African Women's Writing: Multiple Subjectivities and the Power of Storytelling

Priyanka Pareek

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

M.A degree in English Literature with a specialization

in Feminist and Gender Studies

Department of English

Faculty of Arts

University of Ottawa

Unceded Algonquin Territory

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the development of multiple subjectivities in the novels of Tsitsi Dangarembga, Buchi Emecheta, and Yaa Gyasi. Through this research I argue that African women's writing in fiction gives evidence to women's positions as custodians of history. Stories and narratives present African women's theorizing through research tools grounded in the history of their communities. I contend that the novels chosen for this study resist the homogenous and imperialistic understanding of African literature. Each writer's aesthetic style and play with language points towards the significance of the African female literary tradition.

The authors draw on new possibilities to present complex, contradictory and often intertwined experiences of women. Over the course of this thesis, I closely analyze three novels: *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Second-Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta, and *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi. My reading builds upon the importance of storytelling in relation to women's solidarity networks and communal relationships.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude towards Professor Thomas Allen whose belief in this project and constant support helped me persevere during difficult times. Your guidance has been instrumental during the course of this study.

I would also like to thank my family members, Roma Dutia, Monika Pareek, and Sayan Bhattacharjee for giving their invaluable feedback during the writing process. Without their support this project would not reach completion. Their intellectual and emotional support gave me the strength to go through this challenging journey.

Introduction

This study will focus on the different ways in which African women's writing has facilitated a distinct form of knowledge production. In the past the category of "postcolonial" has been contested by scholars for various reasons. Questions regarding what it signifies and the political implications of such a category continue to be analyzed in the present day: Can colonialism be identified as the central defining moment of a nation's history? Does the enormity of the colonial experience fundamentally redefine the structure of native society? What modes of recovery can be developed in order to articulate the experiences of the colonized? African women writers explore these questions with the added axis of gender. They engage in the practice of "perpetual wrestling with the concept of the literary" (McLeod 451). By identifying the limitations of western literary tools of inquiry, African women writers constantly "resculpt and refashion a sense of what constitutes the literary" (McLeod 451). Through this exploration, these writers develop new methods of literary creativity. In grounding their narratives in the tradition of storytelling, these writers highlight the pre-existing tools of knowledge production in non-Western societies. These narratives throw light upon imperialism's legacy in projecting the colonizer's cultural practices as universal. These themes are central to the three novels I have chosen for this study: *Nervous Conditions,* by Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Second-Class Citizen,* by Buchi Emecheta, and *Homegoing*, by Yaa Gyasi. The novels highlight how African women's lived experiences are both deeply rooted in the pre-colonial past and shaped by the encounter with the colonizer. The stress upon recovering the past does not glorify traditional practices, but gives evidence to the existence of social, political, and economic groups in pre-colonial societies. The history of the continent, therefore, is redefined through the lens of the colonized.

In the early years after independence from colonial rule, literary expectations were shaped by nationalist sentiments. In the African context, Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò rightly notes that "every time African scholars are forced into these sterile but needed efforts to assert that we *are* or we *think*, the urgent tasks of identifying and explicating *what* we are and *what* we think remain undone or partly done" (Táwò 46). African women's position is rendered more complex because, during colonial rule, "scholarship [and access to colonial education] was encouraged for the African male, but not so for the African female" (Oyebolu 111). Both *Nervous Conditions* and *Second Class Citizen* represent this reality in fictional form as Tambu and Adah's brothers' educations are prioritized. Colonization changed the fabric of native social structures to minimize the significant agency women had traditionally exerted in favor of more patriarchal communities modeled on Victorian ideals. Colonial agents did not see women's status as their focus, nor did they offer "any possibility of extending the realm of 'civil society' to African women as was a possibility available to a small number of male African elites" (Ossome 160). Women, therefore, arrived late to the African literary canon as their methods of theorizing were overshadowed by the concerns of the African male writer representing the national consciousness. In tracing the development of the African novel, Christine N. Ohale argues that "in spite of critical success enjoyed by these authors, all male, the dearth of a strong female presence is apparent in their works and presents an unbalanced picture of African rural life, ignoring the important roles that women have played and continue to play in African society" (1).

Placing African women's writing as part of a female literary tradition allows the readers to have an in depth analysis of a unique aesthetic style. In reshaping the literary canon, African women conceptualize their lived realities in contrast to the formal codes of the English novel as

well as the concerns of the African male literary canon. In inserting themselves as category and subject of analysis, African women's writing throws light upon the biases present in canon formation. The African literary canon in its early years, as Florence Stratton argues, was predominantly shaped by male artists: "the prime duty of an African writer in the first few years after independence was, according to [Chinua] Achebe, to restore dignity to the past" (Stratton, "Contemporary" 22). By presenting an alternative discourse in opposition to racial codes of English novels such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, writers such as Chinua Achebe were resolved to restore the dignity of the African subject. Multiple models of analysis by African male writers cater to a similar goal which conceptualizes African and third world literature shaped by a set of socio-political conditions. Gender, therefore, is subsumed under umbrella terms where the African subject is predominantly male. Any analysis giving evidence to gender is available when "in the project of nation building, the African woman is used as a symbol of virtue in the African world" (Eze 11). Such an analysis fails to uncover African women's subjectivity shaped by interlocking experiences of colonial subjugation as well as the patriarchal domination of traditional societies.

The focus on multiple subjectivities in African women's writing enables the African woman to assume the role of the speaking subject as opposed to one being spoken for. The woman is no longer a symbolic figure for national regeneration. The use of multiple subjectivities in African women's writing illuminates the lives of individual African women in relation to their pain and pleasures, community life, as well as how they perceive the world (Eze 14). Such an analysis moves away from and beyond the hasty generalizations about women's condition in postcolonial societies. The approach of focussing on individual identity development in relation to the community allows for a holistic understanding of women's

struggle with patriarchy and imperialism. Novels by African women writers, especially the novels chosen for this study, can be understood as self-reflexive. The narratives resist the nationalist agenda prevalent in other works by male writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and "offer a corrective to the dominant theory in postcolonial studies that African literature's main preoccupation is to subvert the colonial metropolis" (Mwangi 2). The shift, instead, is towards multiple sites of identity formation in African literature. Women's writing uses gender and sexual relations as a category of analysis to understand the effects of colonialism as well as internal forms of oppression. The novels, therefore, should be read as projects of presenting women's lived experiences as well as state of being. This study resists a western reading of the texts which gives more importance to "non-Western literatures in order to give priority to the very European cultures that produced that ethics" (Mwangi 4). My analysis of the novels suggests that African women's experiences and struggles are not unidirectional. Their multiple subjectivities are shaped by how they interact with the world around them.

Discussions introduced through the novels trace women's identity development in navigating their social and economic marginality in both native and colonial societies. The novels allow readers to find multiple departure points into finding "one's slippery and always-contingent sense of self constituted by being in the midst of something of unknown duration and of unknown outcome" (Nash 9). All three texts represent culturally specific experiences of women in Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Nigeria. Analyzing these texts under the lens of a female literary tradition reveals their successful integration of "myths, rites, and social practices" (Stratton 97). The identification of specific cultural elements in these novels illuminates women's position in different societies as distinctively unique. The specificity of women's location and their social institutions, however, allows for the development of multiple

subjectivities in African women's writing. This research study identifies a meeting point for all three texts in the authors' assertion that cultural contact with the West brought about by colonial intervention "resulted in a deterioration in the condition of women, and … in suppression of once-powerful feminine values" (Stratton 97).

The colonial vocabulary is dependent on stories of different countries that would eventually come under colonial rule and the construction of the colonized as heathens in the need of civilization and culture. Imperialist projects have been dependent on disseminating information by fabricating stories of African communities in need of cultural regeneration. Frantz Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the Earth* that native societies were conceptualized through the absence of values (Fanon 40). Stories, however, "also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (Rothberg 308). Women writers use the tradition of storytelling as a medium of recovery and connection to the past. These authors highlight women's historical role as storytellers in order to show how storytelling has been a tool of survival of a women's tradition. The mixture of past and present in the novels places women as custodians of their history. In preserving their connection to history through stories, they critique the colonial roots of 'History' built on imperialistic values. For example, in *Nervous Conditions* Tambu's relationship with her grandmother is rooted in the stories the grandmother narrated to Tambu, which took the form of "history that could not be found in the textbooks; a stint in the field and a rest, the beginning of the story, a pause" (Dangarembga 17). Similarly, in *Second-Class Citizen* the protagonist as a young child is reminded by her community of her hometown, Ibuza, where the food was fresh, "the spring water was pure and the air was clean" (Emecheta 3). The stories of her hometown represent a connection to the pre-colonial past and the negation of metropolitan values. Finally, in

Homegoing the author develops the art of storytelling as a medium of recovery from traumatic experiences. When the first character in the novel, Esi, is enslaved, she relies on the stories of the past to find the strength to survive the brutality of the slave trade (Gyasi 30).

The genre of the novel provided new possibilities to present complex, contradictory and often intertwined experiences of women. It destabilized and restructured the constitution of the feminine condition by male writers in fiction. The representation of multiple subjectivities in African women's writing opened up the avenue of imagining and representing women's lives through the quotidian activities both inside and outside of the domestic space. Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi argues that African women's writing presents a set of contradictions that cannot be read as a "mimetic economy" or only as oppositional; such texts "offer alternative scripts that subvert internal systems of power, texts whose gaze is not necessarily directed toward the colonialist text" (261). African women's writing and female subjectivity move beyond western theoretical concepts of subject/object dichotomy. Women move fluidly from center to margin by adopting the status of "outsider within" (Collins 514).

Subjectivity operates on different scales in various socio-political contexts. My concern is to throw light upon the distinct ways in which African women's writing operates to provide narratorial freedom by building upon multiple subjectivities. However, as a researcher I take some caution and tread carefully by drawing a clear contrast between postcolonialism in feminist discourse as "a free floating metaphor for cultural embattlement" and an "obsolete signifier for the historicity of race" (Suleri 339). In "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition", Sara Suleri argues that postcolonial feminist analysis often results in the "objectification of its proper subject" (339). The glorification and celebration of oppressions results in a distancing from discursive theoretical frameworks. Therefore, the central concern is

to explore the construction of subjectivities through different narratives. The relationship between "subject, signifier and cultural order" (Silverman 150) is rendered more complex with the introduction of ideology. The subject "I" is located within a particular ideological apparatus. The literary text has the capacity to subvert this model as it is constantly relying on its relationship with the subject's imagination. The imaginary becomes the site of a Lacanian split between the socialization of the subject through language in the symbolic order, and the role of the unconscious in pushing against these boundaries and creating multiple subjectivities for the "I" in the novel. Multiple subjectivities are based on and conceptualized through difference, and "'I' is, therefore, not a unified subject, a fixed identity, or that solid mass covered with layers of superficialities one has gradually to peel off before one can see its true face. 'I' is, itself, infinite layers" (Trinh 94).

The first chapter focuses on Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* by discussing the various socio-cultural practices shaping women's lives in Zimbabwe. Dangarembga produces a narrative structure that presents African women's writing and subjectivity by centering women's experiences. The narrative strategies used in the novel emphasize the communal ethos of women's lives within the community by invoking the tradition of storytelling as women's connection to their past. I begin my analysis with Dangarembga's text due to the novel's focus on female solidarity in surviving the oppressive practices of colonial times. The author allows most female characters in the novel to have an independent voice in asserting their right to self-determination. The story flawlessly designs the characters to present their lives at the intersection of tradition, gender, and colonialism. Dangarembga attempts to subvert the structure of the classic Bildungsroman by moving against the assumptions of literary individualism. The author chooses to focus on two female characters and center the narrative on their lives in

Rhodesia. Many critics have argued that Tambu's journey from poverty to entering middle class society traces Tambu's "develop[ment] during the course of the novel into an individualized and bourgeois subject" (Andrade 28). My analysis of *Nervous Conditions,* however, will throw light upon the ways in which the author resists the traditional structure of the literary text. I will focus on how Tambu's journey is complemented by that of Nyasha, a rebel, who presents a different worldview and pushes her cousin to think differently about race and colonialism. In other words, this chapter will delve deeper into the networks of solidarity between women that contribute towards Tambu's developing critique of colonial education. The lead character's subjectivity is constantly shaped by the women in her life, including her mother and grandmother. Women's relationships in the novel develop in opposition to colonial education. Dangarembga presents colonial education as a tactic used by the colonizers to erase an individual's sense of self and community. The novel traces the process of erasure in the psychological violence facilitated by the imposition of an alien culture. Dangarembga builds upon Fanon's treatise *The Wretched of the Earth to* conceptualize colonial violence as gendered. The construction of gendered subjects facilitates a nuanced understanding of women's struggles under colonial rule. The novel suggests that the individual does not shape the community, but the community shapes the individual. Identity formation in Dangarembga's novel is not an attempt to dismantle or build a new understanding of subjectivity; instead, the text presents a grid of relationships shaped by courage and solidarity in the quotidian. Dangarembga refuses to fit the text in a mold of eurocentric literary expectations of focussing solely on individual aspirations. *Nervous Conditions,* therefore, presents the lived experiences of women rooted in African women's culture and tradition.

My analysis of Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* constitutes the second chapter of this project. The novel presents an intimate understanding of marriage, motherhood, race, and African identity in the diaspora. For the purpose of this study, the analysis will delve deeper into the author's conceptualization of identity formation in relation to tradition and modernity. Set during the period of Nigerian independence, the novel presents an entrypoint in looking at the aftermath of colonial rule. The chapter will argue that the protagonist in the novel is placed at the intersection of tradition and modernity. In *Second-Class Citizen* tradition is located in women's social practices in pre-colonial society, and modernity in the novel is presented through the development of colonial education. By drawing upon Adah's experiences, the chapter will highlight the different tools of survival used by women to subvert and resist unjust practices. I aim to problematize Adah's position as a woman in the patriarchal Nigerian society by juxtaposing it with her experiences as a second class citizen in London owing to her race. Most of her life in Nigeria is presented as a medium of looking back in time. The nostalgia for life in Nigeria is always in conflict with Adah's present position in British society. She comes to understand race as a marker of her inferiority, something she should be ashamed of. On the other hand, identity in Africa is marked by differences of gender, language, location and culture, but not primarily race. This chapter attempts to focus on this tension between Adah's identity as a Nigerian woman and her socialization in Western practices through colonial education. The chapter, therefore, builds upon the overarching perspective on African women's subjectivity as constantly shifting. Adah's life in Nigeria presents interesting entry points into Emecheta's understanding of women's lives in the society. The novel is, in part, an autobiographical account of Emecheta's life, and the chapter will highlight some key sections of the text where the protagonist resembles the author's aspirations. Motherhood, in the novel, is linked to Adah's

socialization in middle-class Nigerian society; simultaneously, it is also shown as a source of immense courage as she battles her way out of an abusive marriage for her children. Finally, the chapter will argue that *Second Class Citizen* does not glorify colonial education or reject women's social practices rooted in tradition. The novel does, however, identify the limitations and benefits of both, presenting a unique synthesis of the past and present centered on women's emancipation. The chapter attempts to explain how race, motherhood, and gender intersect to form multiple subjectivities dependent on endurance and survival.

The third chapter of this study focuses on Gyasi's *Homegoing.* I begin with the novel's centering of the black female experience to understand the implications of the transatlantic slave trade. The text refuses to engage with traditional Western historiography as a means of knowing Ghana's colonial past. In contrast, the narrative relies on orality and storytelling across communities as it turns the gaze inwards to start a conversation about Ghana's role in the slave trade. My analysis of the novel delves deeper into Gyasi's development of female descendancy and its relationship with trauma. The figure of the matriarch and her two daughters' respective lineages are linked through the experiences of generational violence of colonialism and race. The chapter provides historical context for the various events in the novel and their varied effects on each character. This is not to suggest that the significance of Ghana as one of the first independent post-colonial nations is not established in the novel. Gyasi's story refuses to provide a resolution with the past, but presents different stories as an assemblage of belongings in different spaces of history. The novel places the individual's relationship with history where the subject resists and confronts the epistemic violence of the colonizer. On the other hand, the novel presents history as storytelling in order to recover the lost connection to the past. As the novel shifts in time and space, I conceptualize violence and trauma in *Homegoing* that is felt

over generations through a narrative that does not "shy away from depicting a pre-colonial past or detailing the contact zone between colonizer and colonized" (Haensell 158). Gyasi presents a matrilineal storyline to give evidence to the importance of women in pre-colonial society. The plot follows each character in relation to the figure of the matriarch. I argue that in creating seven generations of a family tree, Gyasi attempts to understand identity formation that is shaped not through a single event, but a fragmented continuation of the past. The novel's ending has often been analyzed as Gyasi's attempt to provide a resolution to colonial and racial violence. My analysis will suggest that the author presents the simultaneity of experience, not as a resolution, but as an act of giving evidence of a shared past that is shaped by the labour of love and endurance.

Analyzing the African women's literary tradition requires understanding the issues at stake in African womanist thought that influence the novels chosen for this study. This research study, in line with African womanist tradition, aims to establish that African women's writing cannot be imagined in opposition to the Western literary tradition. The novels chosen for this study, therefore, should be understood as African women's critique of "women's deliberate silencing in colonial historiography" (Ossome 160). At the same time, the novels give evidence to the existence of "different interpretations of history and different narratives, depending on where one is positioned , in terms of power relations" (Christian, "Fixing" 7). *Nervous Conditions* was first published in 1988, while *Second-Class Citizen* was published in 1974. Though published over a fourteen year gap, both novels present their protagonists' coming of age journeys through their analysis of colonial modernity. The protagonists in both novels are shaped and influenced by colonial education. Both novels, therefore, present women's position in Nigeria (*Second-Class Citizen*) and Zimbabwe (*Nervous Conditions*) towards the latter years of

colonial rule in both countries. The narratives depict the already solidified colonial institutions of the church and state. Both novels span the time frame of colonial rule and the move towards national redefinition through independence. The analysis of African identities and their relationship with race, however, is incomplete without the holistic understanding of the dividing line between what it means to be African and African American: the middle passage (Christian, "Fixing" 7). *Homegoing* takes the readers on a journey of presenting the "four-hundred-year holocaust that wrenched tens of millions of Africans from their motherland" (Christian, "Fixing" 7). The novel locates the diaspora in the intricate relationship between the African and African American subject. It traces the development of colonial power structures from the early years of the slave trade to race in modern America. Diaspora, therefore, "represents a global space, a worldwide web, that accounts as much for the mother continent as for wherever in the world her offspring may have been driven by the unkind forces of history" (Okpewho 9). The different temporalities presented in this research study, therefore, urge the readers to engage with the African perspective in a transnational context.

Chapter One

Sisterhood and Community in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

Tstitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* has been analyzed through various lenses: a postcolonial novel, a bildungsroman, an autobiographical fiction, and a novel that is a contribution to African womanist theory and practice. The novel is an amalgamation of different cultures that Dangarembga herself was influenced by. To simplify, *Nervous Conditions* is a project in reviving as well as bearing witness to the history of the nation of Zimbabwe, and the lives of women navigating within the boundaries of community and nation. Many critics have extensively commented on the novel as an autobiographical fiction. This is due to the resemblance of some events in the novel with Dangarembga's own life since the author also completed part of her education in England, like one of the characters in the novel. When asked in an interview if *Nervous Conditions* is autobiographical, Dangarembga stated that she feels strongly about the content matter as the novel is deeply influenced by her own life and the lives of the women around her, as well as what she felt strongly about when the novel was written (Mule 95). Though there are connections present with the author's life, she presents the narrator's voice in contrast to characters who represent Dangarembga's personal experiences including Nyasha who can be considered most closely linked to the author. The contrast between the narratorial voice and other characters in the novel pushes the readers to rethink their ideas around conventional autobiographies and memoirs. By choosing Tambu as the narrator, Dangarembga has presented a voice that African women can relate to (Mule 95). Tambu is more acceptable as the narrator as she has a deeper connection with the past to understand the significance of the events that unfold in the novel. Her relationships with her grandmother,

mother and other characters in the novel allow Tambu to oscillate between the stories of the past and its effects on the present. The position of the narrator is intimately interwoven with the lives of other women, and include the cultural polity (Mule 97). This chapter will draw upon these relationships to understand different traditions of women's resistance and solidarity networks in *Nervous Conditions*. The understanding of Dangarembga's narrative will conclude that Western feminist theories are limited in the case of Africa as it considers the continent a homogenous unit (Táíwò 62). By reading the novel in the context of African womanist thought as a theoretical framework of its own, this chapter will reinstate the need to understand the history of Zimbabwe through the narratives of women presented by an African woman writer such as Tsitsi Dangarembga.

The understanding of Dangarembga's relationship to postcolonial theory is one of the most important links to the arguments I make in this chapter. Dangarembga's choice of the title and epigraph refers to Jean-Paul Sartre's statement in the preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*: "the status of 'native' is a nervous condition" (18). Dangarembga did not limit her response to Fanon only with the title. The novel is continuously broaching upon debates around national culture. The stark contrast and polarity shown between Tambu and Nyasha can be associated with various arguments that Fanon presents in *The Wretched of the Earth*. It is through different encounters with the culture of the colonizer that Tambu, as the narrator, begins to unravel. The colonizer's worldview is presented through Babamukuru, and the conflict between colonial and pre-colonial history is presented through Nyasha. As Fanon argues that colonialism erases the native's grounding in culture, community and nation, similarly Dangarembga's response to Fanon is conceptualized from the point of view and lived experiences of the women contesting and resisting the colonizer's worldview. Dangarembga's word play with the title as

well as the conversations within the novel can be seen as an attempt to draw attention to the position of the colonized woman in the same way that Fanon argues, "to educate the masses politically is to make the totality of the nation a reality to each citizen" (Fanon 200). The key difference between Dangarembga and Fanon's approaches in educating the masses is that the former pushes for the realization that the "citizens" and people Fanon refers to should be understood as gendered subjects.

Revolving around the overarching theme of women's subjectivity and identity construction, this chapter will look at the different relationships between the female characters in the novel. The complications and layers present in the relationship between Tambu and Nyasha, Tambu and her mother, Nyasha and Maiguru, and Lucia and the other male characters, present different entry points into the discussion of multiple subjectivities narrated from the point of view of Tambu. By throwing light upon instances from the novel that represent an intimate space for women, I will locate women's resistance both inside and outside the domestic space. Themes that come up with the understanding of these relationships, for example, motherhood, colonial modernity, women's community building, their relationship to history, and women's position as storytellers are building blocks in the larger spectrum of women's subjectivity in the novel. Naturally, Dangarembga's attempt is not to present a homogenous identity for African women, or women in Zimbabwe, but it is a narrative that gives voice to the most mundane practices that shape the lives of these women, and in turn give them the strength to operate within patriarchal and colonial structures. Therefore, it would be reductive to conceptualize *Nervous Conditions* as a bildungsroman since Tambu's journey is not hers alone, but, as the narrator states, "the story I have told here, is my own story, the story of four women whom I loved, and our men, this story is how it began" (Dangarembga 304). The assertion at the end of the novel that the story narrated

is a beginning is a clear indication that the story is not complete. By leaving the ending unfinished, Dangarembga subverts the conventional structure of Bildungsroman. It is not the story of the lead character and their maturation towards a fulfilling end. Tambu as the narrator looks back to her life as an adolescent girl by constantly problematizing her interactions with different characters in the novel. The older Tambu does not see this as a finished process, but one that attempts to answer questions about whether or not successful integration is possible through colonial modernity, and how it affects the women and their community.

Tambu as the narrator and Tambu as the lead character accomplish different roles in the novel. Tambu as the narrator makes the controversial statement in the beginning of the novel, "I was not sorry when my brother died" (Dangarembga 1). The statement is equally speculative and controversial as the reader does not expect for the narrative to begin this way. There are multiple reasons for why Tambu's statement has made critics uncomfortable: it represents a young woman who is showing resistance towards mourning the death of her brother. Robert Muponde argues that in Shona it makes Tambu *"haazi munhu"* (She is not a person/a human), or *"hapana zvemunhu"* (She is not a proper human/person or there is no human you can see in her)" (Muponde 79). Or it is a statement that describes on a fundamental level what it means to be a woman in her society? (Nfah-Abbenyi 35). Tambu's character has a complex role in the novel as she is constantly shown as a subject wanting to exercise self-determination; her development is also in line with the "development of the national bourgeoisie and the hope of the New Woman in particular" (Andrade 46). Tambu is deeply motivated to fight for her right to education, and on the surface that struggle shapes the character's need to leave behind her own life. As the novel progresses, there is a split in what Tambu hoped to achieve in the beginning, as opposed to her realization of the real issues at stake at the end of the novel. Tambu as the narrator looks back at

her younger self and traces its development in relation to the community, and not in relation to the education Tambu receives at the mission and Sacred Hearts. The education at the mission is placed in opposition to the "psychological development and social success to have been made possible through the community of women in whose company she comes of age" (Andrade 36).

Tambu's story in the beginning of the novel is attached and shaped by the death of her brother. The first three chapters give evidence to Tambu's resentment of Nhamo, leading to his eventual death and Tambu's journey to the mission. The resentment lies due to the lack or absence of opportunities for Tambu to receive an education, or imagine a life outside the domestic space. In case of any patriarchal backdrop, Tambu is confined under the future of being a wife, mother, and daughter. The realization of her fate is continuously broached by Nhamo in the beginning of the novel. He is the chosen one, and the young Tambu sees the opportunities given to him as an escape from poverty, and easy access to better resources. Through the course of the first three chapters, it is easier for readers to understand or analyze the first assertion made by the narrator that she was not sorry when her brother died.

The development of Tambu's subjectivity begins with her unconscious submission to everything that Nhamo and the mission represent: education, prosperity, and modernity. Tambu's interactions with the men in the novel, mainly her uncle Babamukuru, Nhamo and her father Jeremiah, reassert what she already knows about herself: she is a woman therefore not fit for education, and she has been given the opportunity to study only due to the absence of a male child in the event of Nhamo's death. The relationship between girlhood and death asserts that "oppressed female life can only find full expression in the absence or death of certain kinds of male figures" (Muponde 78). The death of the male child opens all doors for Tambu to access something that was never meant for her to begin with.Tambu's escape in the novel is linked with

colonial education, but it is set against the backdrop of the second Chimurenga struggle in 1968 Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Although the narrative shies away from discussing the war of liberation, it builds an internal war of liberation for both Tambu and the women in the novel against patriarchy,colonialism as well as neo-colonialism (Muponde 83).

The Chimurenga struggle also known as the war for national liberation is one of the most defining moments in the history of the nation. The novel, however, does not take a direct path in addressing the guerilla war which would have been gathering momentum in the 1970s. Rhodesia was a white settler colony and it came into existence after the division of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1963, as a result Zambia and Malawi became independent states. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence adopted in 1965 declared Rhodesia as a sovereign state, but it did little to nothing for the population as power remained with the minority white population which formed most of the government (Andrade 27). It was only after the Chimurenga, fought by the Zimbabwean liberation movement that the country's population was experiencing a free nation. Dangarembga's choice to not delve deeper into the struggle for national liberation is due to her focus on the struggle for liberation by gendered subjects. By focussing on both public and private spheres of social communication, Dangarembga places the quest for national liberation as closely linked and inseparable from the lives of the women in the novel and their understanding of the nation. Dangarembga asserts that women's relationship to the nation and their shared aspirations are crucial to the project of decolonization.

Tambu's relationship with the women in the novel becomes a source of staying connected to where she comes from. The introduction of three generations of women begins with Tambu's grandmother: "Mbuya" (Dangarembga 17). Tambu's position as a storyteller is heavily influenced by her grandmother's role in introducing her to the art of storytelling. Tambu

introduces the character as a history teacher, giving lessons in “history that could not be found in the textbooks; a stint in the field and a rest, the beginning of the story, a pause” (Dangarembga 17). The story Mbuya weaves is of the “white wizard”, and his farm. The white wizard lures the family into slavery through the promise of “riches and luxury” (Dangarembga 18). From the farm, the story then moves on to the grandfather’s death, and Mbuya’s struggle to raise six children by herself. In the hope of escaping poverty and death due to starvation, Mbuya travels to the mission as she hears of “ beings similar in appearance to the wizards but not of them, for these were holy” (Dangarembga 19). Babamukuru’s entry to the mission is set up as an escape from a life of slavery, and working in the mines. Now, he is placed under the guidance of the “holy wizards” as compared to the wizards Mbuya describes as well versed in “treachery and black magic” (Dangarembga 18). What Mbuya passes down to Tambu is the story of where her family comes from, and the story of their survival. The survival, however, is presented on one hand through the evils of slavery in the context of bonded labour, and on the other hand through the justification for the exploitation of the native by the entry of the “holy wizard” and the mission that saves the family.

The retelling of this story introduces two important themes in the novel: women’s position as custodians of history, and Tambu’s first understanding and submission to colonial modernity. Women as custodians of history exercise the agency to shape the story of the community in relation to their own lives. As storytellers, they present the intimate relationship between the family and community as a survival tactic.Mbuya’s memory serves as a tool for accessing a past which is violent, but also bears witness to the resilience of women against colonial domination. What Tambu remembers of her relationship with her grandmother is that she was a strong woman who took necessary measures for the sake of her children. It is a

relationship that connects and grounds Tambu to her roots and community. The idea that her history lies outside and beyond the life she has known in the homestead, allows Tambu to have an imaginative mind.

Tambu's grandmother's use of storytelling to connect Tambu to her ancestry is an important aspect of the novel in analyzing women's role as custodians of history (Nfah-Abbenyi 64). Their stories come from what they know, and have lived through.The knowledge of the past is passed down by Mbuya to her granddaughter while working on the land they have built their lives around.The stories that connect Tambu to her community and ancestry will later serve as a resistance tool against colonial education.The reader is acutely made aware of silent acts of solidarity through stories shared while working in the garden, or cooking in the kitchen and passing on the practices and rituals that ground the women in the novel. There should be caution observed in looking at the relationship between women in the novel unriddled by complications. *Nervous Conditions* resists the idea of providing a single axis analysis of the roles of women. Going back to the point mentioned earlier, even though the novel shies away from discussing the nationalist struggle, and should not be considered a national allegory, it still provides different paths towards identity development by independently focussing on the women in the novel.By locating the lives of these women in a domestic space, the novel builds a connection between womanist struggle and national consciousness (Zwicker 10). The nationalistic sentiment is not present to reduce the text to a national allegory. The project of the novel is not to establish the nation as an abstraction, but to understand identity building in relation to nationalism (Zwicker 10). The readers are urged to confront and understand the different ways in which the subject's relationship with the nation is dependent on their lived experience; for example Tambu does not push herself to question systems of domination early in the novel, while on the other hand

Nyasha is able to deconstruct and politicize issues of missionary education and women's right to self determination.

Nyasha's character in the novel can be considered as important as Tambudzai, since Tambu's aspirations as a young girl are often contradicted by Nyasha's outlook of the world. Nyasha, being the daughter of Babamukuru, spends half of her life as a young girl in England. The child is educated in English, and therefore has forgotten her Shona. The act of forgetting the native language is illustrated by Tambu in her first encounter with Nyasha after years: "I had not expected my cousins to have changed, certainly not so radically, simply because they had been away for a while, Besides Shona was our language. What did people mean when they forgot it?" (Dangarembga 42). Tambu's inability to understand the reasons for Nyasha to not speak in Shona indirectly conceptualizes Nyasha as the "other". Though they are cousins, Tambu is bewildered by the changes she sees in her cousin as Tambu does not understand the significance of the journey to England and the consequences of the same. The estrangement from her own family, and the disconnect from her surroundings, becomes the root cause of Nyasha's struggle in the novel. Nyasha finds herself to be on the margins of both societies, having lost her language, she is unable to fit into the African community, as well as the white society that was not built for her. The novel introduces Nyasha's independent voice in the first conversation between her and Tambu on the latter's first day on the mission. Nyasha explains why she had "forgotten what home was like" (Dangarembga 78). The conversation opens up the door for Tambu and Nyasha to connect as Tambu begins to feel sympathetic for her cousin when she states, "the parents ought to have packed us off home. They should have, you know. Lots of people did that. Maybe that would have been best. For them at least because now they're stuck with hybrids for

children" (Dangarembga 78). The intimacy between Tambu and Nyasha is a core aspect for the development of their subjectivities.

Nyasha's search to find who she really is, and her identity development in the novel is shaped by multiple conflicts with the patriarchal order, and the enforcing of colonial education. In the nuclear family unit, Babamukuru expects Nyasha to be civilized and trained under Western education, but also follow the traditional values of being a dutiful and agreeable daughter as established by Shona culture. In this context, Tambu represents what is seen as a lack in Nyasha. For Nyasha, to connect with her cousin, or term herself a "hybrid" in conversation with Tambu is a way of letting Tambu in on her quest to find an unfragmented self. The goal, however, proves to be untenable as "she has … been stripped of the tools with which to be African" (Aegerter 237). Dangarembga shapes Nyasha's character with a sense of deep rooted displacement and longing for the African identity.The self which has been eroded by colonial intervention constantly tries to reinvent itself through various mediums. Nyasha, in the novel, tries to find tools for self expression through books, language, different practices such as baking, or listening to music. All attempts, however, are met with staunch resistance by Babamukuru. Nyasha is forbidden to read a book by D.H Lawrence on the basis that it is not appropriate for her, and when she tries to protest, the finality of her position is summed up by her father in the statement, "I expect you to do as I say" (Dangarembga 84) . Nyasha's need for cultural expression is directed towards Western music or literature. Finding peace or comfort through the culture of the colonizer only renders her more lonely as she is unable to relate to the other girls at the mission, as well as her own family. Nyasha is then forced to consume the food she does not have the appetite for with the onset of an eating disorder that reaches its climax towards the end of the novel. Nyasha's identity itself is riddled with contradictions as she has not found a belief system

that grounds her understanding of who she is (Murray 211). By consuming different cultural practices, such as reading, baking, studying history, or making herself aware of multiple cultural traditions Nyasha is resolved in her conquest. As the novel progresses, the realization sets that ideals of consumption are set on a model of insatiable needs, therefore, "the self is never something at which you arrive, never an achieved entity with which one is able to feel satisfied" (Murray 213). As Nyasha arrives at a point where every little act, such as smoking a cigarette after being shunned off by her father is also an act of resistance to patriarchal and colonial authority, the only avenue of solace is her relationship to Tambu. Other interactions with Tambu in the novel serve as a window into reconnecting with her own history and the past: "Nyasha took so much interest in the things our grandparents and great-grandparents had done" (Dangarembga 147). The interest in rituals is another way of having access to knowledge that is continuously erased by colonial education. Through such encounters Dangarembga provides a glimpse of Nyasha's fragmented self, as neither here nor there. She cannot classify as completely African, or British, or American. Nyasha's interest in Tambu and her life is one of the most important mediums through which Nyasha wishes to find what is lost.

The friendship between Nyasha and Tambu, is one of looking out for each other, shaped by debates about "old ways" and "new ways". If Tambu brings Nyasha closer to her community, the latter constantly warns Tambu of the dangers of assimilation. Tambu sees the increased distance from the homestead as a journey towards prosperity: "the more I saw of the world beyond the homestead the more I was convinced that the further we left the old ways behind the closer we came to progress" (Dangarembga 147). Nyasha, on the other hand having access to the world Tambu aspires to be a part of, constantly warns her otherwise: "'It's bad enough', she said severely, 'when a country gets colonized, but when the people do as well! That's the end, really,

that's the end'" (Dangarembga 147). For Tambu, the assertions made by her cousin confuse her. The confusion lies in the inability to make sense of the colonialist project. Knowledge or the history she does not fully understand constantly shapes and influences her position as a young African woman. Lindsay Aegerter presents an accurate understanding of women's subjectivities juxtaposed with friendship and solidarity:

> They engage in the interplay of traditional preservation and progress, dancing a dialectic of autonomy and community that leads them to the third point of the dialectic, one that synthesizes traditional notions of African community from a womanist perspective with women's autonomy defined from an African perspective. (Aegerter 231)

So, Nyasha's warnings, though effective in generating curiosity, only fulfill its purpose when Tambu's own experiences of colonial and patriarchal oppression come to the surface. By protecting and grounding one another, both Nyasha and Tambu's identities find different ways of problematizing their locations.

There is more to be said about Nyasha, as her problematizing of her own location brings the readers closer to understanding Dangarembga's predisposition with Fanon's theories in *The Wretched of the Earth.* Like Fanon, Dangarembga conceptualizes a character like Nyasha to present the effects of colonial violence on the psyche of the native subject. Nyasha's nervous conditions are introduced in opposition to Babamukuru's patriarchal authority. As a public figure, he is a benevolent Christian who wishes to uplift and civilize the natives by charity and education, and in private he is an abusive father who wishes to control Nyasha's relationship with her own body, starting from how she conducts herself to what and how much she eats. As a result, Nyasha develops an eating disorder and her body becomes a battleground to resist the impositions. The development of anorexia is a fight against colonial and patriarchal authority.

The choice, however, portrays how women are uniquely affected by "colonial relations of power" (Zwicker 14). In order to combat the violence of her father, and the life she has been subjected to, Nyasha turns towards violence on her body. With the development of anorexia, Dangarembga brings this character to inhabit the nervous conditions Sartre mentions in the preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The complexity of the disorder comes to surface as though it is a choice, but also results in self destruction. Fanon argues, in "Concerning Violence", that decolonization does not always occur in places most affected by revolutionary ideas: "decolonization occurs in areas which have not been sufficiently shaken by the struggle for liberation, and there may be found those same know-all, smart, wily intellectuals" (Fanon 48). Nyasha, in her role as an intellectual is limited in so much as she is influenced by her contact with Western values of a wilful teenage girl, but also affected by the negative effects of the same culture. Consequently, the ability to question and fully understand the violence she is subjected to also results in Nyasha's near death towards the end of the narrative. As a hybrid, Nyasha's nervous conditions, and anorexia in the novel are suggested to arise from different factors: "'they've done it to me', she accused, whispering still. 'Really they have.' And then she became stern. 'It's not their fault. They did it to them too. You know they did,' she whispered. 'To both of them, but especially to him. They put him through it all'" (Dangarembga 200). The reference from "they" to "him" is constantly shifting in the passage. Nyasha's tone changes from angry to sad, and even rational. The reader realizes the severity of her struggle to find herself, as the violence she speaks of is not only physical, but mental (Zwicker 17). Nyasha's character embodies the 'nervous conditions' suggested by the title, however, a deeper reading suggests that Nyasha is not simply colonized, or a victim, but she has self regulated through the eating disorder, and exercises some agency. Towards the end of the novel the readers are not told what

will become of Nyasha, but the importance of Nyasha's character is not felt through anorexia or her near death experience, but the revolutionary effect it has on Tambudzai.

Another character in the novel unequivocally clear of the threat and violence of colonialism is Tambu's mother. She is a woman trapped in an abusive marriage, suffering from the death of her son, loss of her daughter to the evils of 'Englishness', and finally navigating the strictures of rural African life. Tambu's relationship with her mother raises important questions regarding women's position in rural African society. The woman has been married for nineteen years, and has witnessed the history of the nation differently than Tambu or Nyasha. Her family, as Tambu states, was extremely poor and the marriage only took place after Jeremiah impregnated Tambu's mother before marriage; the circumstances under which the child is conceived are unknown to the reader. In the context of rural life, she is not exposed to the world outside the homestead. Regardless of not having access to colonial education or urbanity in the postcolonial society, she still provides evidence of the grave consequences of colonial intervention whenever given a voice in the narrative. The relationship between the two women is complicated as Tambu sees her mother to be a part of the 'old world' she so desperately wants to leave behind. Any warning from her mother is due to heedless paranoia until later in the novel. The shift in the narrative occurs when Babamukuru rules to organize a Christian wedding for Tambu's parents, to rid Jeremiah of any sins:

> Gradually I was forced to admit to myself that I did not like the idea of my parents performing a wedding. But I could not understand why I objected so strongly to the idea of marriage, the idea of my parents no longer living in sin.(...) Sin had become a powerful concept for me during my year at the mission, where we went to Sunday school and to church every Sunday without fail and were taught every time that sin absolutely had to be

> avoided. It had to be avoided because it was deadly. I could see it. It was definitely black, we were taught. (Dangarembga 150)

The paragraph is telling of a conflict between what Tambu has been taught at the mission, and what she has experienced and lived through with her community. She was unable to make sense of her decision to disapprove of the wedding. The warnings of committing sin, and the prohibition on questioning Babamukuru's authority stops Tambu from delving deeper in her discomfort. She will eventually decide to not attend the wedding, also coming in conflict with Babamukuru, her benefactor and father figure. The discomfort felt by the image of her mother walking with a white veil and gown, pushes Tambu to confront the reality of what is lost in the process of accepting colonial practices. The narrative presents this imagery as a mockery of her family and community. Interestingly, Tambu's mother's voice is not present during the entire scene. Her presence is highlighted, but her voice is not given any space throughout the organizing of the ceremony. Tambu describes her mother's attitude as unphased or unpassionate, and her father willing to play the act. In this chapter, the narrative throws light upon the position of the colonized woman as doubly marginalized: Tambu's mother as a suppressed figure in her own household as well as being stripped off of her own community and culture through a Christian wedding ceremony. Watching over this is Tambu and in this moment the novel draws a circular narrative taking the reader back to the beginning of the novel where Tambu sees Babamukuru as a God like figure, to the moment where she is self critical of her submission to his authority:

> I had thought that ambiguities no longer existed. I had thought that issues would continue to be clearly delimited, with Babamukuru, who was as nearly divine as any human being could hope to be, imposing the limits. Through him, because of him, black would remain

> definitely somber and white permanently clear, even in spite of Nyasha (...) My vagueness and my reverence for my uncle, what he was, what he had achieved, what he represented and therefore what he wanted , had stunted the growth of my faculty of criticism, sapped the energy that in childhood I had used to define my own position. (Dangarembga 164)

The sorrow felt by the erasure of her and her parents' identity, is juxtaposed with the love and protection she feels towards her mother. The mother figure, though silent, asserts her presence through Tambu and eventually inverts the nature of Tambu's relationship with Babamukuru from submission to confrontation. Tambu's reaction can be better understood by highlighting the complicated, yet strong bond between mother and daughter. The mother's warnings in the beginning of the novel start to come true as Tambu comes to terms with the harmful aspects of the education given to her at the mission and Sacred Hearts. As the narrative progresses, Tambu begins to fear these warnings. 'Englishness' is built up as a disease that took Nhamo's life, and erased Nyasha and Chido's African identity.

Women in the novel, as presented in the arguments made so far, are placed on different plains of marginality. Navigating through their own struggles, the notion of privilege cannot be associated with any of the characters. One character that comes closest to being in a better position as compared to other women is Maiguru, Nyasha's mother. She is an educated woman as she also completes her education in England, but finds herself settled in the role of a dutiful wife and devoted mother. Though her position does not offer many layers of analysis, she is still an important figure in the traditional Sigauke family unit. As the wife of the senior most member, Maiguru's opinions hold influence in the family, however, she does not offer any controversial opinions for the larger part of the narrative. The only time that the readers are given

a glimpse of Maiguru's character through her own words is when she tries to defend Tambu. She is punished for not attending the wedding and receives fifteen lashes and two weeks of household chores by Babamukuru. Maiguru, in light of these events and the resentment of a wife who is reduced to a servant in her marriage, confronts Babamukuru:

> 'Yes, she is your brother's child,' she said. 'But when it comes to taking my money so that you can feed her and her father and your whole family and waste it on ridiculous weddings, that's when they are my relatives too.(...)I am tired of being a housekeeper for them. I am tired of being nothing in a home I am working myself sick to support'. (Dangarembga 172)

The result of the confrontation is Maiguru's departure from the mission. It is an important moment in the novel as it is the first time the narrative humanizes Maiguru. Throughout the novel, her character is presented through Tambu as the caring mother, beacon of femininity who has mastered her role as a subject working within the system and also benefiting from it. In the fight what comes to surface is the complete opposite of what Tambu thinks of Maiguru: in this instance Maiguru seems to be trapped, just like Tambu, Nyasha, and Tambu's mother. Nyasha later identifies the feeling of being entrapped as systemic as she tells Tambu, "'It's not really him, you know. I mean not really the person. It's everything, it's everywhere. So where do you break out? You're just one person and it's everywhere. So where do you break out to'" (Dangarembga 174). Maiguru, however, does escape even if it is temporary. She returns to the mission and has gained more stability and ground in the marriage.

Maiguru's role in the novel is a commentary on female education under colonial rule. She is the finished project of colonial education, in contrast to the same project rendered incomplete by Tambu. The motive behind female education led by the missions, was centered on producing

good wives and mothers. The process involved "denigration of native history and repression of sexuality" (Katrak 171). Naturally, Maiguru's position in the novel is that she is the only educated woman, yet has the least scope of exercising any power as an economically stable unit in the family. Colonial education, or having access to it in Maiguru's case only delimits her scope of being critical of Babamukuru's choices, or supporting the women of her community in their internal struggles with the patriarchal order.

In clear contrast to Maiguru, the narrative builds the role of Lucia, Tambu's aunt. Lucia uses her position as an unmarried woman in the family to her own advantage. The African family unit accords Lucia more freedom and agency as compared to Maiguru under a hybrid family model at the mission. Lucia is presented as a free agent in charge of her own life. In Lucia's case Shona culture "provides checks and balances on how power and authority is exercised" (Charamba and Musanga 2). Though she is not married, as Tambu's aunt and her mother's sister, Lucia serves an important role in the novel. She is able to directly question and defy Babamukuru's orders as she cannot be silenced like the other women in the novel in the roles of wives and daughters. Lucia defends herself when Takesure tries to degrade her character by addressing the patriarch:

> 'Tell me, Babamukuru, would you say this is a man? Can it be a man that talks such nonsense? A man should talk sense, isn't it? So what can this be?' she tweaked his ears to find out what it would say. 'Let me tell you, Babamukuru,' she continued earnestly. 'Maiguru asleep in her bedroom there is the only one with a sensible head on her shoulders'. (Dangarembga 144)

Lucia's assertiveness highlights her position in the family where she is not protected by any male members, therefore, she protects herself. She jumps on to protect Tambu when she is punished

for not attending the wedding; she also pushes Maiguru to take a stand against injustice when the men sit down to decide on Lucia's future. Dangarembga's use of a character like Lucia further resists a single axis analysis of women's lives in the novel. A simplistic and homogeneous reading would suggest that Lucia is a victim of the patriarchal structure, however, Dangarembga presents her as an independent woman acting on her accord, finally receiving a job and on her way to economic stability.

In *Nervous Conditions,* Dangarembga uses Tambu's voice to present the story of these four women, coping with the "dual burden" (Uwakweh 3). Their lives mirror one another, to push the reader to think about women's subjectivities through the struggles of the community. They suffer, resist, endure, love as well as overcome together. The 'escape' is not complete since the novel does not seem to provide a clear ending. What will become of the other women is unknown, and Tambu's future also remains unclear at the end of the novel. *Nervous Conditions* does not provide closure as political independence is followed by a new era of neocolonialism. Tambu's narrative and her relationship with the women in the novel resists the linear progression from a colonial to neocolonial society. The novel does not valorize pre-colonial history, yet does not fully embrace modernization. It operates in the space in between that aims to highlight the positionality of African women in 1960s Rhodesia. It is critical to remember that *Nervous Conditions* was the first novel published in English by a Zimbabwean female author. So, the author's use of Shona vocabulary in the narrative is a self conscious choice of giving evidence to the orality of African languages, often ignored and left out by Western print (Katrak 170). The implications of using Shona words in English presents the boldness of the author to bring to life the multiplicity of the characters and the actualization of multiple subjectivities.

Chapter Two

Women's Relationship with Tradition and Modernity in *Second-Class Citizen*

The corpus of literature produced by women across the African continent tackles different issues at stake specific to their locations and identities. Any project, therefore, that claims to delve deeper into knowledge production by African women should resist conceptualizing the African identity as a homogeneous unit. As much as connections can be drawn between different authors, each remains unique in presenting different entry points to assessing the development of female subjectivity. The first chapter on Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* opened the gateway to understanding the importance of female solidarity across tradition and modernity, pre-colonial and colonial history, as well as the positionality of the female subject under colonization. In the second chapter, I will analyze Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* to present other ways of looking at the position of the female subject within traditional society and its relationship with colonial modernity. Both Dangarembga and Emecheta have been pioneers of a tradition of African women's writing. While the former gives evidence to women's struggles in Rhodesia under colonial rule, Emecheta provides a harsh criticism of institutions such as family and marriage in traditional Nigerian society. If Dangarembga's narrative throws light upon the hollow ideals of colonial education, Emecheta presents colonial education as a path to a better life for women as it allows them to free themselves from the oppressive family. Despite these contrasting approaches, both authors share a commitment to women's liberation.

In connecting tradition and modernity, Emecheta's novel presents how "she saw the world as an African woman who lived in both rural and urban Africa, and as a black writer who

navigated the difficulties of living in the Europe of the 1960s and 1970s" (Okome 401). Fiction in Emecheta's writing is deeply autobiographical as she uses her own experiences to make a larger commentary on women's position in her home country, Nigeria, and in England. The novel provides a commentary on gender and class in both Nigeria and England as well as a detailed understanding of Emecheta's own life. Like the lead character in the novel, Emecheta was also raised in Lagos with a "seamstress mother and a railway worker father" (Unigwe 1). After acquiring colonial education, she eventually moved to "London in 1962 in order to join her husband" (Opara 250). Like Emecheta, the protagonist in *Second Class Citizen*, Adah, is also an immigrant. In drawing characters based on her own life, Emecheta provides an intimate understanding of her personal life as well as the issues that inform the content of her writing. In centering women's experiences in Nigerian society, both the protagonist and the author are doubly marginalized for being a woman as well as being black when both eventually move to England. The novel, therefore, depicts intersecting themes of gender, education, race, and poverty.

In *Second Class Citizen,* the author links her own life with Adah's to explore the impact of colonialism and colonial education. The novel develops the timeline starting from the years of the second world war leading to Nigerian independence in 1960. Shaped by different political developments, the novel presents the shift from colonization to independence through the story of Adah. Adah's character development from the beginning of the narrative as the girl who would go to the United Kingdom one day is telling of the remnants of colonial legacy in Nigeria as the country moved towards independence. By depicting the complex issues surrounding women's lives, Emecheta centers the female voice in narrating Adah's story. The relationship between colonial modernity and colonial education is deeply interlinked. The importance of

school and the idea of progress is juxtaposed in the first chapter of the novel when the narrator states, "they were realising fast that one's savior from poverty and disease was education" (Emecheta 3). Just like Tambu in *Nervous Conditions*, Adah is determined to fight for her right to education. For both characters, that struggle is shaped by their need to surpass their respective realities. In *Second Class Citizen* Emecheta presents Adah as a resilient and ambitious girl looking at the world around her. At the age of eight, Adah understands that "she was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy" (Emecehta 1). Naturally, if colonial education is a pathway to progress then in opposition is the traditional Nigerian society which limits Adah's potential. By locating her own position as an unwelcome female child, both the narrator and protagonist conceptualize that "Nigeria is male, a fact that is daily thrust in myriad ways on the Nigerian woman" (Ogunyemi 217). In the novel too, Adah's younger brother Boy's education is a priority, while her education serves only to secure Adah a higher bride price because she will be more useful as an educated woman. Her secondary status as a woman is made clear to Adah when the younger brother is sent to school and she stays at home with her mother. She eventually begins her education at the "Methodist Girls' High School in Lagos", where she is introduced to European Missionaries (Emecheta 9). Adah's understanding of her own identity can be analyzed in two ways: she is assigned a secondary status in Nigeria due to her gender, regardless of receiving an education, while later on she is placed in the category of a second class citizen owing to her gender and race in London.

Emecheta's exploration and critique of tradition is deeply rooted in the understanding of the social networks within Igbo society and the implications of colonialism on traditional models of survival. Historian Judith Van Allen explains, "the Igbo speaking peoples are heterogeneous and can only be termed a 'tribe' on the basis of a common language and a contiguous territory"

(Van Allen 166n2). They were the dominant group in southeastern Nigeria during the colonial period. Emecheta's storyline in the beginning of the novel builds the significance of identity development in relation to the history of the community. Adah's personal understanding of this history comes from the stories she has heard of the town Ibuza, which is a reference to the present day community of Igbuzo located in southern Nigeria. Though Adah has been born and raised in Lagos, her family belongs to Ibuza. The contrast between the town and city is clear as "the virtues of Ibuza were praised so much that Adah came to regard her being born in a God-forsaken place like Lagos as a misfortune" (Emecheta 2).

Interestingly, the reference to Ibuza invokes the precolonial history of the Igbo community in which women exercised relatively greater influence in community affairs than they would after colonization. Before colonial intervention, "women had a significant role in traditional political life" (Van Allen 165). Traditionally, power in Igbo society did not rest with a single individual, and the nature of power was diffuse. Within the community "gender equality was measured in comparative worth" (Chuku 82). The influence exerted by an individual, regardless of gender, depended on their ability to persuade (Van Allen 167). It is important to note, however, that men achieved a higher status due to their control over "profitable crops such as palm oil," and their ability to trade goods by traveling larger distances allowed higher profits (Van Allen 168). Since most decisions and disputes were settled in village assemblies where men "were more likely to speak", women's political power depended on their own solidarity networks organized in the form of women's gatherings (Van Allen 169). These networks, under colonialism, came to be known as *Mikiri:*

> *Mikiri* were held whenever there was a need. … There were no official leaders; as in the village, women of wealth and generosity who could speak well took leading roles. … If

> the announcement of decisions and persuasion were not sufficient for their implementation, women could take direct action to enforce their decisions and protect their interests. (Van Allen 169)

With colonial intervention came the introduction of power constituted in an agent of the state. As a result, one person was appointed to represent the concerns of the village. This person might or might not be an ally of the colonizers. Through the consolidation of power under colonial rule, women's solidarity groups continued to diminish and their ability to defend their rights eventually "became extra legal or simply illegal forms of group coercion" (Van Allen 178). By analyzing the history of Igbo women's resistance and its transformation under colonialism, Emecheta's critique of the institutions of marriage and family within Nigeria in a postcolonial society hints towards the development and modification of these institutions under Victorian models. The effects of colonialism and the widespread conversion to Christianity led to the erasure of practices that accorded women autonomy to navigate and retain authority within a patrilineal society.

In *Second Class Citizen*, Emecheta glorifies neither the customs of Igbo culture nor the cultural practices that developed through colonialism. The novel presents the pitfalls and benefits of both traditional and Victorian values to make a larger commentary on women's survival. In Adah is a young woman using the tools from the different value systems available to her in order to accomplish the goal of her survival. When her education is interrupted with the sudden death of her father, Adah's mother is inherited by the father's brother and she is sent to live with her mother's brother as a servant. In a household where she is expected to perform hours of brutal manual labour, Adah is resolved to persevere:

> One might think of this as evidence that Africans treated their children badly. But to Adah's people and to Adah herself, this was not so at all: it was the custom. Children, especially girls, were taught to be very useful very early in life, and this had its advantages. For instance, Adah learned very early to be responsible for herself. Nobody was interested in her for her own sake, only in the money she would fetch and the housework she could do, and Adah, happy at being given this opportunity of survival, did not waste time thinking about its rights or wrongs. She had to survive. (Emecheta 13)

The author critiques traditional Nigerian society that warrants women's subordination as servants or inherited wives. In response to the violence and abuse, Adah resists and aspires to become an educated woman. The limitations and benefits of the education she receives unfold later in the narrative, but it is clear that "Emecheta commends what is beautiful and affirmative in traditional society and modern Nigeria, as well as exposes what is negative and destructive" (Ezeibo 6). The survival instinct is also connected to the tradition of Igbo women's resistance to colonial practices. Adah is able to unknowingly stay connected to her female ancestors through her actions because "traditional or modern, Igbo women, no matter their age, status or condition espouse dynamic economic ethics" (Ezeibo 10). Traditionally, Igbo women's roles as traders and independent economic units remained strong even after colonization of Igboland (10). Throughout the novel, Adah remains financially independent and follows the footsteps of her foremothers in acting upon her ambition to consolidate personal agency. Tradition in *Second Class Citizen* should be understood in two ways: as a set of practices structured to oppress women, but also as a medium for women to connect with their own past to develop new strategies of survival.

Second-Class Citizen shares some similarities with *Nervous Conditions* in juxtaposing tradition with women's position in society. The meeting point for both texts is in the retelling of different traditions of women's cultural practices that survived before and after imperial interference. Such cultural practices should be viewed as tools of survival, constantly undergoing transformation with different generations of women. For example, in *Nervous Conditions* Tambu describes the practice of making clay pots: the use of the clay pots, as the narrator describes, was for "storing water and mahewu and the like" (Dangarembga 150). For Nyasha and Tambu the utility of the clay pots shifts to "hold[ing] buttons and jewellery and pens" (Dangarembga). The practice of making clay pots is a shared experience between Tambu and Nyasha, but the former views it as a simple practice of the past and the latter views it as an attempt to recover the past and a sense of self. By providing contrast in Nyasha and Tambu's perceptions, the author constructs meaning in the mundane activities of women's lives. In relation to each other, both characters find what is lacking in their understanding of their own identities. Dangarembga places more value and scope for women's freedom in the traditional society. Both Tambu and Nyasha, though different in personality, eventually reject the code of conduct ascribed by colonial education. *Nervous Conditions* uses the connections amongst women to navigate their surroundings, while *Second-Class Citizen* deploys an individualistic narrative to make a commentary on women's position in Nigeria. In *Nervous Conditions* the readers have access to other strong voices such as Lucia and Nyasha. In contrast, the storyline in *Second-Class Citizen* is solely shaped by Adah's character and her inner reflections. Colonial education for women is viewed as brainwashing by Tambu, but Adah in *Second-Class Citizen* lives with the dream of going to the United Kingdom, and colonial education is the pathway towards actualizing her

dream. Emecheta aligns with a liberal view of colonial education and colonial modernity as she views it as an escape from the evils of the native country.

The need to escape is deeply rooted in Adah's isolation within the domestic family. After finishing her education at the Methodist Girls' School, Adah is confronted by an uncertain future. As a teenager she does not have access to a safe environment where she can continue her education. Driven by the need to find a home, Adah hastily gets married to Francis, who will allow her to "go on studying at her pace" (Emecheta 19). By deciding to marry Francis, Adah alienates herself from the rest of her family as "Francis … [is] too poor to pay the five hundred pounds bride-price Ma and the other members of the family were asking" (Emecheta 19). The satisfaction of choosing a spouse is momentary, as Adah soon realizes the limitations of being a married woman. As an educated woman she is able to receive employment at the American Consulate. Though she has the security of having a husband, a job, and a high salary, Adah's freedom to make independent choices is only an illusion:

> She did not know her husband very well because, as most young African wives know, most of the decisions about their own lives had to be referred first to Big Pa, Francis' father, then to his mother, then discussed amongst the brothers of the family before Adah was referred to. (Emecheta 22)

Since Adah's own family feels that she has let them down by bringing prosperity only to her husband's household, Adah finds "herself alone once more, forced into a situation dictated by society in which, as an individual, she had little choice" (Emecheta 23). In this context, Adah's aspiration to move to England can be seen as a last resort to escape the abusive family. Emecheta paints the picture of resilience through Adah as "she sets out to mold through the character of

Adah Ofili, the kind of woman needed to bring about change in the status of women as wives" (Ezewanebe 356).

The possibility of an improvement in Adah's condition is solely reliant on her dream of moving to the United Kingdom. Interestingly, as the path to England becomes more clear, Adah's position only shows signs of degradation. Through her marriage she had aspired for an equal partnership; however, Adah soon realizes the exploitative nature of her relationship with Francis. As a result, it is not a surprise when Francis delivers the news to Adah that only he will be allowed to go to England as his "'Father does not approve of women going to the UK'" (Emecheta 24). Isolated from her family, and abandoned by her husband, Adah remains optimistic and determined to fulfill her dream. Her strategy, as she reassures herself, is to "'be as cunning as a serpent but as harmless as a dove'" (Emecheta 24). Instead of reacting badly to the news, Adah devises the plan of being a good wife and daughter-in-law, a performance that she hopes would ultimately convince Francis' parents to allow her to travel to England. The narrative constructs a duality of experience between Adah's recurring victimization within the family and her ability to use her problem solving skills to find a solution. It is crucial to note that all of Adah's decisions are based on a constructed image of the United Kingdom, a country of which she does not have much real knowledge. Her connection to England is first introduced with the arrival of Lawyer Nweze as "someone who had ... a taste of that civilisation, the civilisation which was soon afterwards to hook them all, like opium" (Emecheta 9). In presenting England as a pinnacle of civilization, the narrative provides the possibility of exploring the development of a postcolonial identity.

The varied aspects of Adah's identity development reflect a fragmented sense of self-identity. Cornered by the demands of her history and location, Adah pushes every door open

on her path to England. It is only on the final stop before beginning the long journey to England that she grasps what she is going to lose in the process of voluntarily uprooting herself. The break or split in narrative is clear in the narrator's recollection:

> She cried too, this time not a howl, not an empty show, but tears of real sorrow at the thought of leaving the land of her birth. The land where Pa was buried and where Ma lay, quite forever. Only she and Boy remained of that life which she had known. It was never going to be the same again. Things were bound to change, for better or for worse, but they would never be the same. (Emecheta 30)

In search of stability, she is confronted by unending uncertainty. Though she feels isolated and alone within traditional society in Nigeria, the journey to England represents a permanent breaking away from her old self, ancestry, and family. The evidence of the pain and trauma of displacement is in the understanding of Adah's journey as a result of different socio-cultural factors.

In the loss of her connection with her family and the past, however, Emecheta presents a new dimension to Adah's individuality through motherhood. To justify her own displacement, Adah turns to her role as a mother and the responsibilities that come with it: "The tiny hands clutching her blouse were the hands of a big man in the making. Her duty was to them now. From now on her children came first" (Emecheta 31). The continued exploration of Adah's subjectivity reveals that as she moves closer to the land of her dreams, she is continuously displaced from every avenue through which she might seek help. First, the sudden death of her father results in a change of status to that of an orphan and a servant in her cousin's house. Finally, as she gains standing in society as a working woman and educated wife, she is displaced from the kinship ties within the family and community. The resourcefulness instilled in her that

she has learned through the Igbo community offers her limited relief from her condition. Her socialization in traditional society continues to entrap her in the role of wife and mother. The duality of experience continues as the "narrative concentrates on the power of tradition in limiting individual development outside of traditional spheres" (Umeh 76). The analysis of motherhood in *Second-Class Citizen* as both limiting and liberating deserves more attention in relation to Adah's marriage and life in England.

The knowledge of the fragility of her marriage with Francis starts with the disappointment from the site of England. In the chapter titled "A Cold Welcome", Liverpool is described as "grey, smoky, and ... uninhabited by humans" (Emecheta 33). Adah's arrival in Liverpool prompts her first conception of race as a category of identity, as she questions, "but if, as people said, there was plenty of money in England, why then did the natives give their visitors this poor, cold welcome?" (Emecheta 33). The change of status to the ascribed identity of a black woman in England is an added layer of oppression that Adah slowly begins to uncover. From the onset, her life in England is shaped by "downward social mobility ... in comparison to her life in Nigeria" (Erol 595). She discovers that Francis has deceived her by misrepresenting the reality of the poor living conditions she encounters. In comparison to Nigeria, where she is successful in climbing higher on the class ladder, in London Adah is forced to "share the house with such Nigerians who called her madam at home" (Emecheta 36). As the sharp contrast between her expectation of the life she thought she would lead and the reality only broadens, Adah is overwhelmed by the severity of her own condition. The marriage begins to unravel with the first of the many violent confrontations between Francis and Adah on her arrival in London. A hint of the brutality of the marital abuse Adah will have to suffer is clear in Francis' response to Adah when she questions his ability to provide for his family: "Francis's temper snapped. He lifted his

hand as if to slap her but thought better of it. There would be plenty of time for that, if Adah was going to start telling him what to do" (Emecheta 36). In maintaining consistency with the rest of the narrative, as the abuse and violence within the marriage intensify, Adah's resourcefulness provides her the strength to, once again, push beyond the limitations of her surroundings. Since her husband refuses to work or look after their children, Adah steps into the role of providing for her family. She receives a job at a library in London by disregarding Francis' assertion that, "in Lagos you may be a million publicity officers for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants: you may be living like an élite, but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen" (Emecheta 36). Adah resists socio-cultural norms in refusing to internalize her status as a second-class citizen. In understanding women's multifaceted struggles, Emecheta's novel "celebrates a plurality of protest" (Fishburn 52).

Adah pushes against the societal limits of being a Nigerian housewife and a black woman by consistently defying norms. But, her ability to come through in the face of adversity is driven by her desperation to provide for her family. At the same time her socialization into being a good wife influences Adah's decisions. When she is forced to find a job, she admits that "the fact that she was still laying the golden eggs stopped Francis from walking out on her" (Emecheta 40). The fear of Francis leaving is based on both emotions and practicality as she cares for him; however, she has to navigate by herself in a new country. Finally, she suffers the physical abuse in her marriage and the disrespect of a racist society for her children. To protect and nurture her children, Adah refuses to look for a foster-mother even though "no African child lives with his parents. It is not convenient; it is not possible. There is no accommodation for it" (Emecheta 45). Instead, as a last resort she finds a poor white woman, Trudy, to look after the children when Adah is at work. When Adah discovers that the children are not safe under Trudy's watch, she

arrives at the conclusion that the "whites were just as fallible as everyone else" (Emecheta 51). In her contact with modernity she is able to broaden her horizons by questioning her own assumptions. The idea of white civility that Adah has aspired to achieve all through her childhood and adolescence appears to be a lie.The constant conflict between modern and traditional values continues, as she is an obedient wife and a dutiful mother but fulfills her responsibilities and ambitions at the cost of her well-being:

> Adah's pay at work was just enough to pay the rent, pay for Francis's course, his examination fees, buy his books and pay Trudy. They had little after this, and so it was impossible for Adah to have lunch at work. (...) On those occasions she felt that type of hunger which she thought she had outgrown. (...) It was all right in Nigeria when she was a servant and an orphan, but it was uncomfortable when she was a woman in her own right and a mother of two. (Emecheta 55)

As Adah's dream of a prosperous life in England washes away, the contrast between her status in Nigeria and the downward social mobility in England becomes clear. Adah's character development progresses as she evolves from a naive young girl to a woman with more perspective. In comparing Adah's position in African and English society, "it is a question not just of culture and tradition but also of narrative forms: which [part of the] story will be authoritative" (Fishburn 54). Emecheta showcases ambivalence in accepting and being skeptical of what she has been taught. Adah's life in England and the racial prejudice she faces "forces her to evaluate the good and bad in both cultures" (Fishburn 64).

The narrative urges the readers to sympathize with Adah; however, it is also essential to analyze Adah's agency and view her actions as transactional. In her insightful commentary on Emecheta, Katherine Fishburn argues "that the Obis' entire relationship has been little more than

a business transaction—one that gives Adah the freedom to continue her education and gives Francis access to her scholarship money" (65). Viewing Adah's actions as intentional resists a Western reading of the text which conceptualizes Emecheta's heroine as a helpless African woman who is victimized by her traditional culture. The focus on multiplicity of meaning in the text increases the possibility of a holistic reading. It is left for the readers to decide whether Adah's character can be conceptualized as limited or willful. Adah's awareness of her surroundings is demonstrated further when she admits that she values her son Vicky more than she does her daughter:

> In her society she could only be sure of the love of her husband and the loyalty of her parents-in-law by having and keeping alive as many children as possible, and that though a girl may be counted as one child, to her people a boy was like four children put together? And if the family could give the boy a good university education, his mother would be given the status of a man in the tribe. (Emecheta 62)

With the constant struggle to continue her marriage with Francis, Adah turns to her children to secure a higher status in her tribe. The value of her husband is limited to someone "good at giving her children" (Emecheta 55). Interestingly, her roles of mother and wife become more intertwined as the need to keep the children safe provides Adah the strength to resist against the marital abuse. Adah invokes her agency more forcefully in her warning to Francis: "I must have my children whole and perfect. The only thing I get from this slavish marriage is the children. And Francis, I am warning you, they must be perfect children" (Emecheta 64). Both forced and unforced pregnancies in Adah's marriage increase her troubles while also instilling in her the belief that she will fight for her children even if she has not always been able to fight for herself.

As the only other main character in the novel, Francis stands as the opposing force to Adah's ambitions. The narrative constructs Francis' character as violent and unruly (Oha 302). At different points in the novel, both Adah and the narrator convey the same sentiments about Francis when he refuses to work or support Adah. In a particular scene where Francis shows his resentment towards their children, both Adah and the narrator lament the situation: "Could Francis not have asked her how she was feeling or something? Would that be too much to ask? she wondered" (Emecheta 55). The narrator responds to Adah's dilemma, "despite the hard talking to herself, she still yearned to be loved, to feel really married, to be cared for", but "Francis was only good at giving her children" (Emecheta 55). Many critics have argued that Emecheta shapes Francis' character as a commentary on the African man.The narrative appears to show Adah's viewpoint which "presupposes the culpability and wrongness of all men as a result of the culpability and wrongness of only one man" (Oha 304). The novel echoes similar sentiments when the narrator concludes that "Francis was an African through and through", and "his outlook on life was pure African" (Emecheta 24). Presenting the African man and the African outlook as limiting for women, Adah compares it with her learnings from the Bible "where a woman was supposed to be ready to give in to her man at any time, and she was to be much more precious to her husband than rubies" (Emecheta 24). The evidence provided in the novel should not dissuade readers from remembering Emecheta's strategy of providing contrasting arguments. Both Adah and Francis should be analyzed and understood as affected and shaped by colonization. Adah's resentment towards the position of an African man is rooted in her position as doubly marginalized, as well as in her Catholic education which taught her to see everything African as inferior.

Through Francis, however, the novel also urges the readers to understand the effects of colonization on the male subject. As discussed earlier in this chapter, women's roles in traditional society underwent many significant changes during the colonial period. Similarly, men's traditional roles as the head of the family and primary decision makers in village meetings changed drastically as well. With the introduction of the alien patriarchal system where the white man stood at the top of the hierarchy, men in the Igbo community lost their status, "having been reduced to a state of impotence and powerlessness by the colonial master" (Ezeibo 16). Francis' recurrent attempts at breaking Adah both physically and mentally reflect an effort to direct his anger and humiliation towards the woman who "witnessed his emasculation" (Ezeibo 16).

Adah's early opinions of Francis being a traditional African man should not be conflated with Emecheta's position on all men in Nigerian society. Emecheta's technique in *Second-Class Citizen* represents the relationship between men and women as shaped by different social phenomena. For example, the violence in the marriage is not as drastic when the couple is in Nigeria because Adah is protected by her kinship relationships. With the break in communal and kinship networks, Adah is rendered more vulnerable. On the other hand, Francis continues to internalize his position as a second-class citizen and consequently releases his anger and frustration on Adah. Emecheta, therefore, "recognizes the pressures Westernization places on the couple" (Umeh 75). After moving away from his native country, Francis no longer benefits from the advice of his elders, nor is he able to indulge as easily in privileges such as having multiple sexual partners. The narrator sympathizes with Francis even after he refuses to take care of his children: "things were difficult for Francis, too. He had never in all his life been allowed to make his own mistakes because he had never made his own decisions. He had always consulted his mother, his father and his brothers" (Emecheta 45). Though the readers start disliking Francis,

the narrator maintains a tolerant outlook and Adah refuses to give up on her husband until towards the end of the novel. The acts of violence against Adah, however, are more forceful and cannot be justified by Francis being a victim of the "over-demanding society he found himself in" (Emecheta 104). On multiple occasions Adah is raped by her husband, who assumes the right to use her income as he sees fit, and eventually burns the first copy of her manuscript. Through these violent actions, Francis manifests the "individual male's ability to demonstrate his virility at the expense of a woman and to obtain its validation from the subjugated woman herself" (Mbembe 13).

After moving to England, both Adah and Francis have to confront the issues attached to their racial identity of being black. Race is another social phenomenon that impacts both characters in different ways. As discussed earlier, Francis' inability to make his own decisions leaves him without the tools to persevere; therefore, "his blackness, his feeling of blackness" is "firmly established in his mind" (Emecheta 34). The narrator states that Francis has always enjoyed a higher status back home due to being one of the few boys in the family, and growing up he believed that he was "something special" or a "superhuman creature" (Emecheta 101). On the other hand Adah's upbringing as an orphan allowed her to make her own decisions, a history which gives her the confidence to confront the problems she faces as an adult. In contrast to Francis, she refuses to accept that she should be ashamed of the colour of her skin, and stays resolved "to regard herself as the equal of any white" (Emecheta 71). The differences in response to racial oppression should also be analyzed in light of racism's unique psychological effects on an individual. If *Nervous Conditions*, through Nyasha, gives an intimate glimpse of the mental trauma of colonialism, then in Francis and Adah the readers can chart out the psychological trauma of racial prejudice on the individual psyche. For example, though racial oppression does

not erase Adah's individuality, it still forces her to shift from someone who "previously would have accepted nothing but the best" to one who has "now been conditioned to expect inferior things" (Emecheta 71). As a result she finds herself to be fearful and suspicious of "anything beautiful and pure" (Emecheta 71). On the other hand, Francis "told himself subconsciously that he would never pass his examinations", and "his ever becoming a Cost and Works accountant in this world was a dream" (Emecheta 167). Given the context, Adah's relationship with race differs from that of Francis. Adah is aware of and accepts the existence of race's presence and effects, but she resists the place in society assigned to her by her racial identity. Adah uses colonial education as a window of escape from an abusive marriage, as well as a way of living a dignified life in England.

Adah's decision to try to save the marriage until the end of the novel is deeply influenced by her awareness of the position of women in society in Nigeria. In chapter twelve of the novel, titled "The Collapse", Adah questions her decision to stay in England and stay married to Francis. Pregnant with her fourth child, and not having access to safe abortion, she thinks about "her brother, Boy, who had sent her all his savings, asking her to leave Francis and his children and come back to Nigeria where her work at the Consulate would be waiting for her" (Emecheta 163). She does not leave as she recognizes the reality of her status in Nigerian society without a man: "they would say the child was not her husband's, that it'd probably be a white child. You know, like the people who fitted the cap [birth control]. And then everybody would laugh. Her own people would cover their faces in shame" (Emecheta 163). Adah identifies that in her society she is only accorded protection and safety as long as she continues to fulfill the role of a dutiful wife. She finally makes the decision to leave Francis knowing that in England, divorce is not as much of a taboo compared to Nigerian society. At the same time, she exists outside the set

of traditional community relations as an African woman in England. The novel shows Adah's character development in her realization that she is not bound by the same code of conduct imposed upon women in traditional society.

In the final few chapters of the novel, Adah constantly evaluates her options to leave Francis and move forward. Even when Francis sinks deeper into a state of inadequacy and becomes more violent, Adah's financial independence keeps her and her children afloat. The novel shows Adah's background in colonial education as a positive factor in her survival as it helps her in securing a job as a librarian at the "Chalk Farm Library" in London (Emecheta 159). During this time at the library, Adah is able to cultivate strong friendships with her colleagues Bill and Peggy. Bill is instrumental in Adah's introduction to the African American literary tradition as well as social theory. In this brief passage in the novel lies a key turning point in Adah's understanding of her own identity, as "she came to believe, through reading [James] Baldwin, that black was beautiful" (Emecheta 161). Similarly, in reading the works of Karl Marx she decides that "if the worst came to the very worst she would leave Francis with her children since she had nothing to lose but her chains" (Emecheta 161). In finding strength in her struggles, Adah becomes more tactical and for the first time forces Francis to look for a job and pay the rent. As opposed to her previous experiences with childbirth, with the arrival of her fourth child, Adah embraces motherhood and the freedom of working in her own time. In reasserting her personhood, Adah's childhood dream of becoming a writer is rekindled and she finishes the first draft of her novel, *The Bride Price,* mirroring Emecheta's own life. Adah equates the feeling of accomplishment through writing with the feeling of fulfillment of having another child (Emecheta 177). In complete contrast, when she urges Francis to read the novel he states, "you keep forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black. The white man can

barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby" (Emecheta 178). In consistency with the rest of the narrative, Francis tries to limit Adah's progress by devaluing her intellectual and personal growth. The marriage comes to a breaking point when Francis, driven by his resentment, burns the manuscript of Adah's novel. With the death of her "brainchild", Adah leaves Francis and walks to freedom "with nothing but four babies, her new job, and a box of rags" (Emecheta 182).

In *Second-Class Citizen*, Emecheta uses her own life experiences as subject matter of the novel. Though considering the novel as an autobiographical fiction is an obvious choice, the narrator assumes a certain level of distance from the lead protagonist. The timeline of the events as they happen in Emecheta's real life is not similar to that of Adah's story in *Second-Class Citizen.* Because it focuses solely on Adah's personal growth, *Second-Class Citizen* can be defined as a Bildungsroman. The novel fulfills the basic tenets of the genre in tracing Adah's movement from entrapment to freedom. In aspiring for freedom, "Adah's most disruptive and daring act of self-definition (...) is to write herself as novel" (Fishburn 70). In writing her own story as a novel in *The Bride Price*, Adah admits that the narrative is only an "over-romanticised" version of her life (Emecheta 175). In contrast, Emecheta bases Adah's character on her own life but does not allow the narrator to romanticize Adah's struggles.

Though Adah's personal growth is clear, the novel does not provide a clear end-point to Adah's story. The novel ends abruptly in that the readers are not given any glimpse into the future of Adah and her children. All that is clear from the last chapter of the novel is Francis' upfront denial of responsibility towards Adah and her children in court. The novel ends with Adah leaving the courthouse with her children, "tears flowing from her eyes" (Emecheta 185). In leaving the narrative open-ended, the author subverts the conventional structure of the

Bildungsroman. Similarly, the ending of *Nervous Conditions* does not allow readers a final resolution to Tambu's story. Both *Nervous Conditions* and *Second-Class Citizen* center the black female experience in culturally specific contexts. In both cases the authors deny a simplistic answer to the possibility of female emancipation in colonial and postcolonial communities.

Chapter Three

Trauma in Relation to Female Descendancy and Black Female Experience in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*

Black women's writing has consistently focussed on centering black female experience. The commonality lies in the development of the black woman survivor and the unique strategies they implement to assert their individuality. The novels discussed in this study broadly present varied responses to the problem of identity formation in relation to colonial violence. Much like the other two novels analyzed in this study, Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* explores similar thematic concerns. *Homegoing* begins as the story of two half-sisters separated by slavery and continues through several generations of their descendants. The author presents events through each character's retelling from memory. Narrating the lives of fourteen characters in the novel, the chapters run in two parallel streams by tracing the development of the separated family. Most of the chapters alternate in setting between Africa and America. The structure of the narrative resists any act of forming categories or generalizations about the lives of its characters. Spanning seven generations, the novel begins with two half-sisters named Effia and Esi: the former is married to a white soldier while the latter is sold into slavery. The novel's first assertion is to place the figure of their mother, Maame, as the central force that holds the narrative together. This is one of the many ways in which Gyasi aims to depict femininity and feminine experience as a way of knowing slavery (Motahane et al. 20). Through this chapter, I will throw light upon the different ways in which Gyasi presents the female characters in the novel.The relationships they have with future generations are defined by different ways of coping through trauma and loss. Motherhood and its manifestations in female characters develop the plot of the narrative across historical events.

The novel places Esi and Effia in two separate tribes: Asante and Fante. Historically, both communities are sub-groups of the Akan. Based on linguistic divisions, the Akan speaking people are a part of the broader Kwa group which includes a set of languages spoken in present-day Ghana and the Ivory Coast in West Africa. Fante tribes lived along the coastline near Cape Coast and Elmina castle, while the Asante were located in the interior of what is now known as Ghana. The formation of Asante as a consolidated group can be traced back to "Akan groups from the basin of the Pra-Ofin rivers … migrating north into the sparsely populated areas of the forest zone" (Akyeampong et al. 26). The Fante, originally a part of the Asante tribes, separated to form their own distinct Akan group. The indication of the split is clear in the name, as the Fantes' original name, Fa-atsew, can be loosely translated from Akan to English as "the half that left". In *Homegoing,* Gyasi depicts the conflicts between the Asante and the Fante taking different forms with the arrival of the Europeans. In exploiting the smallest differences between the tribes, colonial intervention caused irreparable damage in the already delicate inter-tribal relations, largely due to the placement of strongholds on direct trade routes from the interior to the coast. To represent the conflict, the novel places Esi in the Asante empire and Effia in Fanteland. The novel moves in location as the narrative opens with Maame's journey from Fanteland to "a small village in the heart of the Asante nation" (Gyasi 30). The involvement of both groups in facilitating the slave trade is later explained by Effia's grandson James as "the Asante had power from capturing slaves. The Fante had protection from trading them" (Gyasi 96). The novel traces the consolidation of the slave trade and colonial power through the conflicting relationship between the Fante and the Asante.

In order to understand Gyasi's choice of forming a matrilineal family tree, it is crucial to delve deeper into the history of the Akan people. A common proverb in the language of the Akan

reads, “obaa na owoo ohene”, which translates to, “it is the woman who gave birth to the king” (Akyeampong et al. 1). Women in Asante society held important roles through which they exercised a certain level of power within the social structure. Historically, Asante social structure was a matrilineal clan system, which enabled women to have positions in decision making (25). The ability to make decisions stemmed from the belief that only women could transmit blood; therefore, a family’s survival depended not on a male heir but on the daughter’s ability to give birth to another offspring so that the family line might continue (29). As colonialism took hold, early Asante social organization took different forms in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, accumulation of wealth and increase in warfare elevated men’s status over that of women (30).Women still remained active agents due to their ability to bear life, and they continued to participate in all three levels of the Asante social structure: family, lineage, and state (30). The novel is deeply committed to bearing witness to the history of Asante women through a fictional narrative. In the novel there are many instances where Gyasi gives the readers a glimpse of how the positions of women as mothers or matriarchs strengthens their influence in the family, while also leaving them vulnerable to other kinds of violence. In conceptualizing the enslaved characters and their descendants, the narrative poses complex questions of “motherhood, diasporic migration, and home” (Marzette 102). Through analyzing the women characters in the split family tree, this chapter will explore motherhood in relation to identity formation, displacement, and healing.

The figure of the first female ancestor, Maame, recurs throughout the narrative and points towards the relevance of ancestry and descendancy. Ancestry in the novel is a reminder of the connection with African cosmology, in which “ancestors are associated with their land, the piece of nature that they inhabit” (qtd. in Marzette 103). The connection with the ancestral figure of

Maame is maintained through different motifs such as fire and a symbolic black stone that Maame gives to her daughters. These recurring images allow the readers to feel Maame's presence in each character's story across generations. The motif of fire is one of the most important in the novel; it introduces the story line in the first chapter:

> The night that Effia Otcher was born into the musky heat of Fanteland, a fire raged through the woods just outside her father's compound. It moved quickly, tearing a path for days. It lived off the air; it slept in caves and hid in trees; it burned, up and through, unconcerned with what wreckage it left behind, until it reached an Asante village. (Gyasi 3)

The use of different motifs is a way of steering the narrative forward by suggesting the interconnectedness of various elements. This is a narrative strategy that makes *Homegoing* unique as Gyasi employs fire to symbolize two crucial themes in the novel: female descendancy and colonial presence. The fire, as the readers will find out later, has been set by Maame, but the author uses this opportunity to juxtapose the extent of it with colonial presence in Fanteland and Asante Ghana. In this way, the fire insinuates the extent of the British role in "proliferating human trade, inciting tribal wars, and ultimately leaving similar destruction and loss in their wake" (Marzette 103). As the chapters progress, the fire motif recurs as a signifier of colonial presence and its consequences on each character. For example, Maame reemerges in the form of the fire woman, a wounded ancestor, in her great great great great granddaughter's dreams.

Another motif that emerges as a signifier of Maame's presence is the black stone split between the two sisters Effia and Esi. The younger daughter Esi loses her half of the stone when she is captured, but the stone left with Effia survives seven generations of physical and emotional trauma across the slave trade and colonization. Esi's loss of the stone is telling of a forced

detachment from the mother, as well as the possibility of going back. Though it is not clear at the time, through the displacement of the stone the novel poses complicated questions regarding the possibility of recovery. The stone's survival in Effia's family line suggests a continuity, and a constant connection with the female ancestral figure of Maame, while the loss of the stone represents a fragmented, or split identity in Esi and her descendants. The connection to Maame in Esi's family line is felt as an absent presence. The feeling of loss hinges upon the anticipation of the reemergence of the stone in the chapters charting Esi's family line. The lack of this direct connection with Maame, therefore, conveys the feeling of loss and the longing for recovery. Gyasi, however, does not allow the readers to arrive at a simple or unitary understanding of identity formation, as regardless of the continuity of the family ties in Asante Ghana, characters are unable to reconcile with the memory of slavery and its aftermath.

Beginning with the scene of the fire, the novel sets the stage for a conflict that will continue to define the lives of the two main characters: Effia and Esi. Maame's spirit will persist in haunting the characters in the later chapters. The novel begins with the loss of a child, with Maame leaving Effia under the care of Baaba, and though Effia's development in the novel takes place away from her mother, it is important to understand the ways in which each character's development takes place in relation to the figure of the matriarch. In this respect, the daughters represent two parts split from the identity of the mother, which Esi later points out when she remarks that her mother is not a whole woman (Gyasi 42). Maame leaves Effia with the wife of the man who raped her. Effia then is a constant reminder to Cobbe's legitimate wife Baaba of her husband's infidelity. As a result, Baaba will later scheme for Effia to get married to a white soldier named James, and Effia will find herself at the Cape Coast Castle where Esi, her half sister, is trapped in the dungeons below. Maame's sacrifice of giving up Effia is made clear to the

readers when Esi finds out the truth about her sister, soon after which she is trapped and enslaved. The early chapters establish the themes of loss and trauma. It is not just the trauma of slavery that Gyasi wants the readers to understand. It is the deep rootedness of the loss of a child due to internal systems of domination which leads to Maame setting the fire for her escape on the night she gives birth to Effia. Through motherhood, then, Gyasi paints a narrative that forces the readers to confront the position of women in Ghana, both before and after slavery. The position of women is shown to be doubly marginalized; however, the novel follows different trajectories and geographical locations to understand the marginalization of women as well as how women cope within and against structures of power and domination.

Effia is made aware of Maame's existence when her father passes away. The forced detachment from her mother and the inability to remember Maame's memory are characteristic of Effia's character development. Her upbringing in Fanteland, away from Esi and Maame, is an entry point into various debates around colonial presence in Ghana, and the development of slavery in the eighteenth century. Effia's fraught relationship with her adoptive mother and the need to have a better life for herself push Effia to ponder complex questions which are telling of the socio-economic nature of the slave trade: "she had seen James look at a king crown brought in by one of their Asante traders and declare that it was worth four pounds. What about the human beast? How much was he worth?" (Gyasi 24). These questions and the dialogues they provoke provide the readers with a retelling of the history of the nation from the lived experiences of a woman like Effia. She is a young girl living under British colonization as she continues to discover the implications of the trade with the British. After marriage, Effia lives at the Cape Coast castle with her husband James. The presence of the dungeons where the slaves are held and the sight of the departing slave ships leave her with a sense of unease about her and

her child's location. Married to a white soldier, Effia gives birth to her first and only child, Quey. Regardless of her complicated relationship with motherhood, and the lack of nurturing from her own mother, Effia is portrayed as a protective and caring mother to her son: "she was the most patient mother in all of Cape Coast, in all of the Gold Coast. She spoke softly yet assuredly" (Gyasi 53).

Through Effia's narrative, Gyasi introduces the importance of stories in the novel as Quey listens to his mother talk of the family: Cobbe, Baaba, Fiifi (uncle), and finally Maame, who is described as "another mother whose name they would never know". Quey also learns "that the shimmering black stone Effia always wore around her neck had belonged to this woman, his true grandmother" (Gyasi 54). Effia and Quey's relationship and their personal inner reflections are characterized by an array of complicated questions regarding African complicity in the slave trade. In an attempt to reconcile with his own location, Quey reflects on his father's profession and wonders how "James felt every time he watched a ship push off? Was it a mix of fear and shame and loathing that Quey felt for his own flesh, his mutinous desire?" (Gyasi, 62). The author depicts the difficulty with reconciliation, as well as the self-contempt that develops as a result of the brutality of the slave trade. In *Homegoing* the readers have a chance to look in from the outside and decipher different aspects of kinship and community relations integral to the understanding of the African memory of the slave trade. In her seminal work, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade,* Ann C. Bailey places "African voices of this era at the center of (...) historical enterprise" (Bailey 2). Bailey's research attempts to dig deeper into the African memory of slavery, particularly its relationship with the oral culture in Ghana. Searching for answers to how slavery is remembered and imagined, Bailey's findings prove to be essential in analyzing the issues of reconciliation with the past in *Homegoing.* Effia's conception of the

slaves is telling of the complex kinship and community relations as the slaves are "people who spoke a different dialect than her, people who had been captured in tribal wars, even people who had been stolen, but she had never thought of where they went from there" (Gyasi, 25).

Kinship in *Homegoing* can be seen as both inclusive and exclusive. Some individuals find themselves protected by the community, while others are marginalized by the same set of kin. Traditionally, in Akan society inclusivity through kinship was limited to a group of villages or "towns in a particular area" (Bailey 59). In *Homegoing*, the entry point into different community relationships is clear through the change in languages. Effia names the language she speaks as "Fante", but the slaves speak a different dialect. A simplistic understanding would urge the readers to believe that individuals existing at the margins of kinship networks were more vulnerable during the slave trade. It is critical to highlight, however, that the slave trade developed in different stages from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century (Bailey 70). The involvement of Africans in transporting slaves had multiple layers "given that a trade in human beings, though marginal, did exist prior to European arrival; … the European and American presence as a match that was lit to bits of paper on the African coast" (72). The existence of domestic slaves is acknowledged briefly through the character of Little Dove, or Abronoma, who is a slave in Maame's household. But, the voices of these enslaved people are sufficient to present hierarchies with broadly two sets of divisions within the Asante and Fante: difference between chiefs and others, and difference between kin and others. In this regard, the early chapters following Effia's and Esi's descendents present the transformation of such hierarchies by echoing the sentiment that in the era of transatlantic slave trade, both Fante and Asante found themselves to be in vulnerable positions. In particular, colonization and its implications in the

novel force the readers to come face to face with violence against women and their varied responses towards recovery.

Violence against women and its recurring patterns are explicit in the novel. Maame's younger daughter Esi is the only character in *Homegoing* with a vivid memory of the matriarch. Esi's narrative begins from the juxtaposition of violence faced by both the mother and daughter. The brutality of the memory of violence is then linked to its effect on an individual's psyche, and its effects on their understanding of time and space. Maame's figure is an absent presence in the better part of the chapter, but the reader can see the relationship between the mother and daughter through the similarities in their experiences. An analysis of Esi in relation to Maame should be done with caution, as their trauma cannot be weighed on a scale of equivalence. Maame's experiences of violence in Cobbe's household, and Esi's entrapment and forced migration to America have differing implications. Esi's memory, though fragmented, gives evidence to the harsh realities of women in the transatlantic slave trade. Their position as doubly marginalised, especially due to the instances of rape and assault, is presented through small pieces of Esi's memory. The chapter ends with her being raped by a white soldier. It is not a coincidence then that Gyasi begins the chapter by referring to a mother and child in the women's dungeons:

> The baby had messed itself, and Afua, its mother, had no milk. She was naked, save the small scrap of fabric the traders had given her to wipe her nipples when they leaked, but they had miscalculated. No food for mother meant no food for baby. The baby would cry soon, but the sound would be absorbed by the mud walls, subsumed into the cries of the hundreds of women who surrounded it. (Gyasi 28)

The finality of the condition of the mother and the fate of the child are clear in this passage. The passage hints at the horrors of slavery by indicating the loss of the child and the damaging effects

of this loss on the mother's spirit. The author explores the fragmentation of the self and what survives in the female slave's role as mother (Gqola 4). Such fragments become a mode of trying to find what is lost and questioning whether recovery is possible.

Feminine experience in the retelling of slave memory is connected to varied thematic concerns. The trauma of forced detachment from all that is familiar convolutes an individual's conception of time. The mediation between the past and present serves to investigate how violence shapes memory, and how memory resists violence. Esi's conception of time is split between "before the castle and now" (31). Her memory as divided between the past and present is not a linear progression, but an interlocking of experiences. She is the daughter of a wealthy man, yet she is exposed to extreme forms of violence. Due to the inability to make sense of their present circumstances, Esi and the other slaves rely on remembering and finding connections with their past in order to forget or erase the present. This strategy is made clear when the author states, "when she wanted to forget the Castle, she thought of these things, but she did not expect joy. Hell was a place of remembering, each beautiful moment passed through the mind's eye until it fell to the ground like a rotten mango, perfectly useless and uselessly perfect" (Gyasi 28). At the same time Esi's experiences as once living a sheltered life and her present as a slave reveal the fluctuating status of women during colonization. Here too, however, is the connection with storytelling that protects their sense of self when Esi relies on the stories narrated by other women in the dungeons. The strong link between memory and storytelling presents a hopeful narrative woven around loss and healing.

Part one of the novel, consisting of seven chapters, introduces the first entrypoint in the exploration of slavery and motherhood juxtaposed with the development of an African American identity through Esi's daughter Ness.The uniqueness of the female slave as doubly marginalized

in *Homegoing* points towards the economic gains of breeding black slave women. Bell hooks in "Sexism and the Black Female Slave Experience" provides a historical context for the same:

> The scarcity of workers coupled with the relatively few numbers of black women in American colonies caused some white male planters to encourage, persuade, and coerce immigrant white females to engage in sexual relationships with black male slaves as a means of producing new workers. In Maryland, in the year 1664, the first anti-amalgamation law was passed; it was aimed at curtailing sexual relationships between white women and enslaved black men. (hooks 15)

As a result of multiple anti-amalgamation laws that followed it was decreed that the child of a white woman and enslaved black man would be free (hooks 15). The position of black slave women as chattel gained more significance in the larger scheme of the demand and supply of labourers becuase the children of enslaved women would also be slaves. As hooks notes, research conducted shows that imperialists did not consider African women as a threat. In some circumstances women on slave ships were not chained, and therefore they were more vulnerable to be spotted by white men and sexually abused. Sexual violence became a tool for white men to assert complete dominance over black women, at the same using their bodies to meet the high demand for slave labour (18).Though Gyasi does not provide a detailed economic analysis of slavery, it is still a crucial facet in reading violence against enslaved women.

At Thomas Allan Stockham's Alabama plantation, Ness is a female slave and her main responsibilities include agricultural labour. Ness' only link to her mother's memory is the stories she narrated of the "big boat", and the "images of men being thrown into the Atlantic ocean like anchors attached to nothing: no land, no people, no worth" (Gyasi 70). Erasure through death and stillness of time and space is a recurring theme in the chapter. The only link of continuity is

Ness' memory of Esi teaching her the native language Twi. But, as time passes and Ness is plucked from her mother's arms, she is only able to remember small physical features of her mother. The chapter oscillates between past and present as Ness looks back on her time in a place she calls Hell under a man she deems the Devil. The location is unknown to the readers, but Ness introduces Hell by her marriage to Sam. From here, once again Gyasi invokes the painful realities of motherhood as Ness and her husband Sam give birth to Kojo under the watchful eyes of the plantation owner known as Devil. The threat of the child being sold into slavery and the need to protect him spurs Ness to plan their escape from the plantation. Kojo's birth brings her some glimpses of happiness, but an attempt to run away from the plantation for the sake of her son results in Sam's murder and Ness' physical abuse. The sacrifice of the mother is the final price to pay for her son's freedom.

As the novel follows the descendants across continents, it also moves between the past and present on the scale of timeline. In the later chapters on Effia's descendants the novel leads to a voluntary break in the family line. Due to the inability to reconcile with his family's role in slavery, Effia's grandson makes the decision to run away and marry a woman below his class station. The incidents leading up to the final break from the family hinge upon James' mental dilemma over whether to continue his family's business in the slave trade. By throwing light upon his relationship with Effia, the novel showcases the first glimpses of the development of individual subjectivity amidst the wreckage of colonialism: "but if we do not like the person we have learned to be, should we just sit in front of our fufu, doing nothing?" (Gyasi 107). Motherhood is not directly invoked in the chapters forming the halfway point of the storyline. But, Gyasi uses the connection to matriarchal figures as a way of developing the subjectivities of male characters. For example, James' mother Nana Yaa is the daughter of the king of Asante, an

important political bargaining tool. Her stories shape James' understanding of colonialism and its aftermath:

> Her people, the Asantes, were the broth, and his father's people, the Fantes, were the groundnuts, and the many other nations that began at the edge of the Atlantic and moved up through the bushland into the North made up the meat and pepper and vegetables. This pot was already full to the brim before the white men came and added fire. Now it was all the Gold Coast people could do to keep from boiling over again and again and again. (Gyasi 89)

His mother's kidnapping and subsequent marriage to Quey, and the family's influence in facilitating tribal wars and capturing slaves, induces James to escape. Interestingly, as the narrative enters the debates of the abolition of slavery, it also introduces the relationship between historical violence and contemporary forms of inequality (Goyal 50). James' subjectivity develops in the backdrop of the solidification of British presence in Africa and their quest to control the land. In the midst of war and his grandfather's death, James meets Akosua, who, having lost her brother to slavery, explains the cycle of colonial violence in her remarks, "when my brothers and the other people were taken, my village mourned them as we redoubled our military efforts. And what does that say? We avenge lost lives by taking more?" (Gyasi 99). Akosua's insistence prompts James to resolve his dissatisfactions and plot to leave his privileged position behind. The individual choices of both James and Akosua develop complicated issues of recovery and the mental effects of colonial violence. In the following chapters Gyasi shapes the narrative to present the multilayered responses towards violence through James' daughter Abena and granddaughter Akua.

If Effia's descendants cope with the aftermath of slavery followed by the wars between the Asante and British, Esi's family line copes with generational violence by confronting new forms of bondage and racism. Kojo and H as Esi's grandson and great grandson provide the readers with the modern manifestations of slavery and its effects in the later years of the nineteenth century. Though Kojo is a runaway slave and free in Baltimore, he constantly searches for explanations for the past. The only resource he has to rely on is the "stories Ma Aku told him, the same way he knew his mother and father, Ness and Sam. As stories and nothing more. He didn't miss what he didn't know, what he couldn't feel in his hand or his heart" (Gyasi 112). Kojo's limited understanding leads him to rely increasingly on the tangible, and what he has: the ships of Baltimore, his wife Anna, and their seven children. The intangibility of the mother's presence is substituted by Maa Aku as the last surviving family member with a direct link to Africa. Her conversations with Kojo form crucial links between black resistance and the African art of storytelling (Bailey 104). Resistance for Maa Aku is in the act of bearing witness to cultural social formations. In small acts of invoking Nyame, and speaking to Kojo in Twi, she is constantly reasserting her African identity despite the trauma associated with it. From connecting Kojo to Africa and retaining some sense of his personhood, Maa Aku is the feminine presence that connects Kojo to Ness, and inevitably to Esi. Kojo's individuality is not shaped by bodily injuries, but mental scars. The novel alludes to the Fugitive Slave Act that was first created in 1793, and passed again in 1850 crack down on runaway slaves. The chapter takes a violent turn when Kojo's wife is kidnapped and sold into slavery along with his unborn child. In response to Anna's kidnapping, Maa Aku speaks to him in Twi to remind Kojo of his ancestral strength in coping with loss: "you will make it through this, Jo. Nyame did not make weak Asantes, and that is what you are, no matter what man here, white or black, wishes to erase that

part of you" (Gyasi 130). Gyasi narrates Kojo's character as an entrypoint into the lived reality of racist America, but tempered by his yearning for knowledge of his roots and ancestry. In invoking Asante history, Maa Aku, despite the violence of slavery, forms implicit relationships amongst Esi's family line.

Part two of the novel begins with a break in the narrative as Kojo's son H finds himself in the crux of industrial capitalism.Serving his early years as a plantation slave and then integrated within the convict leasing system, H does not have any recollection of his parents except for the knowledge of his mother's suicide. As the distance from the ancestry increases, the links to the matriarchal figures fade away as well. On the other hand, each character's personal journey is directly related to their location. Identity formation is shaped by contemplating the limits of their freedom, or whether such freedom exists (Táíwò 44). As the Civil War comes to an end, and the Southern plantations are abandoned, H makes the journey from Georgia to Alabama. By describing his journey as a free man, the narrative paints a picture of America on the crux of the twentieth century confronting the problems of an emancipated black population. In the questioning of the ideals of liberty and freedom, Gyasi structures the storyline to throw light upon the continuance of racial violence against the black population. Simultaneously, it implies the limitations of the Civil War, Freedmen's Bureau, the Emancipation Proclamation passed in 1863, and finally the 13th Amendment of 1865 in healing the wounds of the institution of slavery.

Through H, the reader can conceptualize the various assaults on black population in the post Civil War era through the concept of 'double consciousness' presented by W.E.B Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*. H's image of himself after the Civil War is to believe that he is a free man, but as another inmate notes after H is arrested under false pretense, "slavery ain't nothin'

but a dot in your eye, huh? If nobody tell you, I'ma tell you. War may be over but it ain't ended" (Gyasi 158). When H is sold for 19 dollars by the State of Alabama to work in the mines outside of Birmingham, he is confronted by the reality of "a world which yields him no true self-consciousness. ... It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of the others" (Du Bois 8). H's realization that there is, in fact, no freedom for him to aspire to leads him to work in the mines through the years of his incarceration. The mines are described in dystopian imagery as "this city [that] had shafts for streets, and rooms for houses. And in every room, everywhere, there was coal" (Gyasi 160). The death, beatings, darkness, and reality of being chained to his fellow miners can be seen as the author's attempt to juxtapose H's world with Esi's description of the darkness in the dungeons at the beginning of the novel: "darkness was day and night and everything in between" (Gyasi 30). As the connection with his ancestry gets lost under layers of suffering, Gyasi hints towards a connection with the past through the lived realities of slavery, and its modern manifestations across centuries.

Introducing coal and industrial capitalism forms a genealogy from early forms of the transatlantic slave trade to modern forms of racist domination. In providing a historical context of the imperialist project, Isidore Okpewho argues that America's development can be characterized by three phases of labour: imperative, territorial, and extractive (Okpewho 8). The relationship between racial structures and the early development of capitalism is of paramount importance to throw light upon the development of black resistance through their political and cultural contributions. The novel develops the last three chapters on Esi's family line by presenting a multi-faceted understanding of African American existence in modern America. Resistance to the combined effects of imperialism and capitalism is shown through cultural

regeneration and political solidarity. For example, H moves on to become the head of the union of workers in Pratt City post incarceration. Similarly, his daughter Willie finds her interest in singing and the music she is exposed to through the union meetings she attends with her father. As Gyasi paints a picture of modern America, she is also implicitly providing evidence for the development of the nation through black labour. Whether it is capital accumulated through exploitative coal mining or America's progress in cultural fields such as music that developed through church gatherings and songs sung in various congregations, America cannot deny the black population's contributions to its progress (Du Bois 14). In interlinking the development of the structures of modern capitalism with race, from Pratt City to Harlem, *Homegoing* argues for the necessity of the American Republic to consider its own foundation built on slave labour, and how the nation's survival has been ensured by "imperialism and the invention of race [as] fundamental aspects of Western modernity" (McClintock 5).

In Willie, the last female member of Esi's family tree, the novel subtly hints towards the development of the black female experience through different economic, cultural, and religious spaces. While her upbringing is rooted in Pratt City, Willie moves to Harlem in the hope of becoming a singer. As the realities of segregation become clear, she is exposed to the limitation of her dreams: "'Too dark', he repeated. 'Jazzing's only for the light girls'" (209). Willie's status as a poor black woman only allows her to become a housekeeper, while she raises her son after she is abandoned by her husband. As the novel paints the lived realities of Harlem, Willie's identity development and her connection to her ancestry are established through her community. In response to the forced displacement and detachment in Esi's family line, the novel here introduces healing through the development of the black church. Congregational singing in the church is Willie's opening to find a sense of community and belonging that is otherwise

restricted to her in all other avenues. The centrality of the development of the black church, and the earliest development of the African American musical tradition deserves more contemplation. Bernice Johnson Reagon in the documentary *The Songs Are Free: Bernice Johnson Reagon and African-American Music*, discusses the essential role of the church as a cultural force in African American history:

> When you have a unit like that where twenty people get together, and they have something called a church- and maybe the missionary who baptized them was white, and maybe they are even still slaves. But they are actually brought into an institution that says, the power is in this circle. Then you have something you can actually fashion in your own interest. (Reagon)

Willie's self-expression as a black woman is juxtaposed with the development of the black church and the earliest roots of the African American musical tradition. Since she is too dark to become a professional jazz singer, Willie becomes a member of the church choir. Singing in the choir is an avenue to reconnect with herself and be a part of the community which has undergone continued displacement. As the story shifts towards the possibility of finding lost connections, it also introduces solidarity within the community in subverting the abusive history of the church and refashioning it for self interest. Willie's identity as the last female ancestor does not hold deeper connections with the rest of the ancestry, but her character opens the possibility for "exploring conditions surrounding the paths New World Blacks have had to cut for themselves beyond the encumbering mists of history" (Okpewho 19). Through Willie and the other members of Esi's lineage, Gyasi presents the limitations of roots and origins, while placing more importance on the different routes existing in the diaspora that trace back to the mother continent

(Okpewho 14). Such routes, however, do not trace a clear path towards recovery, but allow the individual to connect with different modes of healing.

African identity in *Homegoing*, as opposed to the African American identity, suggests a continuity in connections that is telling of the effects of violence on memory. Continuity does not indicate a linear progression in narrative, but the varied effects of violence in shaping memory. In James' daughter Abena, the novel presents the increasing distance from the past and the different modes of rediscovering the past in the present. Abena's knowledge of her own identity is limited to her being an Asante, and as a result she desires to visit Kumasi, the capital of the Asante kingdom. Though the location of Abena's village is unknown, the distance to Kumasi represents a contrast in how the past is understood. Kumasi as a crucial trade center and political capital is presented in contrast to a small village with no stakes in the war. For Abena, slavery is a historical event and the white man is a myth. In Abena's village, slavery is only discussed in different stories that the elders speak of:

> The men of her village often spoke of the ongoing conflict between the Asantes and the British, saying that the Fantes were sympathizers, and that no white man could come into their country and tell them that they no longer owned it. These were village people, farmers who had never seen war, most of whom had never seen the coast of the Gold Coast they so wanted to protect. (Gyasi 141)

Abena's understanding is a lens from which the memory of slavery is further complicated. The geographical expanse of the land and the crucial role of orality within African communities present different versions of the past. It is only at the end of the chapter that James tells Abena the truth about their family. Maame's black stone, and the name of her great grandmother Effia are her only connection to her own identity. With the reemergence of the black stone motif, and

the knowledge of her ancestor, Abena leaves her village for Kumasi. In the concluding chapters of the novel, the narrative moves deeper into the history of Asante and women's role within it. The journey from an unknown village to Kumasi is a journey inwards in confronting the violence of colonialism and its institutions. It is in Kumasi she gives birth to her daughter Akua who is shown to have the strongest spiritual connection with Maame and complete knowledge of the past. Maame haunts Akua's dream to bear witness to the generational violence plaguing the family line. Akua, also a mother of three children, communicates with Maame through her dreams where Akua names her as the firewoman carrying two babies. The figure of the firewoman connects to the dissatisfied ancestor due to the loss of her children. Akua's psychological state becomes her downfall as she ends up burning two of her three children as an offering to satisfy her disgruntled ancestor.

The face of Akua's only surviving child, Yaw, is permanently reconfigured due to the scars from the fire set by his mother. He is the first member of Effia's family line bearing the scars on his face as evidence of the family's generational trauma. In Esi's family line, physical evidence of trauma is shown through Ness' scars given to her by the Devil when Ness and Sam are recaptured and enslaved (Gyasi 87). The scars are evidence of generational violence as both Yaw and Ness do not receive their scars due to their own faults. Since Yaw is sent away at a young age to continue his education, he does not have any relationship with Akua or his family. Until the end of the chapter, Yaw is completely unaware of the significance of his scars or the history of his family.Through Yaw's narrative Gyaasi draws upon the intimate relationship between history and storytelling. Yaw as a history teacher explains the limitations of history to his students:

> This is the problem of history. We cannot know that which we were not there to see and hear and experience for ourselves. We must rely upon the words of others. … We believe in the one who has the power. He is the one who gets to write the story. So when you study history, you must ask yourself, Whose story am I missing? Whose voice was suppressed so that this voice could come forth? Once you have figured that out, you must find that story too. From there, you begin to get a clearer, yet still imperfect, picture. (Gyasi 226)

In Yaw, therefore, are the first glimpses of an African understanding of decolonization. It is in the spirit of decolonization that Yaw refuses to move to America, asserting that "if we go to the white man for school, we will just learn the way the white man wants us to learn. … We will come back and build the country the white man wants us to build. One that continues to serve them. We will never be free" (Gyasi 223). Yaw's clarity in thought and his ability to remain unbiased allow him to reunite with his mother, Akua. The narrative comes full circle in the meeting of the mother and son as Maame's black stone necklace resurfaces. Akua informs Yaw that she retrieved the black stone from the missionary who killed Yaw's grandmother Abena. In search of answers when she takes the stone to the fetish man's son Akua is asked, "do you know there is evil in your lineage" (Gyasi 241). In explaining the history of their family to Yaw, Akua states,

> Evil begets evil. It grows. It transmutes, so that sometimes you cannot see that the evil in the world began as the evil in your own home. … When someone does wrong, whether it is you or me, whether it is mother or father, whether it is the Gold Coast man or the white man, it is like a fisherman casting a net into the water. He keeps only the one or two fish that he needs to feed himself and puts the rest in the water, thinking that their lives will

> go back to normal. No one forgets that they were once captive, even if they are now free. (Gyasi 241)

The black stone motif, therefore, is used as a signifier of the family's complicity in the slave trade and the impossibility of erasing the memory of violence. Yaa Gyasi shapes Effia's family line to make a larger commentary on African complicity in the slave trade and its consequences on the communities. The dichotomy of past and present fades as the past becomes a fundamental part of the present.

In the last two chapters of the novel, Gyasi chooses Yaw's daughter Marjorie and Willie's grandson Marcus as the end point of the family tree that began from Maame. Marjorie, as opposed to her father and grandmother, is aware of her family's history from the beginning. The chapter based on Marjorie draws towards a hopeful end as her awareness of the family's history opens up the possibility of forgiveness and healing. Though Marjorie is raised in America, the multiple journeys back to Ghana to see Akua are described as "their summer ritual, her grandmother reminding her how to come home" (Gyasi 267). In maintaining an intimate relationship with her grandmother, and wearing Maame's black stone necklace around her neck, Marjorie represents the possibility of coming to terms with the past. The idea of home assumes greater significance as the narrative places Ghana as the home to come back to. In building upon the possibility of a return, the author merges the two family lines when Marjorie meets Marcus, the last descendant of Esi's family line. As graduate students at Stanford, both Marcus and Marjorie develop an instant connection. If Marjorie is secure in the awareness of her roots, Marcus struggles to find a connection with his ancestry due to racial violence. He has only "heard tell of his great-grandpa H from Ma Willie … but what had they called his father or his father before him? What of the mother" (Gyasi 295). To recover his family's history Marcus

wants to base his doctoral research on capturing "the feeling of time, of having been a part of something that stretched so far back, was so impossibly large, that it was easy to forget that [Marjorie], and [Marcus], and everyone else, existed in it—not apart from it, but inside of it" (295). The experience of slavery "and the past it physically occupies are not the 'past', they live in and through memories that are constantly refreshed and replenished by symbolic mnemonic objects, chief among them, the descendants' black (African) skin" (Motahane et al. 19). Unaware of their closely linked histories, Marjorie takes Marcus to Ghana and the Cape Coast Castle in the hope of Marcus finding some answers. The final few scenes of the novel are a meeting point for the multiple memories of trauma from Esi's departure through the Door of No Return, to centuries later Marcus escaping the dungeons where Esi was trapped through the same door. In the final scene of the novel, Gyasi presents the two main motifs of fire and the black stone as symbols of reconciliation as now the former motif of fire is "controlled, [and] contained" which signifies the satisfied ancestor. On the other hand, Marjorie gifts Maame's black stone to Marcus, unknowingly connecting Marcus with the female matriarch. The last sentence of the chapter echoes the significance of the title of the novel. When placing the stone around Marcus' neck, Marjorie declares, "Welcome home" (Gyasi 300).

In *Homegoing*, the reader is taken on a journey of looking at the history of Ghana in relation to identity formation. The driving force of the narrative is centered around female descendancy which gives special significance to the black female experience.The novel also develops its male characters in relation to Maame's lineage and debunks the myth of conceptualizing familial relationships in antagonistic terms. Each character's association with the matriarch explores complex questions of identity formation through "going out of (and coming back to) Africa" (Motahane et al.18). Maame's character in *Homegoing* represents the endurance

of the memory of trauma. The lasting effect of this memory on the African American identity is "conscious and unconscious transformations in identity informed by aspects of both the new place and attitudes to the old one" (Motahane at al. 18). For example, the forced displacement due to slavery results in multiple reconfigurations of time and space, as well as the eventual loss of language. The native tongue Twi is lost starting from Esi's grandson Kojo and the next four generations, and all that will come after. The African identity on the other hand is shaped both by the shame induced by the transatlantic slave trade and the violence of colonial domination. For example, multiple characters in the novel, such as Effia's son Quey and grandson James, are psychologically impacted by the guilt of their family's role in capturing and supplying slaves to the British. Though in the beginning Effia's family line has a clear advantage as slave traders over Esi's family line, both set of characters undergo varied experiences of generational trauma as victims of the slave trade, as well as of colonial violence. The transformation of the institution of slavery to complete colonial rule showcases the vulnerability of Effia's family line, regardless of their historical complicity in the slave trade. In the last few descendants of Effia's family line, Gyasi brings the narrative together in asserting the complex, and multiple layers of African identity. Esi's descendants, however, represent the development of African American resistance as well their resilience to retain a sense of self. The end of the slave trade in the novel is not an end but the beginning of a series of economic, social, and religious reconfigurations. If the African American identity develops in the backdrop of finding new modes of self expression, the African identity is shaped by the difficulty of reconciling with the past and bearing the consequences for the future. *Homegoing*, as opposed to the other two novels discussed in this study, provides a clear ending. The end of the novel provides a clear indication of hope and reconciliation across the somatic memory of colonialism.

Conclusion

In exploring the factors that shape African women's lives, the three authors discussed in the course of this study reclaim a literary space for themselves. Shaped by the events in the authors' personal lives, both *Second-Class Citizen*, by Buchi Emecheta, and *Nervous Conditions*, by Tsitsi Dangarembga, present autobiographical undertones. I locate the African women's agency through these novels in Dangarembga's strategy to use Tambu (*Nervous Conditions*) as narrator, and Emecheta's focus on Adah's experiences (*Second-Class Citizen*) through a third person narrator. By mirroring their own lives in the stories of their fictional protagonists, the authors provide an intimate window into their unfiltered lived experiences as African women. The first two chapters in this research project devote a significant section to analyzing both Tambu and Adah's journeys from young women to active agents in their own stories. It is an intentional choice by Dangarembga and Emecheta to present some of their own struggles and aspirations as African women through the narrators. In contrast, the final novel, *Homegoing*, by Yaa Gyasi, does not fit the same pattern of developmental narrative. In *Homegoing*, a larger number of characters are given equal space and presented through short stories within a larger historical framework. The identification of different modes of self-expression in the novels negates the idea of a single aesthetic style in African women's writing.

Readers should understand these novels in relation to a dynamic tradition of creative writing by African women. This is not to limit the political and social significance of these novels, but on the contrary to locate theorizing in narrative forms through stories, "in riddles and proverbs, [and] in the play with language" (Christian, "Race" 68). Barbara Christian traces the development of literature by women of colour as "not an occasion for discourse among critics but as necessary nourishment for their people and one way by which they come to understand

their lives" (69). The readers should assume caution in conceptualizing these novels as examples of a minor literature because such a designation accepts invidious Western notions of minor and major literature. This binary sees the literature produced in the rest of the world as minor even as the West claims many of the ideas its "historical other[s] have known and spoken about for so long" (Christian, "Race" 70). The study of African women's writing, therefore, compels its consumers to ask more complex and nuanced questions to address the histories of colonialism. As prominent postcolonial theorist Chandra Mohanty argues, in identifying "colonialism, capitalism, race, and gender as inextricably interrelated, our very conceptual maps are redrawn and transformed" (Mohanty 45). Literary texts by African women writers give evidence to the varied experiences of women in colonial and postcolonial societies.

The final take away from this study is that we should resist the understanding of black women's subjectivity in African women's writing only for its social and political meaningfulness. Women's resistance to colonial institutions, historically, can be located in intimate networks of solidarity. The analysis of *Nervous Conditions* is based on the protagonist's relationship with other women in the novel. The development of female subjectivity, therefore, is in relation to the strength and wisdom Tambu derives from the women in her family. Similarly, as explored in the second chapter of this thesis, Adah consistently laments the lack of communal support in her life in England. In highlighting the pitfalls of traditional life, Emecheta simultaneously focuses on the importance of community relations in protecting women. Finally, *Homegoing* traces the fourteen characters' lives in relation to the matriarch. It situates women in the community as storytellers and preservers of the past. As storytellers, they create a space for reconciliation and healing across generational trauma. All three novels, therefore, locate the black female experience in the collective. Understanding their past through their community

moves against the Western focus on individual identity. In African women's writing, the readers can identify the tools of survival and healing in the authors' use of stories from the past, motifs, and interpersonal relationships amongst women. Identity formation, therefore, takes place in relation to their communities and locations.

The analysis and exploration of similar themes in other creative forms, such as but not limited to poetry, drama, and the short story, allows for a deeper understanding of the African literary canon. Other than the novel, the African short story is an important literary form due its proximity with the African tradition of storytelling. The development of the African short story and themes explored by many writers can appear closest to the African tradition of storytelling. It is worthwhile to explore the questions around the "foundations, aesthetics, energy, literary, and linguistic strengths or weaknesses" of the African short story (Emenyonu 2). In establishing the relevance of the short story in relation to African storytelling, Ernest N. Emenyonu argues:

> Nowhere else was 'story' more socially revered as culturally significant and purposeful than in the traditional African society where it was used for the dual functions of acculturation and entertainment. From time immemorial, Africans designed 'the story' as a vehicle for cultural transmission and continuity. The story (tale/folktale) was the source of 'raw' (authentic) African values and the elders structured its form and sharpened its message such that it became a coherent and reliable vehicle for childhood upbringing, social transformation, and the conveyance of esteemed norms, values, and virtues transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation. (Emenyonu 2)

There are various questions that arise in light of the inextricably linked relationship between the short story and the oral tradition of storytelling: Why has the short story been neglected as a category of analysis as opposed to other forms of African literature? (Emenyonu 1) Do the

African short story and the novel fulfill similar purposes of using lived experience as narrative or do they develop as different entities that contrast with each other? Finally, as compared to the novel, what are the ways in which African women have explored the short story genre? The acceptability of the novel or other creative forms in African literature as compared to the short story can possibly rely on the socio-political foundation of the African literary canon. To refute the eurocentric and colonial mentality of the absence of cultural development in Africa, many writers have used the novel as a means to reassert their presence as producers of different creative forms. It can be speculated, therefore, that the short story did not gain as much critical recognition due to its limited influence in placing the African writer in high regard on the global literary scene. Owen G. Mordaunt states that the short story, as opposed to the tales in African oral tradition, does not evoke a moral purpose (22). It is based on reality and differs from the tale in form and content. Another key difference identified by Mordaunt is that the writer of the African short story is not held in the same revered position enjoyed by the storyteller in traditional African society. While these limitations exist, the similarities in thematic concerns between African novels and short stories cannot be overlooked. For example, African women writers explore the relationship between tradition and modernity in both novels and short stories. In this way, African women writers employ the short story form to present their realities in a manner calculated to generate curiosity through the choice of a creative form otherwise overlooked.

Because of the interest and neglected importance of this genre, I have chosen to conclude my study of African women writers with a discussion of two short stories: “The Girl Who Can,” by Ama Ata Aidoo, and “The Collector of Treasures,” by Bessie Head. “The Girl Who Can” tells the story of a young girl’s journey to subjecthood through sports. Through the protagonist, Aidoo

explores the limitations of gender roles in relation to tradition and modernity. On the other hand, "The Collector of Treasures" traces the different experiences of violence undergone by the protagonist. The story revolves around the experiences of women in prison sentenced for killing their husbands. While these stories represent different socio-political locations, both authors explore the development of female subjectivity through their short stories. While Aidoo develops a "language that embraces a female centered consciousness that is open-ended and full of possibilities", Head's tales "reflect a kind of female subjectivity that is trying to rescue itself from the anonymity of otherness" (Chetin, *Rereading* 2). This analysis traces the different ways in which both writers develop their female characters

The choice of these particular writers is based on differences in their personal experiences as African women that deeply influence their writing. For example, Bessie Head's exploration of women's position as the 'other' mirrors her personal life as a writer in exile. Born to an upper class white woman and a black labourer, Head was "brought up in a deeply segregated and racially polarized South Africa" (Sati xxiii). As a result of not being accepted as a mixed-race woman in South Africa, Head eventually settled in Botswana. Her lived experience, therefore, is deeply centered on creating an alternative narrative and finding a place of belonging. Most of her writing presents a need for assimilation in her new community. In focusing on those who exist on the margins of the cultural imaginary, Head shapes her narratives around the "figure of the oppressed and exploited rural woman" (Sati xxiv). On the other hand, Ama Ata Aidoo presents a different model of female subjectivity; her writing is influenced by the history of Ghana during the era of the slave trade and subsequent colonization, as well as its aftermath. In her novel *Our Sister Killjoy,* Aidoo states, "we are victims of our History and our Present. They place too many obstacles in the Way of Love. And we cannot enjoy even our differences in peace" (Aidoo 29).

Though Aidoo herself was born in the family of a Fante chief and led a privileged life of attending premier academic institutions, her short stories hold value in addressing the systemic inequities confronting the female subject in traditional Ghanaian society. This conclusion to the thesis will locate the thematic similarities that exist in the writings of both authors to gather a deeper understanding of the African women's literary tradition. The brief analysis of their short stories presents the different "strategies that seek to subvert the ways that texts can be interpreted" (Chetin, *Rereading* 6).

Aidoo's short story collection *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* was published in 1997. The title story, "The Girl Who Can", exemplifies how Aidoo's primary area of concern is female empowerment. In the story, Aidoo "explores the position of the girl child and her potential for self-realization" (Roychoudhury 132). Aidoo's protagonist Adjoa and the various thematic concerns in the story can be best understood through the awareness of the author's upbringing. The author's life as a young girl was rooted in the matrilineal Akanian tradition, and Aidoo was raised in "an enlightened and progressive household" (Roychoudhury 126). Aidoo, in one of her many exceptional essays, argues that her "father had come to consider female Western education as the answer to the problems of the limitations of the untrained mind, and the definite waste that was the sum of female lives" (Aidoo 164). Access to education for young girls, therefore, becomes a primary element in Aidoo's writing. For example, in *"*The Girl Who Can", Adjoa's mother and grandmother argue about the relevance of her receiving an education. The protagonist/narrator presents her mother "as locked into some kind of darkness because she didn't go to school" (Aidoo 160). Another parallel that can be made between the author's personal life and the thematic concerns of the story is through the narrative's focus on centering female voices. Aidoo's upbringing was deeply influenced by the strong female presence in her

life. In being “surrounded by strong women who knew their mind , rooted in a tradition that deeply valued them, Aidoo grew up vitally aware of life’s possibilities” (Roychoudhury 126). In “The Girl Who Can”, the narrative centers around the life of a young girl, Adjoa, her grandmother, Nana, and mother, Maami. The conversations in the story are predominantly amongst women. By crafting the story with three generations of women in the same family, Aidoo places women in primary decision-making roles. Though the family is depicted as a matrilineal clan, the influences of patriarchy are apparent in the conditioning of Maami and Nana. Nana sees the absence of a male voice in the household as a limitation when she remarks: “how, after one’s only daughter had insisted on marrying such a man like that the biggest problem you got later was having a granddaughter with spindly legs that are too long for women” (Aidoo 159). Similarly, Nana’s worldview is predominantly shaped around women’s roles as wives and mothers, as she makes an argument with reference to Adjoa’s legs, “if any woman decides to come into this world with all of her two legs, then she should select legs that have meat on them: with good calves. Because you are sure such legs would support solid hips. And a woman must have solid hips to be able to have children” (Aidoo 158). The narrative, therefore, presents the ways in which “patriarchal discursive practices are inscribed in women’s minds and bodies” (Nfah-Abbenyi 46). Aidoo urges the readers to understand women’s decisions in light of their socialization in patriarchal societies.

The narrative does not valorize motherhood even though Nana deems Adjoa useless in fulfilling a woman’s true purpose. On the contrary, Aidoo subverts traditional models of femininity by showing Adjoa’s journey to self-fulfillment in becoming an athlete. The thin legs that place her on the margin of traditional ideals of womanhood, according to her grandmother, allow for the development of a strong and radical self. Adjoa’s legs allow her to run and win the

“cup for the all-round junior athlete” (Aidoo 161). The protagonist notes the shift in her grandmother’s outlook: “thin legs can also be useful … thin legs can also be useful … that ‘even though some legs don’t have much meat on them, to carry hips’ … they can run. Thin legs can run … then who knows?” (Aidoo 162). The cup that Nana carries on her back “like they do with babies, and other very precious things” presents the hope for alternative futures outside the boundaries of the domestic space. The grandmother’s acceptance of Adjoa’s capabilities displays a “complex mix of conventionality and radicalism” (Roychoudhury 143). In reimagining the self, Aidoo paves the way for positive transformation. By presenting the grandmother’s voice as the key element of shaping the plot, Aidoo places the story in relation to the country’s pre-colonial and colonial past. The relationship between Adjoa and Nana evolves in “resistance to the colonial past leading to the dynamic engagement with an ongoing process of (re)construction of the postcolonial self” (Sati 15). The grandmother’s relationship with Adjoa presents the dynamic process of their individual development in the story.

The second section of this study will analyze Head’s short story “The Collector of Treasures". The short story was included in the larger short story collection *The Collector of Treasures and Other Botswana Village Tales* published in 1977. Multiple short stories in the collection are inspired by Head’s research on oral history and storytelling in the small village of Serowe, Botswana, where she herself lived from 1964. The story “The Collector of Treasures” developed “in ‘village newspaper’ fashion from an encounter the author has with a relative of the man who was killed by his estranged wife” (Mackenzie 23). The author draws a link between storytelling and the short story form as it places the narrative in a larger framework “which contextualizes the tales for the reader and transcribes the oral tale into the short story” (Mackenzie 23). The title of the story as well as the entire short story collection is suggestive of

its roots in orality and community life in the village. In “The Collector of Treasures”, Head traces the life of Dikeledi Mokopi imprisoned for the murder of her husband. The short story is unique in its content by a South African writer as it resists “the silence on rural themes and the experiences of women in the literature of South Africa” (Sharma 12). As a mixed-race woman, Head juxtaposes her own sense of profound alienation from communities on both sides of the colour line with writing about “experiences of those sidelined … within resistance movements in her time and place — the village folk, particularly rural woman” (Sharma 12). Her writing, therefore, is deeply shaped by the brutal history of apartheid in South Africa, and the development of the Black Consciousness Movement in 1968. Resistance to racial segregation fed into the idea of racial purity and “black resentment of any relationship with the whites” (Sharma 9). Head continues to become aware of the limitations of black nationalism. Her writing presents the “radical aspiration … [through a] human-centered approach to Africa’s problems, putting humanity over the exclusivity of nationalism and racism” (Khannous 39). Head’s aesthetic style focuses on highlighting the experiences of women existing on the margins of a collective political imagination.

Head’s humanism is evident in “The Collector of Treasures” through the way she showcases the development of various relationships across gender and location. Dikiledi Mokopi builds a life for herself and three children. Abandoned by her husband, she uses her resourcefulness as she survives knitting dresses and jerseys for her neighbors’ children. Her relationship with the neighboring Theobolo family can be identified as Head’s understanding of collective solidarity in traditional community life. Dikiledi’s relationship with Paul Theobolo and his wife Kenalepe is described as “a new world opened up for Dikiledi. It was so impossibly rich and happy that, as the days went by, she immersed herself more deeply in it and quite overlooked

the barrenness of her own" (Head 47). Head presents a narrative of hope in contrast to Dikiledi's personal life and her marriage to Garesego Mokopi. The narrator provides the male character with a detailed context rooted in pre-colonial and colonial history. In Garesego's character the narrative locates the journey of "a man who lived by the traditions and taboos outlined for all the people by the forefathers of the tribe" to "the boy of the white man and a machine-tool of the South African mines" (Head 43). In the present where African independence has been achieved, the author presents the man as "a broken wreck with no inner resources at all … hideous to himself and in an effort to flee his own inner emptiness, he spun away in a dizzy kind of death dance of wild destruction and dissipation" (Head 43). Due to his own lack of self-fulfillment and jealousy, Garesego wishes to assert his control over Dikiledi by sexual violence. Head's radical instinct as a writer can be located in her insistence that Dikeldi's act of murdering her husband "should be seen not as an arbitrary act of retribution but as a socially determined act" (Mackenzie 24). The author presents a larger commentary on women's condition in society by placing Dikiledi in a prison with women prisoners who have also been jailed for murdering their husbands. The narrative subverts the oppressiveness associated with a colonial institution such as the prison through the development of a strong friendship amongst prisoners. They find solidarity in their collective experiences of gendered violence and marital abuse.

The analysis of these short stories illuminates the effectiveness of the genre, showing that it can be "a more suitable medium than the novel for the expression of communal experience" (Mackenzie 26). By using different episodes as part of a larger narrative, the short story can develop multiple subjectivities, revealing each character's story as essential to the main plot. African women's use of the short story genre brings forth the different aspects of feminine experience in the continent. Both Aidoo and Head allow a rich understanding of the various

factors influencing the lives of women in Africa. Their writing in short stories presents captivating narratives in a capsule, proving the relevance of this writing form. Revolving around the larger themes of resistance and solidarity, both short stories discussed here "dramatize the fluid and often problematic nature of the subjectivity they inscribe" (Chetin, *Rereading* 2). African women's writing in the short story reveals multiple subjectivities that are socially specific. Aidoo conceptualizes the African woman as a riddle because "whether formally educated or not, traditional or modern, they do not fit the accepted (Western) notions of themselves as mute beasts of burden, yet they are definitely not as free and as equal as the African men … In fact they fall somewhere in between these two notions" (Aidoo 160). On the other hand, Head locates women's resistance in the 'errors' of the ancestors in providing men with "a superior position in the tribe. This imbalance is compounded by the introduction of Victorian ideology during the colonial era in which women became further disempowered" (Egbunike 69). Though writing from and located in different traditions of women's resistance, both writers give evidence to the spirit of survival in African women's writing across genres.

Works Cited and Consulted

Abubakar, Habib Awais, et al. “Otherness in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen*: A Postcolonial Rendering.” *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 11, no. 12, 2021, pp. 1534–39, https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1112.04.

Achebe, Chinua. “The Novelist as Teacher.” *New Statesman (1957)*, vol. 69, no. 29, 1965, pp. 161-.

Aegerter, Lindsay Pentolfe. “A Dialectic of Autonomy and Community: Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1996, pp. 231–40. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/464133. Accessed 8 Apr. 2024.

Agbo, Joshua. “The Literature of the Oppressed”. *Bessie Head and the Trauma of Exile: Identity and Alienation in Southern African Fiction.* Routledge, 2021, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003154402.

Aidoo, Ama Ata. *Our Sister Killjoy: Or, Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint.* Longman, 1988.

—. “Literature, feminism, and the African Woman Today.” *Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism : Writings on Black Women*, edited by Delia Jarrett-Macauley, Taylor & Francis Group, 1995. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ottawa/detail.action?docID=237274.

—. “Unwelcome Pals and Decorative Slaves or Glimpses of Women as Writers and Characters in Contemporary African Literature.” *A Warble of Postcolonial Voices: An Anthology of Short Stories and Poems*, edited by Someshwar Sati, Worldview Critical Editions, Vol. 1, 2015, pp. 125–156.

—. “The Girl Who Can.” *A Warble of Postcolonial Voices: An Anthology of Short Stories and Poems*, edited by Someshwar Sati, Worldview Critical Editions, Vol. 1, 2015.

Akyeampong, Emmanuel, and Pashington Obeng. "Spirituality, Gender, and Power in Asante History." *African Gender Studies : A Reader,* edited by Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 23–48.

Andrade, Susan Z. "Tradition, Modernity and the Family as Nation: Reading the Chimurenga struggle *into and out of Nervous Condition." Negotiation the Postcolonial: Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga,* edited by Willey, Ann Elizabeth., and Jeanette Treiber, Africa World Press, 2002, pp. 25–60

Anyidoho, Kofi. "The Back without Which There Is No Front." *Africa Today*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2003, pp. 3–18. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4187569. Accessed 2 Jan. 2024.

Arndt, Susan. "Buchi Emecheta and the Tradition of Ifo: Continuation and Writing Back." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta.* edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 27-56.

Asante, Molefi K. "Meeting Cheikh Anta Diop on the Road to African Resurgence." *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2018, pp. 4–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/18186874.2018.1459427.

Badoe, Yaba. "Women in African Literature." *Feminist Review*, no. 17, 1984, pp. 102–05. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/1395023. Accessed 29 Mar. 2024.

Bailey, Anne C. *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame*. Beacon Press Books, 2005.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2008.

Boyce-Davies, Carole. *Black Women Writing and Identity,* Routledge, 1st edition, 1994, https://doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.4324/9780203201404.

Unigwe, Chika. “Emecheta, Buchi.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, Oxford University Press, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.477.

Charamba, Tyanai., and Musanga, Terrence. “The depiction of *chiramu* register and the female voice and communicator in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*.” *African Identities*, 2022, pp. 1–15. https://doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.1080/14725843.2022.2084033.

Chetin, Sara. “Myth, Exile, and the Female Condition: Bessie Head’s The Collector of Treasures.” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1989, pp. 114–37, https://doi.org/10.1177/002198948902400110.

—. *Rereading and Rewriting African Women: Ama Ata Aidoo and Bessie Head*, University of Kent (United Kingdom), England, 1991. *ProQuest*, https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/rereading-rewriting-african-women-ama-ata-aidoo/docview/2665129779/se-2, doi:https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.02.86088.

Christian, Barbara. “Fixing Methodologies: *Beloved*.” *Cultural Critique*, no. 24, 1993, pp. 5–15. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/1354127. Accessed 2 Jan. 2024.

—. “The Race for Theory.” *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1988, pp. 67–79. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/3177999. Accessed 9 Apr. 2024.

Chuku, Gloria. “Igbo Women and Political Participation in Nigeria, 1800s-2005.” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2009, pp. 81–103. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40282431. Accessed 25 Mar. 2024.

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." *Social Problems* (Berkeley, Calif.), vol. 33, no. 6, 1986, pp. S14–S32, https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1986.33.6.03a00020.

Crous, M. "Dikeledi's Revenge: A Reading of Bessie Head's 'The Collector of Treasures." *Literator*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1996, pp. 133–42, https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v17i1.588.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. U.S. ed., Seal Press, 1989.

—. "Writing as Witnessing: The Tambudzai and Nyasha Trilogy." *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2020, pp. 467–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2019.1704700.

Davidson, Basil. *Black Mother: The Years of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Second ed., Little, Brown and Company, 1961.

Daymond, M. J. "Buchi Emecheta, Laughter and Silence: Changes in the Concepts of "Woman," "Wife," and "Mother"." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta,* edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 277-288.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Edited by Brent Hayes Edwards, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Egbunike, Louisa Uchum. "Snapshots of the Botswana Nation: Bessie Head's *The Collector of Treasures and Other Botswana Village Tales* as a National Project". *Writing Africa in the Short Story,* edited by Ernest Emenyonu and Pat. T. (Patricia Thornton) Emenyonu, James Currey, 2013, pp. 65–76.

Emecheta, Buchi. *Second-Class Citizen*. 1974. ProQuest LLC, 1994.

Emenyonu, Ernest N. "Once Upon a Time Begins a Story." *Writing Africa in the Short Story,* edited by Ernest Emenyonu, and Pat. T. (Patricia Thornton) Emenyonu, James Currey, 2013, pp. 1–6.

Erol, Burçin. "Destination England: Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage*." *Neohelicon (Budapest)*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2019, pp. 591–99, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-019-00492-3.

Eze, Chielozona. "Rethinking African Culture and Identity: The Afropolitan Model." *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2014, pp. 234–47. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24758424. Accessed 5 Jan. 2024.

—. *Ethics and Human Rights in Anglophone African Women's Literature: Feminist Empathy*. 1st ed., Springer International Publishing, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40922-1.

Ezeibo, Theodora Akachi. "Tradition and the African Female Writer: The Example of Buchi Emecheta." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta*, edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 5-26.

Ezewanebe, Osita C. "Setting the Prisoners Free: Buchi Emecheta's Strategy for the Emancipation of Women in the Traditional African Family." *Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2000, pp. 350-363, https://doi.org/10.4314/jcs.v2i1.6253.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1963. Translated by Richard Philcox, Grove Press, 2004.

Fishburn, Katherine. "Introduction: A Question of Power." *Reading Buchi Emecheta: Cross-Cultural Conversations*. Greenwood Press, 1995, pp. 1-16.

Fishburn, Katherine. "Life as an Emigré" *Reading Buchi Emecheta: Cross-Cultural Conversations*. Greenwood Press, 1995, pp. 51-76.

Goyal, Yogita. "African Atrocity, American Humanity: Slavery and Its Transnational Afterlives." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2014, pp. 48–71, https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafrilite.45.3.48.

Gqola, Pumla Dineo. *What Is Slavery to Me? : Postcolonial/Slave Memory in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Wits University Press, 2010.

Gyasi, Yaa. *Homegoing.* Penguin Random House, 2016.

Haensell, Dominique. *Making Black History : Diasporic Fiction in the Moment of Afropolitanism*. De Gruyter, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110722093.

Harrow, Kenneth W. "Bessie Head's *The Collector of Treasures*: Change on the Margins." *Callaloo*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1993, pp. 169–79. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2931824. Accessed 29 Mar. 2024.

Head. Bessie. "Collector of Treasures." *A Warble Of Postcolonial Voices: An Anthology of Short Stories and Poems*, edited by Someshwar Sati, Worldview Critical Editions, Vol. 1, 2015, pp. 37–57.

—. *Tales of Tenderness and Power.* Heinemann, Oxford, 1990. *ProQuest*, https://login.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/tales-tenderness-power/docview/2138594062/se-2.

hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman : Black Women and Feminism*. 1981. Routledge, 2015.

Irele, F. Abiola. *The African Imagination : Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora*, Oxford University Press, 2001. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ottawa/detail.action?docID=430966.

Irele, F. Abiola, and Nana Wilson-Tagoe. “The African Novel and the Feminine Condition.” *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 177–94, https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521855600.011.

Joyce, Joyce Ann. “African-Centered Womanism: Connecting Africa to the Diaspora .” *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, by Isidore Okpewho et al., Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. 538–554.

Katrak, Ketu H. “Decolonizing Culture: Toward a Theory for Postcolonial Women’s Texts.” *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1989, pp. 157–79. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26282988. Accessed 8 Apr. 2024.

Khannous, Touria. “Rewriting Power: Bessie Head’s Revolutionary Politics”. *African Pasts, Presents, and Futures : Generational Shifts in African Women’s Literature, Film, and Internet Discourse*. Lexington Books, 2013, pp. 39–58.

Landry, Ava. “Black Is Black Is Black?: African Immigrant Acculturation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* and Yaa Gyasi’s *Homegoing*.” *MELUS*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2018, pp. 127–47. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26566180. Accessed 9 Apr. 2024.

MacKenzie, Craig. “Short Fiction in the Making: The Case of Bessie Head.” *English in Africa*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1989, pp. 17–28. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40238631. Accessed 2 Apr. 2024.

Mama, Amina. “Is It Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom.” *African Studies Review*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1–26, https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2005.0122.

Marzette, DeLinda. “Children of Fire and Water: Motherhood, Migration, and Home in Yaa Gyasi’s Homegoing.” *South Central Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2021, pp. 102–08, https://doi.org/10.1353/scr.2021.0038.

Mazama, Ama. "The Afrocentric Paradigm: Contours and Definitions." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2001, pp. 387–405. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2668022. Accessed 2 Jan. 2024.

Mbembe, Achille. *Out of the Dark Night : Essays on Decolonization*. Columbia University Press, 2021, https://doi.org/10.7312/mbem16028.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather : Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, 1995, pp. 1–17, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203699546.

McLeod, John, 'Postcolonialism and Literature', in Graham Huggan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies* (2013; online edn, Oxford Academic, 16 Dec. 2013), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588251.013.0019, accessed 1 Dec. 2022.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press, 2003.

Mordaunt, Owen G. "Thematic Concerns in the African Short Story." *International Journal of Language and Literature,* vol. 3, no. 2, 2015, pp. 21-24.

Morrison, Jago. "Rewriting Ethnicity in Buchi Emecheta's Fiction." *Contemporary Fiction*, Routledge, 2003, pp. 201–12, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203398463-17.

Motahane, Nonki, et al. "Rooting Routes to Trans-Atlantic African Identities: The Metaphor of Female Descendancy in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*." *African Identities*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2021, pp. 17–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2020.1788505.

Mule, Katwiwa. "Blurred Genres, Blended Memories: Engendering Dissidence in Nawal El Saadawi's *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*." *Meridians*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2006, pp. 93–116. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40338704. Accessed 4 Apr. 2024.

Muponde, Robert. *Some Kinds of Childhood : Images of History and Resistance in Zimbabwean Literature*. Africa World Press, 2015, pp. 78–92.

Murray, Sally Ann. "Some Very Nervous Conditions: Commodity, Culture and Identity in Dangarembga's Novel." *Negotiating the Postcolonial : Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga*, edited by Willey, Ann Elizabeth., and Jeanette Treiber, Africa World Press, 2002, pp. 189–220.

Mwangi, Evan. *Africa Writes Back to Self : Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality*. State University of New York Press, 2009.

Nash, Jennifer C. "Slow Loss: Black Feminism and Endurance." *Social Text*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2022, pp. 1–20, https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-9631103.

Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi. "Gender, Feminist Theory, and Post-Colonial (Women's) Writing." *African Gender Studies: A Reader*, edited by Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 259-278.

—. *Gender in African Women's Writing : Identity, Sexuality, and Difference*. Indiana University Press, 1997, *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=594&site=ehost-live.

Ogundele, Oladipo J. "A Conversation With Dr. Buchi Emecheta." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta,* edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 445-456.

Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo. "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1985, pp. 63–80, https://doi.org/10.1086/494200.

Oha, Obododimma. “Language and Gender Conflict in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen.*” *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta,* edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 289-308.

Ohale, Christine N. "The dea(r)th of female presence in early African literature: the depth of writers' responsibility." *Forum on Public Policy: A Journal of the Oxford Round Table*, summer 2010. *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A253058140/AONE?u=anon~6f48a5a7&sid=googleScholar&xid=f3710223. Accessed 27 Mar. 2024.

Okpewho, Isidore. “Introduction.” *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities,* edited by Okpewho, Davies, et al. Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. xi-xxviii.

Okoth, Christine. “The Extractive Form of Contemporary Black Writing: Dionne Brand and Yaa Gyasi.” *Textual Practice*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2021, pp. 379–94, https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2021.1886705.

Okome, Onookome. “Obituary: Buchi Emecheta (1944–2017).” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2017, pp. 401–08, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989417712349.

Okudzeto, Senam. “Emotive Histories: The Politics of Remembering Slavery in Contemporary Ghana.” *Atlantic Studies (Abingdon, England)*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2012, pp. 337–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2012.698098.

Opara, Chioma. “Buchi Emecheta (1944-2017): Beyond the Dingy Ditch.” *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2017, pp. 250–52, https://doi.org/10.17159/tvl.v.54i1.17.

Ossome, Lyn. "African Feminism." *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism*, edited by Reiland Rabaka, 1st ed., Routledge, 2020, pp. 159–70, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429020193-11.

Owomoyela, Oyekan. "From Folklore to Literature: The Route from Roots in the African World." *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, edited by Isidore Okpewho et al., Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. 275–289.

Oyebolu, Ifeoluwa. "The Emergence of Women in African Literature: The Francophone Experience." *Quest Journals: Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 10, no. 11, 2022, pp. 111-114.

Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónké. "Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects." *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, NED-New edition, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp. 1–30. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt0vh.6. Accessed 9 Apr. 2024.

Porter, Abioseh Michael. "*Second-Class Citizen:* The Point of Departure for Understanding Buchi Emecheta's Major Fiction." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta,* edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 267-276.

Rothberg, Michael. "Remembering Back: Cultural Memory, Colonial Legacies, and Postcolonial Studies." *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies,* edited by Graham Huggan, 2013; online edn, Oxford Academic, 16 Dec. 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588251.013.0027, accessed 1 Dec. 2022.

Roychoudhury, Maitrayee. "She-Kings, Sprinters, and Aviators: Ama Ata Aidoo's Radical Women-scapes." *A Warble of Postcolonial Voices: An Anthology of Short Stories and*

Poems, edited by Someshwar Sati, Worldview Critical Editions, Vol. 1, 2015, pp. 125–162.

Saboro, Emmanuel. "The Burden of Memory: Oral and Material Evidence of Human Kidnapping for Enslavement and Resistance Strategies among the Bulsa and Kasena of Ghana." *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2016, pp. 111–30.

Sample, Maxine. "Landscape and Spatial Metaphor in Bessie Head's *The Collector of Treasures*." *Studies in Short Fiction*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1991, pp. 311–19.

Sati, Someshwar. Introduction. *A Warble of Postcolonial Voices: An Anthology of Short Stories and Poems*, edited by Someshwar Sati, Worldview Critical Editions, Vol. 1, 2015, pp. xi–xxxvii.

Sharma, Ruchi. "'Humanism' as a Political Method in Bessie Head's "The Collector of Treasure"". *A Warble of Postcolonial Voices: An Anthology of Short Stories and Poems*, edited by Someshwar Sati, Worldview Critical Editions, Vol. 1, 2015, pp. 3–36.

Silverman, Kaja. *The Subject of Semiotics*. Oxford University Press, 1983.

Sizemore, Christine W. "The London Novels of Buchi Emecheta." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta,* edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 367-386.

Spivak, Gayatri C. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Postcolonial Criticism*, 2014, pp. 145–65.

Stratton, Florence. "The Shallow Grave: Archetypes of Female Experience in African Fiction." *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta*, edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 95–124.

—. *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.

Suleri, Sara. “Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition.” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1992, pp. 756–69, https://doi.org/10.1086/448655.

Sutherland-Addy, Esi. “Mfantse Meets English: Interpretations of Ama Ata Aidoo’s Multilingual Idiom.” *A Warble of Postcolonial Voices: An Anthology of Short Stories and Poems,* edited by Someshwar Sati, Worldview Critical Editions, Vol. 1, 2015, pp. 211–228.

Táíwò, O Olúfẹ́mi. *Against Decolonisation : Taking African Agency Seriously*. Hurst Publications, 2022, *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=3321254&site=ehost-live.

—. “Feminism and Africa: Reflections on the Poverty of Theory.” *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting On The Politics Of Sisterhood*, edited by Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, Africa World Press, Inc., 2003, pp. 45–66.

The Songs Are Free : Bernice Johnson Reagon and African-American Music. Infobase, 2007.

Toker, Alpaslan. “Patriarchal Hegemony: Gender Inequality as Reflected in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen* and Sefi Atta’s *Everything Good Will Come*.” *Agathos : An International Review of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2023, pp. 167–80.

Trinh, Thi Minh-Ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism.* Indiana University Press, 1989.

Umeh, Marie Arlene. *Women and Social Realism in the Novels of Buchi Emecheta*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1981.

—. “Introduction: (En)gendering African Womanhood: Locating Sexual Politics in Igbo Societies and Across Boundaries.” *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta,* edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. Xxiii-xlii.

Uwakweh, Pauline Ada. “Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*.’” *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1995, pp. 75–84. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820089. Accessed 8 Apr. 2024

—. “To Ground the Wandering Muse: A Critique of Buchi Emecheta’s Feminism.” *Emerging Perspectives on Buchi Emecheta,* edited by Marie Umeh, Africa World Press, 1996, pp. 395-406.

Van Allen, Judith. “‘Sitting on a Man’: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women.” *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1972, pp. 165–81. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/484197. Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.

Wilson-Tagoe, Nana. “Feminism and Womanism.” *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature*, edited by Chew, Shirley, and David Richards, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 120–140, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444317879.

Zwicker, Heather. “The Nervous Collusions of Nation and Gender: Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Challenge to Fanon.” *Negotiating the Postcolonial : Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga*, edited by Willey, Ann Elizabeth., and Jeanette Treiber, Africa World Press, 2002, pp. 3–24.