-narration provide a possibility of resistance to what cannot be voiced, hence a possibility of narratability.

Self-narration is what Foucault calls practices of the self[49]. Self-writing is seen at the heart of Foucault's studies on the role of writing as a technique of the self[50]. Foucault considered narration as self-transformation and self-creation in his 1983 essay *Self Writing.* He presented his essay as "part of a series of studies on 'the arts of oneself", that is on the aesthetics of existence and the government of oneself and others in Greco-Roman culture during the first two centuries of the empire" (Foucault, 1997, p. 207).

Furthermore, in his remarkable essay, Foucault argues that one writes in order to transform and cultivate oneself into an ethical subject because writing is "the account of one's relation to oneself (Foucault, 1997, p. 217). Accordingly, the struggles and downfalls, as well as traumatic experiences that are hidden in the depths of one's soul become revealed through self-narration. The selected novels of Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi all foreground processes of self-narration. Being the only exception, *l'Interdite* blurs the boundaries between fictional and autobiographical writing in complex ways, while *TTT* and *Purple Hibiscus* dramatize processes of self-narration and self-analysis.

However, Valverde suggests a sensible intervention in this case. She argues that a critical account of practices of self-narration must be able to distinguish between confessional practices and story-telling that have, or can have, different and ethical effects. She further questions the 'postmodern', which is worth quoting at length:

[49]"it seems to me, that all the so-called literature of the self –private diaries, narratives of the self, and so on – cannot be understood unless it is put into the general and very rich framework of these practices of the self" (Foucault, 1997, p. 277).
[50]See Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (1997).

Isn't experience always linguistically and culturally constructed? Don't we always resort to stereotyped narrative forms in telling our story, so that a transgressive tale of coming out as a lesbian ends up sounding remarkably like an evangelical conversion experience, and is to that extent hardly authentic? Isn't "the subject" dead? If Man is dead, does that mean that Woman is equally defunct? If we are not autonomous subjects who creates meanings, as eighteenth-century European intellectuals believed, but rather mere effects of discursive and cultural practices, then what is the status of the tales we tell? Can honesty and sincerity be a sound basic for knowledge as well as ethics, if, as Jacques Lacan tells us, not only is self-knowledge impossible but, more disturbingly, self-identity is but a perpetual illusion? (Valverde, 2004 p. 68)

Valverde thinks that the postmodern approach pours cold water over telling one's story and, in so doing, risks throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Although she is sympathetic to such deconstructive critical though, as in this dissertation, Valverde argues that there remains the appeal of a particular kind of subjectivity and a particular kind of narration. She fittingly says:

"breaking the silence", however trite as a book title, and however problematic as a theoretical project in the post-Foucauldian age, remains a real, meaningful imperative for many ordinary women facing up to the old problems of oppression, violence, sexual shame, and so on. After all, most women who become feminists do so not by reading postmodern theory but by participating in some kind of truth-telling activity such as going to a support group in which one learns that one's experience of rape or incest is part of a large collective problem. (Valverde, 2004, p. 69)

In view of this reflection, Valverde argues that not all practices of narration are accessible or refer back to a deep truth about subjectivity. In this regard, one may hold practices of self-narration without holding on to notions of 'absolute truth' or 'self-knowledge'. Self-narrative in this context are socio-cultural products. Mokeddem, Beyala, and Chimamanda reflected the social reality through their novels.

In this vein, and in relation to trauma narratives, one views arguments proposed by Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey, particularly in their distinction between subversive stories and hegemonic tales. In fact, Ewick and Silbey study the conditions according to which a self-narrative can function in a counter-hegemonic ways (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). Particularly, they refer to a dual function of narrative: an *epistemological* role through which narratives reveal

social and cultural meanings, and a *political* role whereby narratives are mobilized with subversive or transformative aims to counter culturally dominant ways of interpreting social realities (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). "Narratives", Ewick and Silbey argue, "can function to sustain hegemony or, alternatively, subvert power" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, p. 200).

To say it differently, Ewick and Silbey suggests that "narratives are told for a variety of reasons, to a variety of audiences, with a variety of effects" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, p. 205). They highlight that narratives are not told in a random manner, in this case, trauma narratives emphasize in particular the dynamics between writer and reader or teller or listener. L'Interdite, TTT, and Purple Hibiscus are all examples of trauma novels that foreground the specific situational frame of the narrative, the relation between the narrator and addressee, the context, space, and time of narration, and so forth.

Similarly, Judith Butler developed the concept of self-narration around a sovereign subject who has full control and mastery over itself. Her insights on subjectivity and narrative theory are crucial at this point because her ideas match with this section's primary goal, which is the narratability of traumatic self. Butler's work revolve around the notion of gendered identities, which she develops through the notion of performativity[51]. In *Gender Trouble* (2006), Butler discusses her critique of identity as a manifestation of a stable inner essence or core. In other words, Butler thinks that for an individual to express her/his trauma, s/he must take full advantage of trauma's repetitions.

Butler here echoes Derrida's account of iterability, whereby although repeatability is key to every sigh, repetitions do not merely create more of the same. While repetitions conserve the

[51]See Jagger's *Judith Butler: Sexual Politics, Social Change and the Power of the performative* (2008) and Vicki Kerby's *Judith Butler: Live Theory* (2006).

original, each repetition can be seen as introducing something different, creating new possibilities for transformation (Loxley, 2007; Borg, 2020).

Moreover, Butler engages with the question of narratability through theories of cultural construction. Whereby social and discursive norms *act on*[52] subjects to structure the realm of the thinkable, the liveable and the speakable. This prompted her exploration of the notion of vulnerability, dependency, and injurability. Indeed, throughout her work, Butler deconstructed the active/passive dichotomy in order to show how the subject (woman writer in this case) can be thought of as simultaneously acting and acted upon[53]. Accordingly, vulnerability is not what blocks the narrative, but, in fact, it is a condition of possibility.

In *Violence, Mourning, Politics*, Butler seeks to find a basis for community in what she considers to be two inarguable and inescapable dimensions of life. First, one's exposure to and complicity in violence, and second, one's vulnerability to loss and the mourning that follows. For the case of Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili, each have witnessed a different kind of loss that resulted in a common consequence which is trauma. Sultana lost her mother (country); Tanga lost her body, wherein Kambili lost her voice because of her patriarchal father. Butler claims that, despite being geographically and socially distributed unequally, experiences of losing something one had, or somebody one desired and loved, seem to be shareable in such a way that "[l]oss has made a tenuous 'we' of us all" (Butler, 2012, p. 20). Even though the African writers Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi come from different backgrounds and countries, this does not make their experiences of trauma different, because they share the same outcome of the pain.

[52]In Trauma studies, the concept of *acting out* is a way employed by the survivor in a way to re-act the trauma incident in order to have more control on the event. See Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (2015), and van der Kolk's the *Black Hole of Trauma* (2004).

[53] In this regard, Butler draws from the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, particularly his later work. See Judith Burtler's *Merlau-Ponty and the Touch of Malebranche* in *Senses of the Subject* (2015).

Corporeal existence binds these writers together in this experience of loss because the body is both the site of agency but also that which exposes them to others and potential injury (Butler, 2012). The social vulnerability of the body, therefore, is a crucial aspect of political constitution that marks the subject as "attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure" (Butler, 2012, p. 20).

This conception of corporeal existence emphasizes the inevitable relationality of existence, not only as a descriptive fact but as a normatively imbued dimension of social life. In accounting for a relationship with another, thus, the subject may find itself challenged since it is the very constitution of oneself as an autonomous self-sufficient agent that is called into question through the dependency of the 'I' on another:

> I tell a story about the relations I choose, only to expose, somewhere along the way, the way I am gripped and undone by these very relations. My narrative falters as it must. Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, wer're missing something. (Butler, 2012, p. 23)

The language of social construction, in these writings paves the way for a softer language that speaks of the subject as being 'given over': "One does not always stay intact. One may want to, or manage to for a while, but despite one's best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel" (Butler, 2012, p. 24). Butler's concern, however, is how to think of responsibility or accountability in relation to a subject who lacks control and mastery over oneself, and who is not the cause of its own emergence. In other words, if the 'I' is given over to others, is shaped by norms and power relations, and is constituted through the relations it has with others, how can it account for itself? In response to such questions, Butler argues that when the 'I' tries to give an account of itself, it must necessarily end up doing so in terms of a set of relations to others and to norms (Thiem, 2008).

In similar veins, Butler maintains that one's account of oneself, given in discourse, cannot fully express one's self because the public nature of discourse exceeds the self (Butler, 2001). Echoing Foucault's statement, often cited by Butler, "discourse is not life; its time is not yours" (qtd.in Butler, 2001, p. 36). Butler thus probes the extent to which the self can be narrated, that is, the narrativisability of the self, and the extent to which this narration can be coherent, that is, accounting for oneself it terms of a narrative, a story.

In view of the unnarratability, Butler claims that there is something in the process of offering a narrative account that corresponds to fiction. For example, referring to the possibility of self-narration in the light of the impossibility of accounting for the conditions of the self's emergence. She writes that "narration is surely possible under [specific] circumstances, but it is, as Thomas Keenan[54] has pointed out, surely fabulous" (Butler, 2001, p. 37). For Butler, one is always recuperating, reconstructing, and fictionalizing her/his story.

Overall, trauma narratives complicate an already complex process of absorbing emotionally charged material. Narratives generally can make disturbing events palatable, even seemingly normal (Herman, 2015). Moreover, narratives can offer context, a framework of cause and effect, and psychological insights that are not as readily available or as clear in real-life situations.

[54] The reference to Keenan is to Thomas Keenan, *Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics* (1997).

4.1. The literary Strategies for Conveying Trauma

Representing the experience of trauma, an internal event inherently imbued with voicelessness, requires structures and technique that simultaneously contain and reform those qualities of the unspeakable. Anne Whitehead identifies the characteristics of literary imitation of trauma experiences, which can be found within fictional trauma representations: "Novelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection" (Whitehead, 2004, p. 3).

In fact, inscribing trauma into the fictional narrative requires representational strategies that show that the author 'knows' the nature of trauma and its manifestation. True knowledge of trauma cannot be invented, and the construction of literary techniques to capture and convey this knowledge is essential in providing a pathway into the elusive internal wounding that is trauma.

The selected narratives of Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi demonstrate range of innovative literary strategies in response to the task of the "directing outward of an inward, silent process" (Vickroy, 2002, p. 3). The texts evoke the experience of trauma for women through the fragmentation of narrative conventions, by using language, narration, speech and structure, and through the construction of metaphors, symbols and tropes that provide powerful links to the symbolic aspects of the playing out of trauma.

Fragmentation of narrative, meaning that the story is 'interrupted' through the use of various literary techniques, is something that has been identified as one of the tools used by fictional trauma writers to create a sense of the chaos, the undefinable disorderliness of the state of traumatization, particularly, as Laurie Vickroy states, in relation to the function of *remembering*:

> Writers have created a number of narrative strategies to represent a conflicted or incomplete relation to memory, including textual gaps…repetition, breaks in linear time, shifting viewpoints, and a focus on visual images and affective states. (Vickroy, 2002, p. 29)

In Mokeddem's l'Interdite the narrative voice, the shifting viewpoints, and most importantly, Sultana's particular inability to speak coherently and clearly about her trauma, are strong linguistic indications of the state of trauma. The unpredictability and uncontainability of the state of being traumatized are conveyed to the reader through the irregularity of language as Mokeddem constructs the narratives to shift and weave. The narrative leaves gaps and presents a linguistic structure that is itself uncontainable, as it changes the conventions and use of literary realism.

At the time of Mokeddem's writing, this narrative style was innovative, presenting a seemingly chaotic arrangement that was subversive of the sought after orderliness of post-war Algeria. Out of the three narratives analyzed in this dissertation, it is only Ngozi's depiction of Kambili's lack of coherency in *Purple Hibiscus*, which displays similarity to Sultana, as it uses linguistic fragmentation to access the inner fragmentation of the trauma victims' mind. Like Sultana's, Kambili's internal dialogue is distinguished by the struggle with being Other, splitting the mind into a chaotic state of *knowing* and *not knowing*.

In fact, the three narratives in this dissertation use the tension between the knowing and the not knowing to evoke the trauma experience through the female protagonists' struggle to express their experiences and find the words that convey trauma. Like the memory of trauma, in which the psychological mechanism that promotes survival initially seeks to drive the experience of trauma underground, these works reflect the conflict that the characters experience while they go through this survival-based denial.

This tension is represented in all the narratives as being in a state of flux, meaning that the female characters gradually uncover the truth of the trauma experience. Conflict is evoked by

the narrative strategies as Sultana in l'*Interdite* reminds the reader of all the things she cannot say when she is the *ksar*, or when she recalls her psychosomatic anorexia during her time with Vincent. Beyala depicts Tanga's retrospective acknowledgement of her tendency to deny the truth to herself, recounting how she was forced by her body to articulate the truth with Anna-Claude, a foreigner. Chimamanda shows the conflict of Kambili's stifled truth as she depicts her as *silenced*, lost character.

All the texts evoke the role that memory plays in the simultaneous denial of and exposure of traumatic experience, a role that has only recently been clearly defined by trauma therapy itself. The de-construction of conventional modes of literary representations, and the creation of specific linguistic and narrative strategies to capture this emotional and cognitive process, represents how memory both disables and enables trauma expression.

The narratives examined in this dissertation exhibit the polyvocal quality of trauma, both in relation to the many voices contained within the memory of trauma and the notion of the communal involvement in trauma experience. The linear orderliness of narration is subverted by the sense that "there is more to the story than the story" (Vickroy, 2005, p. 122). The before mentioned mimicking of the chaotic fragmentation of trauma are depicted through intertextuality, such as Sultana's inclusion of the other female trauma victims in her story, the women of the village that come for a medical consultation.

These unseen and unheard women provide additional voices in the background, which indicate the many layers and levels on which women's traumatization occurs. Alongside Ngozi's authorial de-constructive acknowledgment of the voices in *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili's own narration of her story facilitates the emergence of the many other voices of the stories' female characters. In a similar manner, Beyala shows the possibility of having a voice through Tanga in *TTT* (1988).

All the texts demonstrate that trauma is on one level a very individual and private experience, as the effects of traumatization play out inside the private mind and body, while simultaneously being a communal experience based on the timeless and similar trauma experiences for women in the past. Furthermore, these representations embody the changing nature of the trauma experience as constituting a "dynamic, living process where interactions have a quality of being in process and unfinalizable" (Vickroy, 2002, p. 183).

This polyvocality suggest that trauma builds on trauma, and points to the complex, cyclical process of unaddressed trauma's repetition from one generation to the next, and from the past into the present. The unvoiced and unacknowledged traumas of the female protagonists Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili are indicative of the replication of trauma as well as the community of women who are, on a literal and an actual level, connected through the experience with the triple-trauma, a connection that is:

> The way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of the other, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's world. (Caruth, 2007, p. 8)

As already suggested in chapters two and three, the narrative strategy that is employed in the three novels is therefore also the creation of essential, female communities for the female protagonists. They are the communities of traumatized women that know, and listen to, the Other's trauma. This creates the social context that frames and witnesses and thereby validates, and gives order to the trauma.

Another way in which the fictional trauma narratives of Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi employ literary strategies that represent the forms of trauma is through the creation of metaphors, symbols and tropes. The symbolic manifestations in the narratives mirror the experience of trauma, since initial traumatization and subsequent life memory are strongly connected to symbols and metaphors. This connection forms from the re-experiencing

or negotiation of the traumatic memory, as well as the capturing of the voiceless, language-deficient quality of trauma, in which symbols voice the unspeakable. The role played by metaphors and symbols in trauma experience is significant, as the meaning of particular symbols takes shape during traumatization, which then influences and affects subsequent memory and re-experience of trauma.

This very complex process plays part in inducing the psychophysiological reactions of the trauma sufferer to "specific reminders of the trauma, and in response to intense but [to other people] neutral stimuli," all of which are likely to be from a metaphoric or symbolic source, thereby making the traumatized person's "loss of stimulus discrimination" (van der Kolk et al., 2007, p. 219).

The ability of metaphors and symbols to evoke a strong, psychophysiological reaction is a complicated issue to analyze within traumatology, a complexity that is relevant to any literary depiction of this process. The three narratives represent these intricacies as they use the depiction of the female body to highlight the role played by symbols and metaphors in the reaction to trauma. In l'*Interdite*, the protagonist embodies the fragmentation of herself through her seemingly involuntary and uncontrollable responses to stimuli. Sultana's difficulty in evaluating trauma-stimulating symbols is represented by her inappropriate responses to the male counterparts in the novel, namely Vincent and Salah.

The depiction of Tanga in *TTT* (1988) as thinking of herself as *femme-fiellette* at the outset of her narrative is comparable here, as is Tanga's reaction to the symbols and metaphors of colonization that surround her, such as the city scenes. Tanga is represented as displaying a common reaction to the state created by the physiological response to trauma related stimuli, which is to disengage and become numb in body and mind, serving the "function of allowing

organisms not to 'consciously experience' or not remember situations of overwhelming stress" (van der Kolk et al., 2007, p. 230).

Ngozi's protagonist Kambili's reaction to the domestic violence depicts her inner conflict bout knowing and not knowing, or not wanting to know as well as highlighting how the body acts out the stimuli of trauma. Echoing the essential nature of trauma, Kambili has no control over the contortions and actions of her body during her 'fits' and it is her body that signals the extent of the trauma she is experiencing.

The metaphor of the body is extended and linked to yet another metaphor that seeks to give voice to the trauma experience, which is the notion of the transformative. Transformation is a key element linking the separate metaphors associated with body, time, and silence. It is also the trope that most clearly articulates the non-static nature of trauma and the act of the journey that is undertaken by all the female protagonists. The transformative is represented by the way in which the protagonists become able to express themselves.

Furthermore, transformation is depicted through places, concepts and objects that are re-formed in the narratives. The protagonists change their environment[55], or their perception of their environment, and experience internal changes in which the finding of place is crucial to the dealing with trauma. This is depicted when Sultana finds the lost parts of herself in the desert, thereby within her mind changing the barrenness of the desert to a place where possibilities are blooming and possible.

For Kambili, Aunty Ifeoma's house, the place where visits after her father beats her, is transformed in Kambili's mind into a refuge, in as far as it is here that she is finally able to express her whole story. Transforming a place of trauma into a place of voicing out the pain is

[55]Except for Tanga who remains in the prison cell but managed to change her environment 'spiritually' when she gives her body to Anna-Claude.

crucial to the expression and resolution of the protagonists of l'*Interdite*, *TTT*, and *Purple Hibiscus*.

The concept of transformation is fundamental to the representations of silence and voicelessness within the narratives. All the authors depict silence as a transformative element, as liberating and voice-enabling, and thereby subvert the traditional Western notions of silence as a purely undesirable and tragic. Instead, silence is an entry point for the protagonists to make choices about their life, and the way they express their trauma experiences.

Sultana's choice to not wanting to belong anywhere is also her final, powerful statement against the mechanisms of trauma, as she curses those responsible for it. Kambili sees silence as a more liberating option than continuing to be part of the destructive patriarchal madness she can see ahead. In *TTT*, it is Tanga's death that enables Anna-Claude to live and finally grieve for her trauma, or as a catalyst to transform at the point of death into a powerful Other that lives on to tell the tale of trauma.

In this sense, all these works depict the silence of the old self that needs to occur when trauma is truly confronted and expressed. It also symbolizes the fear that underlies trauma experience and trauma memory, which is the absolute fear of being voiceless. Furthermore, it reflects the feeling of silence that occurs after traumatization: the silence of the previously non-traumatized individual, *and*, arising out of the expression of trauma, the eventual silence of the traumatized self, a challenging prospect for trauma survivors, where change can be as frightening as the state of traumatization.

4.2. Trauma and its Performance in Society

In *Reading Trauma Narratives*, Vickroy (2015) articulates that trauma fiction presents many interconnected aspects of psychological and social life for readers that no other medium can. Indeed, fictional trauma narrative is able to evoke or access a part of consciousness that allows the uncovering of trauma and moves it towards integration on a personal and political level for the female writer, protagonist and reader.

In fact, Van der Kolk and McFarlane consider that the general circulation of trauma stories is indeed something that has the potential to change a society's perception of and engagement with trauma, as the stories inspire or promote *actions* that can lead to change:

> Trauma may act as a catalyst for social change: By giving voice to their own misery, many social critics, political leaders, and artists have been able to transform their trauma into a way of helping people…it can be sublimated into social or artistic action and thus can serve as a powerful agent for social change. (Ferlane & van der Kolk, 1996, p. 33)

While this is not a generic or absolute outcome of the fictional trauma story, the point is that any act of exposing the traumatizing mechanisms and enforcements of othering, is an act that goes against the stories that have concealed such oppression. The expression of a traditionally unvoiced story of women's trauma "can be extraordinarily disruptive to the social order" (Hanne, 1994, p. 12).

Commonality between the three African women writers examined in this disseration, and their narratives spanning across times and cultures, comes from the fact that through their representations they all *expose* and *dissect* the sources of trauma for women as they see them operating during their time. Furthermore, these expositions are of a pioneering nature, in the sense that they represent early criticism of the structures that enable/construct the sources of trauma against women.

How such subversive criticism interacts with the society in which it is created, and which, to some extent it represents, comes from the way in which readers of the narratives can identify the reality within the texts, thereby accepting them "to be accurate representations of real human and social processes" (Hanne, 1994, p. 34). In each case, the narratives pre-date or sit on the cusp of an evolving larger discourse about oppression and traumatization. In this way the narratives have, or will, in time succeed in:

> Complementing and aggregating with the narrative of other kinds … from which political and social action primarily derives, or in competition with them by a process of capping or reframing or disruption. In some striking instances, narrative fiction may insert a new provocative element into one or more of the controlling metanarratives of a particular society and so contribute to radical change. (Hanne, 1994, p. 34)

Regards to the evolution of trauma, the narratives of *l'Interdite, Tu t'Appelleras Tanga,* and *Purple Hibiscus* have all contributed new and provocative elements to the way that African women's trauma has been viewed within the larger socio/psychological context of each society. The deconstruction of women's trauma, which the narratives undertake, opens up the subject of trauma, and looks beyond the trend of focusing on particular symptomatology. Most importantly, these narratives, through various means and in varying degrees, have provided representations not just of African women's *victimization*, but also of women's strength in the face of the traumatization they encounter. This is a significant contribution to the area of trauma studies, where the social legacy consists of:

> A history of distorted research that has stressed the emotional pathologies and behavioral deficits of marginalized communities, [while] less research has illustrated their strength, resources and resilience. (Bryant-Davis, 2005, p.5)

While this resilience is particularly expressed in the narratives of Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi, the fact that *all* the traumatized female protagonists voice their stories and defy silencing in the face of an overwhelming, oppressive framework,

represents models for strength and the drawing on women's own voices as a powerful resource in the face of trauma. Resilience is demonstrated by all three narratives looking for their own, personal truth, which in itself constitutes a powerful disturbance to, or subversion of, the cultures and societies out of which the narratives originate. The search for the truth of the narrative attacks the very core of the sources of trauma, where othering through violence and voicelessness is made possible by the concealing of the truth, as "a culture of domination is necessarily a culture where lying is an acceptable norm. It is, in fact, required" (Hooks, 2015, p. 15).

4.2.1. Trauma Performance and the Female Protagonist

The literary strategies used by Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi effect initial disruption, or deconstruction of traditional, literary notions of plot, narrative, chronology, metaphor and symbol use, and then subsequently re-construct these elements in such a way as to depict the voices of trauma.

Integration of the disarray of trauma is the key to moving from the *exposition* of the trauma story to the *processing* of it. The question here is: to what extent do these texts represent models or examples of healing trauma experiences for women? The analysis so far has shown that all the narratives convey trauma in very real and engaging ways, yet do the novels go further than demonstrating trauma and its numerous complex effects, and move towards depicting restoration or healing of the damaged selves of the female protagonists? To what degree do the narratives suggest that their female characters are engaged in the process of healing, in which, as Lewis Herman states, the "owning of self" is fundamental:

She is in possession of self. She has some understanding of the person she used to be and of the damage done to that person by the traumatic event. Her task now is to become the person she wants to be. (Herman, 2015, p. 202).

Mokeddem's Sultana is not depicted in "possession of herself", as the novel narrates her journey from France to Algeria, which mirrors her journey from inner fragmentation to the confrontation with the source of trauma that have shaped her mental crisis. Sultana does not have some understanding of her past, pre-traumatized self, yet the narrative males it clear that she has difficulty trusting her memory, while she struggles to articulate and accept the truth of the death of her lover, Yacine.

By the end of the novel, Sultana is able to voice the effects that the trauma has had on her, as she knows of what she has been robbed, and uses the metaphors of anorexia to describe and explain herself. For Sultana, there seem to be only glimpses of hope of formulating for herself a picture of what she wants to be.

While her experience in the desert, especially with the French doctor Vincent, demonstrate that she knows she has to come to her rights, the narrative does not present an alternative picture of a healed, or healthy woman. As the novel is built on the legacy of traumatized women and sinister examples of male medical professionals (Yacine and Vincent), there is literally no place from which Sultana can derive a model of good mental health, that is why she feels that she does not belong to Ain Nekhla. This means that after her coming back to Algerian, Sultana cannot choose wellness and live in a world in which the sources of trauma, ancient and modern, converge and are still fully operational.

As already discussed in chapter three, the fact that Sultana is actively and increasingly consciously in pursuit of coherence, in pursuit of piecing together and telling her story, and that in the end she makes an articulated *choice* about her trauma, is in itself a form of self-recovery.

All three novels examined in this dissertation demonstrate this pursuit of coherence in the face of essentially fragmentary experiences of trauma as the first step in the process towards self-recovery. The search for expression constitutes the commitment to set out on the journey through past and present trauma, an attempted recovery of the psyche and as John Harvey states, an "opportunity for survivors to create greater value in their lives" (Harvey, 2002, p.32).

Whereas Sultana lacks coherence in her search for expression of the trauma story, Kambili from Ngozi's *Purple Hibiscus* makes a clear connection between trauma and her life-role as the one to *see* it and *articulate* it. Kambili's narrative is constructed in a deliberately retrospective way by Ngozi, allowing for self-analysis and understanding of the sources of trauma as key processes.

Kambili is self-aware and honest about her father's abuse, she provides increasing resistance to the sources of her trauma, initially acted out in her body and then through her voice. Through this resistance, her sense of self, or who she wants to be, is increasingly clearly visible, as she clashes with her father's patriarchy.

Unlike Sultana, Kambili has a choice, the choice between accepting her father, with his patriarchal attitudes or go to live with her Aunt Ifeoma, where she feels more accepter and protected. Once Kambili is able to be truthful about herself and her family, she is able to live in her community, which presents the brief opportunity for her to start healing from the trauma of domestic violence by her own father.

Tanga from Beyala's *TTT* also experiences a type of growth and from acknowledging and expressing her trauma. She describes the impact of rape, and compares it implicitly to colonization. In doing so, Tanga resists oppression and knows, like Kambili, that she must use her voice and destroy the emptiness of silence.

In addition, like Sultana and Kambili, Tanga exits the narrative with a suggestion of *choice* about her death, when she states to Anna-Claude: “ma mort existe avant moi, au-delà de moi” (Beyala, 1988, p. 6). Tanga does not make this choice because there is no alternative in which to live, but rather because her life for her is done, and it is time to give her body to Anna-Clause, a white Jewish woman. Tanga extends Sultana and Kambili’s sense of self as being an every-woman through her insight into trauma.

Tanga expresses hope as residing in an indefinite future, as well as in the very present in the form of Anna-Claude’s embodiment of herself, a woman who is able to live. Tanga giving the opportunity to Anna-Claude to voice her trauma experience is a cathartic experience, in which Anna-Clause represents the view that healing or being healthy is a gift and that healing does not take place in isolation. Tanga thinks she represents her own past, which she is entitled to, and giving her body to Anna-Clause is what she (Tanga) can be.

Tanga leaves the novel with an articulated understanding of this identity, and she knows that she is on the path towards healing, a process rather than an event, something she voices when she speaks about her rape to Anna-Claude.

This option in response to trauma is also represented throughout Mokeddem’s, Beyala’s, and Ngozi’s novels where the most heavily traumatized protagonists *create* their own alternatives. The protagonists Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili express and address their trauma through the fundamental act of restoring equilibrium in their lives, and the equilibrium of the life-ordering forces of tapu and noa. This is a significant creation, as it models images and scenarios of healing that address the process of ‘choosing wellness’ at its very core:

> Clearly, if black women want to be about the business of collective self-healing, we have to be about the business of inventing all manner of images and representations that show us the way we want to be and are. (Hooks, 2005, p. 62)

The images of trauma discussed in chapter three of every protagonist address the trauma in ways that imbue the trauma experience with very real meaning for the protagonists and their communities, as the responses to trauma shape the natural and cultural resources from ancient times into the contemporary.

The actuality of turning trauma around is the result of the long-lasting expression of trauma in the works of Algerian women writers, in which cultural limitations are created. Just as Sultana from l'*Interdite* (1993) manages finally to achieve to the point where she can voice her unbelonging to either Algerian or France, starts to feel better wither herself. Wellness, or the choice to transcend trauma in this depiction is not a passive one, it is an effective commitment to doing and acting in ways that open up a different life. It is saying that if there are no healthy alternatives, or healthy places to live, then they must be created.

In its subversion of the structures of trauma, *l'Interdite* (1993) is therefore the most powerful of all the three narratives, as it surpasses the theoretical, or linguistic, and moves to actions that create digressive and long-lasting statements about trauma and healing.

In this way, Malika Mokeddem has illustrated the many forms in which expression of trauma and resolution of trauma can simultaneously occur. In *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* (1988), unlike in Mokeddem's and Ngozi's narratives, there is a clear movement from the event of traumatization to the female protagonist's creation of resolutions, which are resolutions that change the trauma for the protagonist, as well as leaving culturally appropriate road-signs for future generations. Ngozi's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) presents a progression from trauma to healing in which change is pivotal, or as Harvey explains:

> A major loss leads to the development of a story about or understanding of the loss, which leads to storytelling or confiding about the loss, which leads to identifying possibilities for change, which leads to some sort of action that addresses the loss in some constructive way. (Harvey, 2002, p. 260)

The voicing of trauma as a restorative act is based on the fact that in order to integrate trauma there has to be an *engagement* with trauma, in the sense of facing the trauma and then working through it to create a narrative. In therapy, for survivors of trauma this initial confrontation is the beginning of a journey that does not make the trauma disappear, but rather, gives it a meaning that one can live with:

> Developing an adequate and evolving narrative of life's unbidden transitions does not assuage the pain associated with them, but it does permit them to be articulated in a way that encourages both personal integration of such experiences and social validation of their meaning. (Neimeyer & Levitt, 2021, p. 408)

The protagonists of Mokeddem's, Beyala's, and Ngozi's novels are in the process of creating evolving narratives, in which the measure of healing trauma corresponds to this process of evolution, which rather than answering it, raises the question of what is adequate in terms of depicting trauma through the literary trauma genre.

4.2.2. Trauma Performance and the Female Author

Stories about trauma address an individual and social need to express the *in-expressible* of how trauma originates and plays out as part of the overarching social context. It is therefore important to consider the meaning or impact that is created through the acts of writing and reading fictional narratives of trauma (LaCapra, 2014; Valentina, 2008).

Stories about trauma are not created in a vacuum, nor without context; neither is their reception or place within a given society and culture a random accident. Instead, there are psychological and cultural forces that determine these issues at any given time, processes that are far too complex for them to be given full justice in this chapter, but which nevertheless need to be raised as they are of significance to the topic of women's trauma as a whole.

The finding of trauma in the novels that have been examined in this dissertation, and the construction of a key framework of sources or areas in which these African women authors locate trauma for women, in the form of the triple trauma[56], can be seen as a beginning in terms of raising questions as to what all this means. Further issues arising from this dissertation, which has shown how trauma for women is inflicted on the narratives' protagonists, and how this is represented in literary forms, include questions about what such representations do for the real people involved in the production and consumption of such fictional trauma. Particularly in the face of the prevailing response to trauma as being marked by "denial, repression, and dissociation [that] operate on a social as well as an individual level" (Herma, 2015, p. 2).

Questioning what might drive an author to construct fictional trauma, what compels people to read it and whether this process is of influence in the contemporary social perception of and addressing real trauma for women is of great interest; and something that is hoped will be closely analyzed in further research. Such research would contribute to the evolution of narratives of trauma and the theories of how these can be of positive use for individuals and societies.

The relationship of an author to their trauma representation, or to trauma in general is one of the areas in which the how of fictional trauma changes to the why. For the non-fictional trauma story, the connection between the narrative and the author is crucial, yet what does this relationship entail in the case of the fictional trauma narrative? The psychologically determined need for the telling of the story, and the ensuing therapeutic correlation of integration that occur when the trauma sufferer tells her own story are not a given in the case of *fictional* narrative construction (Felman & Laub, 1991).

[56]Trauma of unbelonging, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

The engagement with trauma in the case of the fictional storyteller involves an imaginative creation of trauma, which is followed by the process of finding ways to construct a narrative from this creation. The progression that takes the teller through the voicing of trauma from a point of outward construction, or exposition to the transformation of the "traumatic memory and the moving towards recovery" cannot be assumed to function in the same way for the teller whose trauma stories are created as fiction (Herman, 2015, p. 175).

There cannot be a generalized assumption that the writers have personally, and directly, experienced the trauma stories they ascribe to their female protagonists. A more useful approach is to consider whether the fundamentally positive effects of using *voice* for a woman as Other can also be assumed to have an effect on the author, and whether this is of significance when looking at the exposition of female trauma.

The act of writing fictional narratives by women and about women has already been discussed as constituting a personally and politically effective task in chapter two, as the female authorial voice writing about trauma can be the liberation of the voice of the Other. Gilmore thinks that this is an act contributing to gaining psychological freedom, while also presenting a challenge, a transgressive, disruptive excess to the ideological structures that create women as an Other (Gilmore, 2018). African women writers writing as an Other, *about* the Other from within a social, cultural and political framework, in which the Other experiences strategic and institutionalized oppression, is a journey of expression similar to that of the constructed female protagonists.

Like Sultana in l'*Interdite* (1993), who is struggling to find the words to express herself and her experience as Other, Malika Mokeddem also struggled to find the right words that could communicate what she felt was a historically unspoken and the Algerian crisis of the 1990s make the case of women unspeakable in every aspect of life. In an interview by Achour, she

acknowledges the public resistance that she found in writing, and how writing about the unspeakable holds the potential for change:

J'ai essayé de trouver refuge dans la lecture. Mais je ne pouvais plus y rentrer. Il ne restait plus, dans mon être, d'espace disponible aux mots des autres. Il y avait urgence. Alors, j'ai écrit, d'abord comme on soigne, par nécessité. D'abord lentement comme lorsque le risque est grand. Mais ils se sont bousculés les mots du silence. J'en suis restée à la fois ivre et désemparée. Maintenant, l'écriture m'est une médecine, un besoin quotidien. Les mots me viennent naturellement, m'habitent comme par habitude. Et par habitude, ils s'écrivent et me délivrent, au fur et à mesure. Ecrire, noircir le blanc cadavéreux du papier, c'est gagner une page de vie, c'est retrouver, au-dessus du trouble et du désarroi, un pointillé d'espoir. (Achour, 1997, p. 3)

Malika engages with the "limitations of language", stipulating that "if we had the word, if we had language we would no need the weapons" (Hartman, 2003, p. 260). This echoes Sultana's fictional experience of being without the weapon of language, and thereby forcibly silenced by the fundamentalists. But unlike Sultana, Tanga is articulate and clear about her condition, she is more aware of her sexual abuse and tells eloquently her story to Anna-Claude. Tanga knows who has silenced her, and why. Through her discussion with Anna-Claude, she was able to speak about the condition of voicelessness, using her voice to wade through the thing that she wants the most. Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) was searching for a voice to create her narrative and to express what her father made her feel.

In *A Companion to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,* Emenyonu (2017) argues that Kambili's voicelessness is also the voicelessness of all the female storytellers before Ngozi, who like Kambili were disregarded, misunderstood, or forgotten. Ngozi wants her exposure of the sources of trauma to provoke change, in the sense that her desire to write so that the society in which one lives, receives the greatest use from it (Emenyonu, 2017).

For Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi, writing from/about a colonized condition, a "culture of domination", which "undermines individuals' capacity to assert meaningful agency in their

live", means that the act of writing is one of the ways in which agency is asserted (Hooks, 2005, p. 49).

The case of voicelessness for Algerian women writers is more acutely literal than it is for Calixthe Beyala and Chimamanda Ngozi, as the issue of a lost/displaced language reinforces a fundamental, cultural voicelessness based on the importance having one's own language. The African women writers' stated in this dissertation challenge here is not merely the construction of a literary language that can describe the fragmentation of trauma, but moreover the construction of such experiences in a way that somehow captures, portrays and rebuilds this essential lost voice of a culture in the language of the colonizers.

While Beyala and Ngozi chart the historical legacy of the exclusion of women's voices as a context for their own experiences of voice/lessness, Malika Mokeddem, as one of the Algerian female writers who spoke about the violence against women, have to consider the historical exclusion of a whole culture, and the colonized exclusion of themselves as writers and *readers:* *"*Women's new status as warriors not only altered the patriarchal concept of the division of labor between the genders, but also challenged the wider power of patriarchy, threatening to erode its power and privileges" (Salhi, 2010, p. 116).

This notion of writing as a site in which to access the self is echoed by the three African women writers, where writing is an act in which their own voices are dealing with the world in which they are placed. Accordingly, the three female authors are writing out of contexts which cause trauma to be unquestionable, whether it be the trauma of unbelonging to a country and cultural system that brutally murdered or oppressed millions of Others, the trauma of sexual abuse, or the trauma of domestic violence.

The extent, to which these contexts have provided the choices of fictional representation of the mechanisms of the triple-trauma, can be seen within each work examined in this dissertation.

There is no claim made by the women authors, or this analysis that the fictional traumas are, in fact, the authors' own traumas, yet the processes of sublimation of trauma, meaning the re-formation of one's own trauma experience into another kind of trauma, an imaginary trauma, is of interest in the analysis of the dynamics of writing about trauma.

What can certainly be said is that Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi all challenge the voicelessness of the Other, including any voicelessness of their own, through their act of writing. While there are differences in terms of the authors' stated personal intent in regards to what this means to the readers who may also be othered or voiceless, or their society and culture in general, the use of writing in this way changes the authors' own struggle to have a voice. Such expression of the othered voice through the creative act is inherently therapeutic, since the creative process that constitutes writing is both "healing and life enhancing" (Ferrara, 2004, p. 3). Engagement with one's own voicelessness through writing facilitates the confrontation with one's inner demons.

The analysis of speechlessness and subsequent construction of a voice through the creation of narrative is the process of "creating a new self by deconstructing the old, redefining the components, and building a new, multivocal self" (Ferrara, 2004, p. 3).

If the finding of voice is an imperative progression for the female protagonists of the narratives, then the essential formation of voice achieved by the authors of the narratives has similarly powerful, therapeutic consequences. If "healing takes place within us as we speak the truth of our lives," (Hooks, 2005, p. 11) then it does so whether our truth is delivered through a non-fictional testimony, or through our own truth that is fitted into, or re-formed in a fictional, literary space.

In fact, the investigation of trauma in this fictional, literary sense opens up possibilities of dealing with trauma in what perhaps could be a safer way than voicing trauma in a non-fictional

way, as it offers wider possibilities of inclusion and exploration. It allows the author to deal with trauma, including their own, in a way that transfers and inscribes trauma through the wide range of diversity, creating a "reflexive distance", which can be a powerful way in which to voice trauma (Whitehead, 2004, p. 92).

4.2.3. Trauma Performance and the Female Reader

Of interest in regards to this "reflexive distance" attributable to the writing of the fictional trauma story, is the consideration whether and how this affects the actual *reading* of fictional trauma. Could the reading of fictionally constructed trauma be a similarly safe space in which to engage with trauma? And does this entail the possibility of any benefit for the female reader in regards to her own experiences or perceptions of trauma? Moreover, if so, is this facilitated by witnessing the reconciliation of trauma depicted in the texts, or through the expression of women's voices (that of author and protagonist)?

Determining what kinds of impact literary works have on readers is a complex question, in which varieties of factors preclude a single and definitive answer. When investigating women reading trauma narratives by and about women, of interest is the reading process and how this relates to the dynamics of trauma experience and articulation.

Reception theorist Wolfgang Iser defines a process in which the reader realizes the text, bringing it to life through a series of internal acts that are meaning-making and discovery procedures, both about the reader herself and about the text (Iser, 1980). The important part of this practice in regards to trauma analysis is that this process can be said to resemble the ordering of the chaos that is trauma, undertaken by the female protagonists and writers of the trauma narratives.

The reader is not given the whole story; fissures in the narrative determine the kind of strategies required by the reader to fill the gaps, to make sense in a similar way in which the fictional female trauma sufferers are seeking to structure their experiences by voicing them (Vickroy, 2015). This progression in which the reader is called upon to retrieve her own memory, her own experiences in regards to trauma, is unquestionable, as the "work" of meaning-making is the "very process [that] results ultimately in the awakening of responses within [her]self" (Iser, 1980, p. 51).

In this sense, then, the reader participates in the de-coding of the unwritten of the trauma experiences, such as making sense of Sultana's incoherent and fragmented statements, or Kambili's trying to access the truth behind the patriarchal and brutal behavior of her father, and Tanga's re-discovering trauma experiences of rape and sexual abuse. The more gaps there are in the narrative, the more ample opportunities there are for the reader to become truly involved in employing her imagination, as the unsaid is crucial to truly involving the reader: "It is the unwritten part that gives us the opportunity to picture things; indeed without the elements of indeterminacy, the gaps in the texts, we should not be able to use our imagination" (Iser, 1980, p. 58).

Negotiating the unspoken of the trauma narratives is not just a matter of deciphering what is not said, but also of creatively establishing what meaning this has in regards to one's own personal context. Mirroring the developments undertaken by the trauma subject and the author in their quest to articulate the unspeakable, the reader of the fictional trauma narratives forms the final link in the exposition of trauma, being what trauma theory regards as the important witness to the story, who is also a co-creator of the trauma meaning and reconciliation (Vickroy, 2015; Whitehead, 2004).

In this way, the reader enacts a communication that links herself to the author and the female protagonist(s) of the trauma narrative. The act of creating understanding and significance of the trauma narrative is the filling in of the unsaid, which is done for the protagonist but also by the reader for herself, meaning that "whenever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins" (Iser, 1980, p. 24). This is a pivotal element of the trauma story as to a large extent it is a story about being without or outside of communication. The textual communication that is achieved through this process is therefore of importance in dispelling the sense of isolation which lies at the core of the narrated trauma experiences. This is done through the involvement of the reader in formulating expression, by witnessing, and through personal involvement in the story.

It is also a communication with the authors of the narratives, who, as in the case of Malika Mokeddem, Calixthe Beyala, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are *readers* themselves as they re-read old texts and re-create them in their trauma narratives. Like the authors, the readers of these narratives are reading the subtext of the 'old' narratives, integrating the old with the new in consideration of each reader's own trauma context:

> This would mean that consciousness forms at the point at which author and reader converge, and at the same time it would result in the cessation of the temporary self-alienation that occurs to the reader when [her] consciousness brings to life the ideas formulated by the author. (Iser, 1980, p. 66)

Reading the fictional trauma story is yet another way in which the representation of fictional trauma creates a community, where the active deciphering of trauma, the considering and voicing of traditionally silenced female experiences, become shared experiences. This is in accordance with feminist notions of reader theory, where reading is seen as a potentially powerful *activity*, in which the connections between female author, protagonist and reader are essential, and the voicing of the previously silenced is of extreme importance, as reading and interpretation is:

A mode of *praxis*. The point is not merely to interpret literature in various ways; the point is to *change the world*. We cannot afford to ignore the activity of reading, for it is here that literature is realized as *praxis*. ...Literature acts on the world by acting on its readers. (Schweickart, 2008, p. 427)

This creates an important link to feminist trauma theory, as the facilitation of voicing women's trauma and the processes involved in the reconciliation of trauma within a world where women are othered, is also a praxis with the goal of effecting change. The answer to the question of whether the female reading of fictional trauma by women plays a part in this process, in a broad sense, has to be yes.

The political aspect of this reading praxis can be demonstrated by the ample feminist literary interpretations that have looked at the novels in this dissertation where the connection between author, protagonists and reader is expanded to connect to a "community of women readers" (Schweickart, 2008, p. 433).

The personal aspect of experiencing a change through fictional trauma narratives derives from the interaction of self with the text, something that happens regardless of individual circumstances, history or context. Reading *does* have the potential for personal change, in that once our personal faculties are activated, in particular the way our own memory interacts to shape meaning out of a trauma story, they are challenged to not resume their "original shape" (Iser, 1980, p. 54).

In this sense, reading is an experience in which the aspect of *understanding* is central, an aspect that may continue to be engaged with long after the reading of the actual text has concluded. Reading can involve the dissolution of "subject-object division that is otherwise prerequisite for all knowledge and all observation" (Iser, 1980, p. 66), thereby providing a rare entry into the heart of the experience of women's trauma, and potentially accessing personal depths of cognition, memory and feeling. This means that reading fictional trauma can be transformative,

as the reader alters the text to bring it to life and make sense, at the same time as interacting with her own story:

> In the act of reading, having to think something that we have not yet experienced does not mean only being in a position to conceive or even understand it, it also means that such acts of conception are possible and successful to the degree that they lead to something being formulated in us. (Iser, 1980, p. 67)

Readers' formulations of the 'unformulated' lie at the core of trauma exposition, whether non-fictional or fictional. As this provides the impetus that leads to the journey towards reconciliation of trauma, the reader is placed in the midst of such a reconciliatory process.

For women readers as Other based on their gender and race and/or sexual orientation etc., the identification with trauma that results from being an Other is a strong and realistic possibility. Such engagement with literature, occurring on a prospective deep, personal level is what bell hooks means when she comments on the ability of reading to be a part of the journey towards healing: "Reading inspirational writing is an essential part of self-recovery. We are sustained by one another's testimony when we find ourselves falling or falling into despair" (Hooks, 2005, p. 146).

While there is no definitive, single way in which a reader will react to fictional trauma narratives, the process of reading trauma does invite the deconstruction of Other and of self. Questions arise as to how the reading process and impact may differ if a male reader as opposed to a female, or a non-indigenous reader as opposed to an indigenous reader undertakes it. Nevertheless, the access that fictional trauma facilitates to "ourselves and so discover[s] what had previously seemed to elude consciousness" (Iser, 1980, p. 68), remains the pivotal relationship between reading and trauma.

Being a reader of fictional trauma narratives is a compelling and empowering part of ascertaining the sources of trauma, articulating and exposing trauma, and integrating it in a

world where trauma occupies a notoriously large position in people's lives. Moreover, when immersed in the mind of the characters, readers can become engaged in a version of what cognitive psychologists call "theory of the mind", or "the process by which humans attribute mental states, properties, and dispositions both to themselves and to their social cohorts ased on their actions (Herman, 2007, p. 253).

Other textual details may prompt readers to create in their minds a sense of a thinking being and their mental processes. These details, which resemble lived experiences, are called *qualia*, a term coined by philosophers of the mind and used by narrative theorists interested in the representation of consciousness[57]. Qualia may be defined as "the qualitative, experiential, or felt properties of mental states" that according to David Herman help readers envision characters' experience and, by extension, her/his consciousness (Levin, 2016, p. 693; Herman, 2009). Furthermore, qualia usually include a sense of time, place, human qualities, and a "personalistic" view (Herman, 2009, p. 140).

This theoretical too may help readers analyze narratives that are structured on symptoms of trauma, and help us see how such narratives stimulates readers' own perceptual and ethical frameworks by attempting to give readers access to experiences that are difficult to understand and sympathize with because they challenge normative Western conceptions of individual free will and trait-driven behavior (Vickroy, 2015, Herman, 2004).

Another crucial point is that a reader's background and familiarity with a topic, and readers' sensitivity to others, all condition reader's reactions to a novel. For example, I, a woman reader from Algeria, who lived and witnessed the Algerian crisis of the 1990s can relate and sympathize more with trauma narratives selected in this dissertation. Sultana for me represents

[57]See discussions of qualia as part of consciousness in Alan Palmer's *Fictional Mind* (2004), Antonio Damasio's *The Feeling of What Happens* (2000), Joseph Levin's *Qualia* (2016), and David Herman's *Story Logic* (2004).

not just the unbelonging of a woman, but the unbelonging of every Algerian women, including myself in that time.

Research has shown that readers are transported by becoming engaged in/or preforming the work that narratives set out for them, in a variety of ways. First, readers apply their own experience (which was my case) and knowledge structures to interpret textual events, for they must either bridge or acknowledge gaps left by the text (Vickroy, 2015). Second, readers develop schemas, attributing traits to characters more often than considering that their circumstances lead to behaviors (Gerrig, 1993). Third, readers become engrossed in manipulations of causal structure (Gerrig, 1993). Lastly, readers' investment in the consequences of a story or for a character is more likely if they are aroused by suspense, hopefulness, and the ability to use real-world knowledge (Gerrig, 1993).

In simpler words, readers like to anticipate and make predictive inferences. These performative tasks, along with the dynamic relations between writers, texts, and readers, which are unique to each novel, should disabuse anyone of easy conclusions about what readers might feel.

4.3. Culture of Cognition and Emotion in Women's Postcolonial Writings

Several critics thrive to signal for readers the effects of trauma in order to shape their cognitive frameworks. In the previous section, narratology proved to be an analytical tool to help identify how women writers produce writings that stimulates readers to envision mental states, and to demonstrate how cognition and emotion are key aspects of both storytelling and reading processes.

According to Vickroy, cognitive psychology provides additional analytical tools with which to tease out subtle or hidden motives and emotional effects buried deep within a narrative

(Vickroy, 2015). On another note, Scott has another approach to emotions in literary texts. Rather than understanding emotion as necessarily subjective or individualized, Scott regard it as a relational practice that may be socially or even politically determined (Scott, 2019). To put it another way, he argued that literary representations of emotion need not be interpreted solely at the level of character, individual psychology, or the contingencies of plotting, but could also be related to wider historical processes (Scott, 2019).

In *The Transmission of Affect,* Teresa Brennan makes a similar point, arguing that the feelings of "one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another" (Brennan, 2004, p. 3). Vickroy contends that research on readers' cognition while reading indicates that readers become absorbed in texts when are offered believable human situations and behaviors similar to them (Vickroy, 2015). Similarly, Keith Oatly and Jennifer Jenkins write:

> Emotions emerge when we encounter problems, uncertainties in life, when we do not know how to act. They tell us something is happening to which we should pay attention. Often they demand a creative response. What artists do is to bring vague feelings, the conflicts with others and within the self, the uncertainties that they represent, into awareness, giving them content and particularly by expressing them as works of art. (Oatly & Jenkins, 2014, p. 370)

Notably, many critics have legitimately questioned the presumption that readers can or should fully identify or emphasize with trauma victims. Some feminists and postcolonial critics reject the concept of empathy and particularly its assumed basis in "universal human emotions" (Keen, 2007, p. 161). These critics, according to Vickroy, see culture as the primary determinant of human life and behavior, rather than psychological mechanisms or responses to environment (Vickroy, 2015).

The cognitive scientist Antonio Damasio notes that our emotions are generally more observable for others than to ourselves (Damasio, 2000). This is especially evident in traumatic contexts

as Vickroy observed, where emotions are submerged and not accessible to the survivors who defend against them (Vickroy, 2015).

Sultana in *l'Interdite* (1993) can realize her behavior only belatedly, when she recalls hos others –Salah and Vincent – have seen her, and then she can break her trauma-induced haze and grasp her failure to recognize critical situations and to act. Similarly, we learn about of Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) and Tanga in *TTT* (1988) through the eyes of the other characters in the novels or from indirect authorial narration, which provide additional insights and express judgment of the traumatized.

Accordingly, these novels demonstrate the crucial effects the wounded have on observers and, through this focalization, on readers, whether they evoke sympathy, denial, or avoidance.

In *Fictional Minds,* Alan Palmer examines the narrative techniques writers use to show the connections of the "internal consciousness of characters to their external social and physical contexts (Palmer, 2004, p. 49). Notably, he does not distinguish between thought and action because "the concept of an action necessarily contains within it mental phenomena such as intentions and reasons" (Palmer, 2004, p. 76).

In other words, the narrator, in presenting a character's consciousness, connects it to its surrounding. The use of this device emphasizes the nature of consciousness as mental action and thereby brings together consciousness and physical action. Tracking these thoughts is useful in interpreting trauma as Vickroy remarks in *Reading Trauma Narratives* (2015), because though it is isolating, "trauma makes us confront how the individual mind is situated in larger contexts because its causes and consequences are rooted in the social world" (Vickroy, 2015, p. 22).

Tu t'Appelleras Tanga (1988) is a great example here; the protagonist Tanga's mentality has been afflicted by a gender and class-driven world order. Her mind is social in its inhibitions and

sense of duty, and operates within domestic spaces and other places of confinement (prison) to which society has relegated her.

The mechanism of trauma, how it is caused and perpetuated, and the potential to heal wounds are all dependent on social interconnections, through witnessing or healing relationships. Unfortunately, social interests or opinions can retraumatize or cause rejection of the traumatized. L'*Interdite*, *TTT*, and *Purple Hibiscus* all feature averse social environments in which trauma is denied and healing is thwarted. Denials, revulsion, and scapegoating characterize the response of witnesses who are implicated in victims' suffering. Though such reactions are depicted as normative responses, the different women authors also offer a critique of them by showing in detail the devastating isolation and abandonment others inflict on the wounded.

Trauma narratives complicate al already complex process of absorbing emotionally charged material. Narratives generally can make disturbing emotionally charged material (Vickroy, 2015). Furthermore, trauma narratives can offer context, a framework of cause and effect, and psychological insights that are not as readily available or as clear in real-life situations. One, then, asks, can these narratives change us emotionally or cognitively? Empathy seems important to the reading process but may not have lasting effects after the actual reading is done (Keen, 2007; Comer Kidd & Costano, 2013).

4.4.Trauma and the Theory of Narrative Empathy

In a remarkable article entitled *A Theory of Narrative Empathy*, Suzanne keen contends that fiction writers are likely to be among high empathy individuals because of their ability to describe an absent other's actions (Keen, 2006). In order to investigate what empathy invoked

by novels might do to and for readers, one begins with a psychological understanding of what direct experiences of empathy for individuals.

Keen defines empathy as follows:

> A vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect, can be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition, or even by reading. Mirroring what a person might be expecting to feel in that condition or context, empathy is thought to be precursor to its semantic close relative, sympathy. (Keen, 2007, p. 4)

Keen further explains that empathy is a relatively new term that has entered English in the early twentieth century and that the term have been described by philosophers such as David Huma and Adam Smith under the older term *sympathy* (keen, 2006). Notably, sympathy is feeling supportive emotions towards a situation or an individual i.e. feeling pity for the other's pain, while empathy literally translates to 'I feel your pain', that is why it is considered to be deeper than sympathy.

Keen also differentiates between personal distress and empathy, wherein the former "focuses on the self and leads not to sympathy but to avoidance" (Keen, 2006, p. 4). In empathy, we feel what we believe to be the emotions of others. Psychologist Martin Hoffman, for instance, believes that structural similarities in people's physiological and cognitive response system cause similar feelings to be evoked by similar events. In other words, Hoffman suggest that human beings are basically similar to one another, with a limited range of variations (Hoffman, 2012). However, Hoffman comes to the conclusion that these similarities are not enough to guarantee an empathic response. His views are more or less philosophical, thus, they will not be included in this dissertation.

Singer and her colleagues believe that our survival depends on effective functioning in social contexts, and that feeling what others feel, empathizing, contributes to that success. They

suggest that “our ability to empathize has evolved from a system for representing our internal bodily states and subjective feeling states to ourselves” (Singer et al., 2004, p. 1161).

In other words, empathy as Singer's group understands it participates in a theory of mind that links second order re-representations of others to the system that allows us to predict the results of emotional stimuli for ourselves.

In this sense, most trauma narratives, like the novels treated in this dissertation, aim to create reader empathy by testifying to the human experience of pain and locating the defensive mechanisms by which we survive it. Indeed, it provides some of the deepest meditations on our humanity in our reaction to stress and adversity. Recent studies indicate that character identification often invites empathy, even when the fictional character and reader differ from one another in all sorts of practical and obvious ways, but empathy for fictional characters appears to require only minimal elements of identity, situation, and feeling, not necessarily complex or realistic characterization (Keen, 2006; Kidd & Costano, 2013).

However, one ought to state that not all feeling states of characters evoke empathy. Indeed, Keen argues that empathetic responses to fictional characters and situations occur more readily for negative emotions, whether or not a match in details of experience exists. Finally, readers' experiences differ from one another, and empathy with characters does not always occur as a result of reading an emotionally evocative fiction (Keen, 2006).

Readers' empathy for situations depicted in fiction may be enhanced by chance relevance to particular historical, economic, cultural, or social circumstances, either in the moment of first publication or in later times, unexpectedly anticipated or prophetically foreseen by the novelist.

For examples the novels treated in this dissertation each has been written in a different year: l’*Interdite* (1993), *Tu t’Appelleras Tanga* (1988), and *Purple Hibiscus* (2004). Yet as a reader, as a female reader from Algerian, I could resonate and feel deep empathy for the protagonists’

pain and trauma. Partially because I know, for example, what it feels like to live in an era of *crisis*, and as a woman who lives in a patriarchal society, I know what it feels like to be silenced, to repress the trauma because it is still a taboo. This calls for the treatment of emotions and rationality, two separate and dichotomous features of our experiences that have been challenged in recent decades.

Notably, thinking and feeling belong to the same package for Antonio Damasio (2000). In a plethora of scientific works, he has shown that clinical patients suffering from emotional distress have cognitive difficulties. On the contrary, evolutionary psychologists Leda Cosmides and John Tooby believe that "one cannot sensibly talk about emotion affecting cognition because cognition refers to a language for describing all of the brain's operations, including emotions and reasoning, and not to any particular subset of operations"[58] (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000, p. 98).

Keen, however, does not take the view that differentiate because emotion and cognition because empathy itself involves both feeling and thinking. In this case, narrative empathy invoked by reading must involve cognition, for reading itself relies upon complex cognitive operations (Keen, 2007; Palmer, 2004). Yet overall, emotional response to reading is the more neglected aspect of what literary cognitivists refer to under the umbrella term cognition. This does not need to be so. The discipline of aesthetics, which has historical ties both to philosophy and to psychology, as well as to literary studies, has been interested for over a century in empathy as a facet of creativity and an explanation of human response to artworks (Keen, 2006).

Narrative theorists and novel critics have already singled out a small set of narrative techniques, such as the use of first person narration and the interior monologue of characters' consciousness

[58]Some scientists informally refer to "cogmotions" to emphasize the fusion of the two concepts in their research. See *Cognition: Theory and Applications* (2013).

and emotional states, as devices supporting character identification, contributing to empathetic experiences, opening readers' minds to others, changing attitudes, and even predisposing readers to altruism.

4.4.1. Reader's Empathy

As stated before, character identification invites empathy, even when the fictional character and reader differ from one another in all sorts of practical and obvious ways. This is observed with the selected novels of Calixthe Beyala and Chimamanda Ngozi. Even though both protagonists, namely Tanga and Kambili are from different counties and different cultures, I could pain and sorrow for their cases. According to Keen, empathy for fictional characters appears to require only minimal elements of identity, situation, and feeling, not necessarily complex or realistic characterization (Keen, 2006). On similar veins, not all feeling states evoke empathy; indeed, empathetic response to fictional characters and situations occur more readily for negative emotions, whether or not a match in details of experience exists.

However, for traumatized individuals, or survivors of rape and domestic violence, reading narratives of trauma can be a trigger to their own personal trauma. This calls for readers' experiences that differ from one another, and empathy with characters does not always occur as a result of reading an emotionally evocative fiction.

Several observations help to explain the differences in readers' responses. Most importantly, readers' empathic dispositions are not identical to one another. Some humans are more empathetic to real others and some feel little empathy at all.

The timing and the context of the reading experience matters: the capacity of novels to invoke readers' empathy changes over time, and some novels may only activate the empathy of their

first, immediate audience, while others must survive to reach a later generation of readers in order to garner an emotionally resonant reading (Keen, 2006).

4.4.2. Writer's Empathy

Novelists do not exert complete control over the responses to their fiction. Empathy for a fictional character does not invariably correspond with what the author appears to set up or invite. Keen describes situational empathy, which responds primarily to aspects of plot and circumstance, involves less self-extension in imaginative role taking and more recognition of prior (or current) experience (Keen, 2006). Moreover, a novelist invoking situational empathy can only hope to reach readers with appropriately correlating experiences. In the case of Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi, situational empathy is applicable because the generic and formal choices made by these authors in crafting fictional worlds play a role in inviting (or retarding) readers' empathic responses (Fludernik, 2014; Keen, 2006).

Novelists themselves often vouch for the centrality of empathy to original reading and writing and express belief in narrative empathy's power to change the minds and lives of readers. This belief mirrors their experiences as ready empathizers (Herman, 2007; Neimeyer & Levitt, 2021). Yet even the most fervent individuals of their empathetic imaginations realize that this key ingredient of fictional world making does not always transmit to readers without interference. Author's empathy can be devoted to socially undesirable ends that may be rejected by a disapproving reader.

Indeed, empathic distress at feeling with a character whose actions are at odds with a reader's moral code may be a result of success fully exercised authorial empathy. In the case of Beyala's Tanga, Algerian culture as well as Algerian readers, females or males, do not accept the idea of

two women touching each other, which was the case of Tanga and Anna-Claude, or insinuations of lesbianism because the moral code of the Algerian society disapproves sexuality, let alone homosexuality.

In this sense, both authors' empathy and readers' empathy have rhetorical uses, which come more readily to notice when they conflict in instances of empathic inaccuracy (discordance arising from gaps between an author's intention and a reader's experience of narrative empathy).

Experiences of empathic inaccuracy may contribute to a reader's outraged sense that the author's perspective is simply wrong, while strong concord in authors' empathy and readers' empathy can be a motivating force to move beyond literary response to prosocial action. This is actually reflected in Malika Mokeddem's terminology in l'*Interdite*. Notably, she uses terms like fundamentalists, and terrorists to describe the Algerian politics. There are some readers who do not tolerate her use of this terminology because they do not go along with her philosophy of life. The position of the reader, thus, with respect to the author's strategic empathizing in fictional world making limits these potential results.

It has been a commonplace of narrative theory that an internal perspective, achieved either through first person self-narration, or through authorial (omniscient) narration, that moves inside characters' minds, best promotes character identification and readers' empathy (Keen, 2006).

Wayne Booth, for instance, writes, "If an author wants intense sympathy for characters who do not have strong virtues to recommend them, then the psychic vividness of prolonged inside views will help him [or her]" (Booth, 1983, pp. 377-8). The technique also works for characters in which readers have a natural rooting interest, such as Ngozi's protagonist Kambili. Booth's detailed account of how authors use the inside view to promote sympathy by asserting: "By showing most of the story through the character's eyes, the author insures that we will travel

with the character rather than stand against him/her" (Booth, 1983, p. 245). Ngozi, one of the Nigerian masters of narrated monologue to represent characters' consciousness, crafts smooth transitions between her narrator's generalizations about characters' mental states (psycho-narration) and transcriptions of their inner thoughts, in language that preserves the tense and person of the narration.

Subsequent theorists have agreed that narrated monologue has a strong effect on readers' responses to characters. David Miall and Don Kuiken specifically mention the means of providing "privileged information about a character's mind," free indirect discourse, as especially likely to cue literariness and invite empathic decentering (Miall & Kuiken, 1999, p. 130). Sylvia Adamson arrives independently at a similar point, arguing that narrated monologue should be understood as "empathetic narrative" (Adamson, 2001, p. 85). In Adamson's language the representational technique and its ostensible effects fuse.

Most theories of narrative empathy assume that empathy can be transacted accurately from author to reader by way of a literary text. The comments of writers about their craft suggest the formation of a triangulated empathic bond (Keen, 2006).

In this way, authors' empathy contributes to the creation of textual beings designed to elicit empathic responses from readers. However, there is no guarantee that an individual reader will respond empathetically to a particular representation. Critics of empathy claim it results in misunderstanding or worse.

Finally, if a narrative situation devised to evoke empathy fails to do so, does the fault lie in the reader, or in the overestimation of the efficacy of the technique? According to Keen, to answer this type of questions, it should be first subjected to careful empirical testing before any aspect of narrative technique earns the label of ‘empathetic’.

Through trauma narratives, writers are able to re-create the lived experience and atmospheres surrounding the linkage of trauma with social oppression.

Notably, l'*Interdite* (1993), *Tu t'Appelleras Tanga* (1988), and *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) seem able to suggest connections between psychological and cultural trauma that would be more difficult to see without the psychological and experiential framework of narrative. In these novels, the African women writers, Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi demonstrated through Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili that fear drives those who traumatize others so as to dominate them, and fear leads to the aggressors to instill more fear in the traumatized so they will not challenge established power and norms, also knowns as the patriarchal system.

Conclusion

This last chapter focused more on the narrative strategies, as well as the relationship between the reader, the author, and the text. In demonstrating how trauma can be narrativized, how it can be voiced, African women authors, namely Mokeddem, Beyala, and Chimamanda followed narrative techniques that resists the unspeakability of trauma.

This chapter also presented Butler's and Foucault's account of self-narration in detail, outlining the emphasis she places on the constitutive relationality that troubles the self and the coherence of self-narration. Moreover, Butler's work showed how narrative coherence will be analyzed as a possibly hegemonic norm that can function to circumscribe traumatized individuals their narratives.

The chapter engaged in a comparison of representational literary strategies used by Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi, and the extent to which each work suggests the resolution of trauma, or the healing from trauma, for the female protagonists Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili.

The questions of whether and how such resolutions apply to the process of writing fictional trauma and reading about fictional trauma are posed by comparatively analyzing the issues of trauma resolutions for the writers, readers and societal context of each narrative. The chapter ended with the narrative of empathy that demonstrated how trauma fiction mediate on human responses to shock and how these narratives bring about awareness of emotions.

Research on readers' cognition have demonstrated that while reading, readers become absorbed in texts when they are offered believable reproductions of human situations and behaviors and are familiar to them, or when they can identify with characters, or at least be induced to care about what happens to them.

General Conclusion

> *You Write in order to change the world, knowing perfectly well that you probably can't, but also knowing that literature is indispensable to the world. . . . The world changes according to the way people see it, and you can alter, even by a millimeter, the way . . . people look at reality, then you can change it.*
>
> –James Baldwin

The aim of this dissertation was to demonstrate the creative feminine in writing psychological and cultural trauma in selected women's writings. The postcolonial trauma novels l'*Interdite* (1993), *TTT* (1988), and *Purple Hibiscus* (1988) highlight the impact of trauma of unbelonging, trauma of rape and sexual abuse, and trauma of domestic violence on women's experiences. Even if the protagonists Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili figure as the locus of pain and suffering, of violence and loss, each one continues to define her identity and life-story through testifying, witnessing, and narrating their wounds.

Family, in these texts, function simultaneously as the site of trauma. For instance, Sultana in *l'Interdite,* who experiences multiple traumas in her childhood, keeps striving for a sense of understanding and familial community even if she no longer feels a sense of belonging to either France and Algeria. Tanga in *TTT* keeps referring to her father, implicitly and explicitly, embarks on quest to find ways to voice her experience of rape to Anna-Claude, while Ngozi's Kambili yearns for human connections and relationships that might compensate for the home and family she never had.

The present research has attempted to explore psychological and cultural trauma in selected works of African women writers. In fact, Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi proved to be subversive and creative writers. Instead of giving up to the challenging and complex framework of trauma, they used it in a creative way to put words on their wounds.

Exploring how psychological traumas are disrupted through internal or external destructive forces, these novels share a political commitment to women, often in conjunction with a feminist commitment.

In addition, the dialogue between the three novels has revealed significant trauma literary techniques employed by Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi. Moreover, the selected novels displays a conscious attention to language, narrative, and the functions of self-narration. Indeed, postcolonial trauma novels are profoundly concerned with issues of voice and audience, listening and reading; the autodiegetic narratives of Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili contain gaps and rupture.

Literary trauma seem to be able to suggest connections and similar mechanisms affecting the individual and broader cultural pathologies. The psychological and experiential investigative framework that the selected narratives provide makes these connections easier to see.

Trauma in literary studies provides scenarios that confronts readers with subjective endurance in the face of crisis and conflict. In fact, literary trauma presents how defensive responses are created out of many types of wounding. In what has become a canonical text for trauma literary theory, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra makes the case that "trauma is a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence," one that unsettles our assumptions about knowledge and truth with the result that "the study of traumatic events poses especially difficult problems in representation and writing" (LaCapra, 2001, p. 41).

This way of characterizing trauma and its effects, with its emphasis on instability and on the thorny contradictions of representation that mirror the workings of language itself, meshes particularly well with the core claims of the literary theory known as deconstruction. Because deconstruction offers an approach that accounts for and even emphasizes these representational

gaps and disarticulations, it is perhaps not surprising that we find this close link between trauma theory and the literary discourse of deconstruction.

The key insight is that traumatic symptoms appear not only in our bodies and minds; they are also evident in language itself, and as a result, deconstruction as a literary approach has had a profound influence on trauma theory.

Deconstruction theory, thus, shaped what has become literary trauma, and gave rise to trauma narratives. Trauma narratives have emerged, over the past thirty years, as personalized responses to the catastrophic events such as wars, colonization, poverty, and sexual and physical assaults. Writers of these narratives see trauma as an indicator of social injustice or oppression and as the ultimate cost of destructive sociocultural institutions.

The selected novels of this dissertation offered valuable insights into the different psychological traumas: trauma of unbelonging, trauma of domestic violence, and trauma of rape and sexual abuse. First, by putting the traumatic experience into words, the African women writers challenge the first complex characterization of trauma, which us unrepresentability. In this regards, Luckhurst's claim that trauma may be unspeakable, because it is an overwhelming event, but this does not make of it unrepresentable (Luckhurst, 2008).

Second, by pinpointing the psychological trauma, the African writers of this dissertation bring to the surface social evasions of the psychological consequences of objectifying individuals. Readers are presented with analogues examples of a fraught, split, and at times dramatically overdetermined sense of being characteristic of trauma. Moreover, what these women have in common as authors is why I chose them for this dissertation: they refuse to be contained. The source of their power is the text, which is the tool they use to free themselves from the confines imposed by the dominant literary tradition. Each author understands trauma through her own

life experience and integrates this into her prose. The women in these texts force their way out of these confining spaces to reveal their value to the literary tradition.

This research showed that trauma narratives have a unique capacity to represent the interplay of environment and human emotions. Mokeddem, Beyala, and Ngozi were able to re-create lived experiences of women and atmospheres surrounding the linkage of psychological trauma with social oppression. Furthermore, their selected writings suggested a connection between psychological wounding and broader cultural pathologies that would be more difficult to see without the psychological and experiential framework of narrative. For example, in all of the three novels, l'*Interdite*, *TTT*, and *Purple Hibiscus*, fear dominates the protagonists' life, but it is not the kind of fear that silence them. On the contrary, it is this fear that pushed them to tell their stories, to find listeners and share their experiences as individuals, as women.

Indeed, in telling their stories, Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili shed light on women's endurance of painful dilemmas that they face by their cultures, past and present. In this sense, trauma is a common phenomenon because of the many stressors in the world, and its conceptualization helps one to measure the costs of human diminishment, violence, and objectification.

In their approaches to trauma from humanist, social, and political angles, the selected novels promote a progressive hope that situations might change. They portray change as beginning with growing consciousness of one's situation. Accordingly, trauma studies and trauma fiction's examinations of this experience have the potential to expand our culturally inculcated views of human complexity beyond the simple binary thinking that divides the world into right or wrong, guilty or innocent, possessed of free will or predetermined in one's action.

At last, narrative theory helped reminding us, readers, that there is ethical dynamics to the reading process. During reading, the viewpoints and backgrounds of narrator, implied author,

and reader all meet, and the reader must consider, among other things, what kind of case the author and narrator are making.

The novels I have discussed in this dissertation ask readers, especially female readers to identify with Sultana, Tanga, and Kambili in some way, often by channeling the reader's perspective through these protagonists. The traumatized protagonists' subsequent destructive behavior, although a sign of trauma, can make them difficult to sympathize with. One key challenge to readers of trauma novels is to give up the powerful cultural ideal of personal responsibility as an absolute.

In this research, different approaches were followed to demonstrate how different African women writers voice the wounds in selected novels. A comparative method was followed to find differences and similarities between Mokeddem's, Beyala's, and Ngozi's ways of writing about psychological and cultural trauma. However, it would be interesting, for further research, to develop a comparative study between male and female African writers and how they represent trauma through their writings.

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