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MEMORIA, RESISTENCIA Y RESILIENCIA EN LA LITERATURA POSTCOLONIAL AFRICANA ESCRITA POR MUJERES.

MEMORY, RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICAN WOMEN'S LITERATURE

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TÍTULO DE LA TESIS: Memoria, resistencia y resiliencia en la literatura postcolonial africana escrita por mujeres

DOCTORANDA: MARÍA DOLORES RAIGÓN HIDALGO

INFORME RAZONADO DE LA DIRECTORA DE LA TESIS

La Tesis Doctoral de Dña. María Dolores Raigón se desarrolla dentro del propósito de poner en valor a la escritora ghanesa Ayesha Harrunah Attah, haciendo un estudio detallado de su obra completa y situándola en la trayectoria literaria del país. El análisis crítico realizado en esta Tesis Doctoral proporciona un enfoque novedoso para responder a las cuestiones planteadas en esta investigación.

El objetivo principal de esta Tesis Doctoral es revisar la literatura escrita en lengua inglesa, aportando la contribución de una mujer africana, que no reside en la diáspora. A la presente aproximación crítica le acompaña un enfoque metodológico actual basado en los conceptos más novedosos del feminismo postcolonial y un extenso recorrido por el contexto político-social entorno al feminismo africano.

Entre los resultados obtenidos, destaca la originalidad de la doctoranda al concluir que la autora propone un paso más allá de la violencia y el trauma. Pasamos de la resiliencia de la subalternidad (donde se mantienen las posiciones de subalternidad) a la resiliencia de la vulnerabilidad (donde hay una supervivencia del colectivo vulnerable con una transformación del mismo).

Las conclusiones significativas obtenidas en esta Tesis Doctoral pueden abrir el camino para tender puentes entre la teoría y la práctica, al proporcionar información de relevancia sobre la joven escritora y la situación de las mujeres en Ghana, así como para ayudar en la toma de decisiones políticas y estratégicas relativas al estudio de la migración por parte de las autoridades y agentes implicados.

Por todo ello, se autoriza la presentación de la Tesis Doctoral.

Córdoba, 24 de febrero de 2020

Fdo.: Antonia Navarro Tejero

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To the woman who can

"Como los recuerdos dolían, no recordaban. Como las lágrimas herían, no lloraban. Como los sentimientos debilitaban, no sentían."

Las tres bodas de Manolita. Almudena Grandes.

RESUMEN/ABSTRACT

El planteamiento de partida que hace pertinente esta investigación es una reformulación de las perspectivas con las que la literatura africana escrita por mujeres se ha interpretado desde la crítica feminista occidental. Como hipótesis de partida planteamos la necesidad de hacer, desde esta perspectiva, un balance del sentido de la obra de la escritora ghanesa Ayesha Harrunah Attah, desde el enfoque del feminismo postcolonial.

Dentro del marco del feminismo postcolonial son varios los estudios que hacen referencia a la repercusión de la memoria en la literatura, así como de las estrategias empleadas por distintas autoras para dar voz a los colectivos olvidados por el discurso hegemónico occidental. Para Barbara Harlow en *Resistance Literature* las narraciones de resistencia ahondan en el análisis de las relaciones que sustentan el sistema de dominación y explotación proporcionando un análisis histórico detallado de las circunstancias de dominación y represión económicas, políticas y culturales, mientras analizan el impacto del pasado en el presente y lo utilizan para encontrar nuevas formas de resistir en el presente y en el futuro. Sarah Bracke en "Bouncing Back. Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience" analiza el poder que la resiliencia ejerce en los sujetos y las distintas formas en las que tales sujetos existen y se mantienen. Para ello, consideramos relevante el impacto de la memoria en la obra de Attah, *Harmattan Rain* (2009), *Saturday´s Shadows* (2015) y *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* (2018), así como la implicación conceptual de agencia y resistencia y el poder que la resiliencia ejerce en los sujetos.

Hemos constatado el impacto de la memoria en la literatura postcolonial africana, tanto revisando la implicación conceptual de agencia y resistencia, como analizando el poder que la resiliencia ejerce en los sujetos. En el marco del feminismo postcolonial, hemos abordado la importancia de mecanismos de resistencia y resiliencia en la literatura africana escrita por mujeres en lengua inglesa. Hemos demostrado la concepción de la vulnerabilidad como condición capacitadora y, a través del análisis comparativo de nuestro corpus, concluimos que la narración, como manifestación artística, se confirma como respuesta sanadora al trauma y la marginalización.

Palabras clave: Feminismos africanos, vulnerabilidad, Ayesha Harruna Attah, violencia, resiliencia, memoria.

The initial approach which makes this research relevant is a reformulation of the perspectives which Western Feminist criticism has interpreted African women´s literature. The initial hypothesis proposes the necessity of a balance of the Ghanaian writer Ayesha Harruna Attah´s novels from a postcolonial feminism focus.

There are many studies within postcolonial feminist theory which mention the repercussions of memory in literature, as well as those strategies employed by different authors to give voice to those collectives forgotten by Western hegemonic discourse. Barbara Harlow contends in *Resistance Literature* that narrations of resistance go deeply into the analysis of the relations which support the system of domination and exploitation giving a detailed historical analysis of those circumstances of economic, political and cultural domination and repression while they analyze the impact of the past in the present and they use it to find new ways to resist in both the present and the future. Sarah Bracke, in "Bouncing Back. Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience", analyzes the power exerted by resilience on subjects besides the different ways in which those subjects exist and do not give way. For that reason, the impact of memory in Attah´s work is relevant, as well as the conceptual implication of agency and resistance together with the power exerted by resilience on those subjects.

The impact of memory in postcolonial literature in Africa has been proved by means of the revision of the conceptual implication of agency and resistance as analyzing the power that resilience exerts on the subjects. Within the frame of postcolonial feminism, it has been undertaken the importance of mechanisms of resistance and resilience in African women´s literature in English. It has also been shown that vulnerability is an enabling condition. Furthermore, by means of the comparative analysis of the chosen corpus, it can be concluded that storytelling, as an artistic manifestation, proves as healing response to trauma and marginalization.

Keywords: African feminisms, vulnerability, Ayesha Harruna Attah, violence, resilience, memory.

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Introduction

The initial approach which makes this research relevant is a reformulation of the perspectives which Western Feminist criticism has interpreted African women's literature. The initial hypothesis proposes the necessity of the study of the Ghanaian writer Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels from a postcolonial feminism focus. Ghana was the first British colony to obtain independence and women were quite an active part in its fulfillment. In our Master thesis titled, "Nacionalismo, feminismo y oralidad: escritoras ghanesas posteriores a la independencia" (2001) we analysed how Ghanaian Women Writers portrayed the women who played an active part in the independence movement from the British Empire. Those writers set the basis for those to come later with whom they share a history of the fight for equal rights as well as for literary recognition. Women such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua Sutherland, and Ama Darko, to name just a few, opened the path to younger generations of women writers. This fact led us to concentrate our efforts on Ayesha Harruna Attah, a writer set in Ghana although she has also received a university education in the United States of America. Ayesha Harruna Attah published her first novel, *Harmattan Rain* in 2008, *Saturday's Shadows* in 2012 and *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* in 2018.

The aim of this dissertation is twofold. On the one hand, it analyses the impact of memory on the novels written by Attah. Furthermore, it understands agency as the capacity of the subject to act in her environment. On the other hand, it proves that resistance and resilience are both literary strategies which respond to the opposition of the established order as well as to the appropriation and adaptation for a new subject to emerge. In this analysis, resistance and

resilience are not understood as opposite concepts. On the contrary, they are different strategies to narrate memory and to give an answer to the oppression of gender, as Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels show.

Our dissertation is divided in two parts. In the first part, we plan the state of the art beginning with an overview of postcolonial theory and criticism. Therefore, it goes go back to the origins of Postcolonial studies, the empire writes back from Africa, to continue with African scholars' contributions to this field of studies. After that, we will address the topic of Postcolonial Feminism from the third wave of feminism in the USA to Afro-American women's contributions to Western feminism. Then we review the different theories and critical studies in the field of African feminisms as well as African women's grassroots movements. Furthermore, we develop the different manifestations of feminism in Africa, paying attention to the fluid character of these movements. Departing from a common concern to African feminisms, to seek female agency and autonomy, we agree with Pinkie Mekgwe that African Feminisms emerge as activist movements and share the necessity of a positive change in society where women are full citizens. Moreover, we trace African Feminism from Filomina Steady who addressed female autonomy and co-operation; Buchi Emecheta who wrote about African women activism ; Molara Ogundipe Leslie's STIWANISM, Obioma Nnameka's Nego-Feminism based on negotiation and cooperation, to Ecofeminism connected to Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement who advocates for the genuine voice of women in rural communities.

Within this theoretical frame, this dissertation concentrates in Ghana and its cultural production. It contextualizes Ghana's historical and political situation after independence in 1957 and analyses its social frame paying special attention to gender and sexuality as well. Once the country has been contextualized, it goes in depth to an overview of Ghana's literary

production. Likewise, it discusses the question of the language chosen to write from 1957 to get to literature written in English. It also reviews contemporary women writers in Ghana to finally focus on Ayesha Harruna Attah.

In the second chapter, we discuss the methodology used in this research project. There are many studies within postcolonial feminist theory which mention the repercussions of memory in literature, as well as those strategies employed by different authors to give voice to those collectives forgotten by Western hegemonic discourse. In this light, Barbara Harlow contends in *Resistance Literature* that narrations of resistance go deeply into the analysis of the relations which support the system of domination and exploitation giving a detailed historical analysis of those circumstances of economic, political and cultural domination and repression while they analyse the impact of the past in the present and they use it to find new ways to resist in both the present and the future. Furthermore, Sarah Bracke, in "Bouncing Back. Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience", analyses the power exerted by resilience on subjects besides the different ways in which those subjects exist and do not give way. For that reason, the impact of memory in Attah's work is relevant, as well as the conceptual implication of agency and resistance together with the power exerted by resilience on those subjects. In postcolonial literature in Africa, the impact of memory is proved by means of the revision of the conceptual implication of agency and resistance as analysing the power that resilience exerts on the subjects. Within the frame of postcolonial feminism, it is analysed the importance of mechanisms of resistance and resilience in African women's literature in English. It also shows that vulnerability is an enabling condition. Furthermore, by means of the comparative analysis of the corpus mentioned above, it can be concluded that storytelling, as an artistic manifestation, proves as a healing response to trauma and marginalization.

Michel Foucault's development of the concept of power is reviewed, a concept which leads him to the concepts of biohistory and biopolitics in relation to sovereignty and its implications to the body. Meanwhile, Slavoj Žižek's analysis of violence connects with the concept of power and the way this is exercised by the state on subjects' bodies. Who those subjects are, and how those subjects are constituted will lead us to the question of both, the gendered subaltern body subject to violence and her healing after trauma. Judith Butler's study on precarity will be dealing with as an induced human condition derived from the exercise of power on vulnerable subjects, to end with Sara Bracke's analysis of resilience which concludes that this condition is again a direct consequence of state control. As Foucault claimed in *Dits et Écrits*, society's control over its members it is not only exerted by means of consciousness or ideology, but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist societies, the biopolitical is what matters above all, the biological, the somatic, and the corporeal. The body is a biopolitical entity, medicine is a biopolitical strategy. The way power is exerted in postcolonial societies, is by depriving citizens of their rights in a violent way, which makes these subaltern subjects employ those strategies of resistance in which they become agents of their own stories.

The second part of this dissertation is devoted to the analysis of Attah's novels. In chapter three, issues of gender violence and trauma are dealt with. It is questioned whether Attah's heroines can be considered vulnerable women as subalterns based in Foucault's biopolitics and Žižek's study on violence. Under similar circumstances of vulnerability, Ayesha Harruna Attah addresses both male and female violence and trauma in a similar way. Attah introduces Bador Samed as a vulnerable character in *Harmattan Rain.* He is beaten and abused as his torturer considers he behaves like a woman when he is beating Bador. In *Saturday's Shadows*, market women are brutalized while serial killings are taking place in the capital city. This kind of gender violence in the public arena has its counterpart in the private enclosure of

households where parents beat their daughters and husbands beat their wives. However, when both men and women are at the most vulnerable state, they are held as slaves. It is then when they become objects, public commodities, or war loot and completely dehumanized.

Chapter four analyses the different ways people have to overcome trauma in the light of Judith Butler's study on resistance, and Sarah Bracke's study on resilience. Following the definitions of the concepts of resistance and resilience dealt with in the first chapter of our dissertation, we analyse these strategies to overcome power abuse and violence in Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels. The way the characters face their destiny either by resisting or being resilient in the present, will condition the way they heal the past, which is discussed in the next chapter.

The fifth chapter contends that healing through storytelling is another strategy for both women and men to overcome trauma. With the help of Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, the role of memory and the necessity for reparation is also analysed. Once analysed the effects of gender violence and trauma and the way subaltern subjects react to such exertion of power, either by resisting or being resilient, this chapter addresses the different ways to recover from such trauma. As it has been mentioned above, and as Ayesha Attah states, art is a way for reparation of the wounds of the past as, in for example, character Akua Afriyie in *Harmattan Rain.* This chapter also deals with the telling of stories of the past through literature which makes collective cultural memory a way to heal from those painful experiences in the past. Ayesha Harruna Attah has claimed that she wrote *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* when she learned that her great great-grandmother had been a slave at Salaga market, to give her voice. So, by means of art, Attah's characters get to heal those wounds from the past despite having been strong people who resisted to the impositions of power as subjects of their own destiny.

Finally, our unpublished interview conducted with Ayesha Harruna Attah via email has been included in the appendix. In February 2019, in the middle of *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*'s promotion, she kindly accepted to clarify some issues about identity, creation, memory, agency, and healing that came across in her novels and which were interesting and illuminating for our research. As a West African woman, living in Senegal and writing about Ghana, she is a self-acclaimed womanist, as she believes feminism has excluded African women in the past; therefore, she is committed as a writer and as an African woman.

All in all, this dissertation tries to show the importance of the analysis of the novels written by the Ghanaian Ayesha Harruna Attah who portrays vulnerable subjects at times of social unrest. Attah develops strategies of resistance and resistance to narrate memory. In doing so, those collectives forgotten in the hegemonic discourse are agents of change who have found new ways to resist both in the present and in the future.

PART I

Chapter 1

State of the Art

1.1.The Empire Writes back from Africa

According to many critics, Edward Said's *Orientalism* was the study which opened the path to the so called Post-Colonial studies in 1978. In the introduction of his seminal work he states,

> …the French and the British - … - have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling *Orientalism*, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in the European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. .. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles… Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'. (1-2)

Together with Said's *Orientalism*, critics of cultural studies[1] consider Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" published in 1988 and Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990), the foundational documents in the field of Post-colonial Studies. Contrary to Spivak's conclusion, the subaltern cannot speak[2], Said in the afterword to *Orientalism* 1995 printing, points out

> …the subjective truth insinuated by Marx ("They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented"), which is that if you feel you have been denied the chance to speak your mind, you will try extremely hard to get that chance. For indeed, the subaltern can speak, as the history of liberation movements in the twentieth century eloquently attests. (335)

This issue connects with a key element in Post-colonial studies in relation to the subaltern, that is, the construction of identity. For Said:

> … The development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another different and competing *alter ego*. The construction of identity – while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, *is* finally a construction - involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from "us"…. the construction of identity is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society, and is therefore anything but mere academic wool-gathering. (332)

This scenario connects with a twenty first century milieu of fear as identity, be it national or religious, which is being cast doubt on. The common response to such fear is patriotism, extreme xenophobic nationalism and obvious unpleasant chauvinism. (333)

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[1] Further on we will question this assertion.

[2] We will come back to this essay when dealing with Post-colonial Feminism.

Post-colonialism was the global political and economic situation which followed World War II. The Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o observes:

> The universal interdependence in the reign of industrial capital that they [Marx and Engels] talked about in 1848 has become globalization, the global reign of financial capital. The cheap prices of the factory-produced commodities they saw as the heavy artillery that battered all national walls has been replaced by financial capital that has come to break all national barriers in its movement across the globe. (46)

In terms of economic policy, it is clear that nowadays and more than ever before, we are facing a new empire ruled by money, power and human's reification. There is no surplus of raw or manufactured materials, humans are surplus currently.

There is no single post-colonial theory as it is a term that covers contradictory currents and theories although they share the style of 'post-structuralism. Stephen Slemon highlights "problems of definition, object, motive, ground and constituency" (178) within the field of post-colonial critical theory. These are the distinguishing features of post-colonial studies, which are also a point for divergence for commentators, and makes a single post-colonial theory impossible. Edward Said distinguishes between 'imperialism' as "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; and 'colonialism' almost always a direct consequence of imperialism, [is] the implanting of settlements on distant territory"(*Culture and Imperialism* 8). When anti-colonial struggle brings about national independence in colonial locations, a new kind of state formation is born, the post-colonial state. However, as Slemon argues, formal decolonization does not imply the disappearance of economic domination after Empire. This direct colonialism is continued by new forms of foreign domination or 'neo-colonialism', a term coined by Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of independent Ghana: " The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it

is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from the outside" (*Neo-Colonialism* ix). Slemon concludes that a political commitment to social change in the contemporary world that assumed no monadic theory of anti-imperialism or decolonization or 'post-colonialism', would not necessarily set a common critical methodology (184).

Disciplinary studies in the area of post-colonial studies, started under the sphere of "Commonwealth Literature Studies" in the mid-1960s when a group of young writers and critics from commonwealth nations attended the first conference of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies at Leeds. Their main concern was the Anglocentrism dominating English departments curricula and canon in their home countries. They shared a desire to introduce creative works from the 'Commonwealth' or 'new' literatures into English department syllabuses.

When dealing with post-colonial critical theory, it is necessary to develop the category of history from this perspective. The central problem when shaping a modern Eurocentric world is, for Robert Young, the construction of history and historiography. Other theorists turn away from Eurocentric historicism such as the 'subaltern studies' collective who apart from trying to identify the modes of domination that make subalterns[3] subordinate to power, also look for an understanding of subaltern peoples as 'subjects to their own histories'(Slemon 191). However, Spivak declares "Whether or not [the subaltern historians] themselves perceive it … their text articulates the difficult task of rewriting its own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of its possibility" ("Can the subaltern Speak?" 286).

[3] After Gramsci's 'subaltern', a name for subordinate individuals and groups who do not possess a general "class consciousness" (qtd. in Slemon191).

Another way to challenge Eurocentric historicism, Slemon observes, is the branch of post-colonial critical theory known as 'colonial discourse analysis.' It derives from Foucault's refusal to Marxist theory of ideology to advocate for discourse as a concept that considers social subjects, social consciousness to be formed through a form of power that circulates in and around the social fabric, framing social subjects through strategies of regulation and exclusion, and constructing forms of `knowledge' which make possible that which can be said and which cannot" (193). Said's *Orientalism* is considered the earliest version of colonial discourse analysis

> Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point, Orientalism … can be discussed and analysed as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. … without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, military, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightment period. … It is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on any occasion when that peculiar entity "the Orient" is in question. (3)

In this same vein of thought, Homi Bhabha agrees with a Foucauldian position with a difference; for him, a theory of historical agency needs to be relocated into a "space for a new discursive temporality … by which marginalized or insurgent subjects create a collective agency under colonial relations" (3). He advises a reading away from culture-nation, race, class, colonizer, colonized- towards a reading of the 'in-between' spaces, those in excess of the sum of the parts of social and cultural differences. (2)

Gareth Griffiths, among others, considers Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha y Edward Said to be Eurocentric in their views and they advocate for a close reading of non-European native writers' works. They question their own Eurocentrist learning, and they deduce that the reason

why Spivak declares that the subaltern cannot speak is because of the question of using the language of the colonizers.

For Griffiths "the study of post-colonialism has recently moved away from earlier literary models towards models of discourse analysis and textuality, in which the literary text is seen as only one kind of document in the larger archive of the post-colonial" (164). Edward Said is influential for having shifted assumptions from those held by traditional humanists' critics to current colonialist discourse theories. Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism* was reputed to be the first work on Post-colonial theory. However, some writers and commentators from India, Africa, the West Indies and Australia, had already developed those distinctive modes of representation of colonized societies in the nineteenth- and early twentieth- century . J.E. Casely Hayford , C.L.R. James, Marcus Clarke, E.K. Brathwaite, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong`o, and Raja Rao had talked about the creolization of culture, universalism, language and culture, and cross-cultural recovery and the suppression of indigenous traditions before Said's publication of *Orientalism.* Said was the catalyst not of Post-Colonial critical theory, but of colonial discourse theory as found subsequently in the work of Spivak and Bhabha. Said's concern is the relationship between textual representations and social practice. He insisted that knowledge and power always exist in a close relationship (165).

As we have already mentioned, some other theorists and critics of Post-colonialism were Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha. Spivak's work has developed poststructuralist, Marxist and psychoanalytic thought engaging with the writings of Derrida, Foucault, Freud, Lacan and Marx. She explores deconstruction in terms of an ethical responsibility to the Other, Spivak's concern with alterity, a term which in postcolonial theory has been used as a synonym for otherness and difference. According to Spivak, "the self-identity of the colonizing subject, indeed the identity of imperial culture, is inextricable from

the alterity of colonized others, an alterity determined by a process of othering" (qtd. in Ashcroft et al. *Key Concepts* 12). Spivak has addressed a variety of different audiences, as she is concerned with the international division of labour, the status of the migrant, the epistemic violence of colonialism, and the agency of the gendered subaltern (*The Spivak Reader* 3-4). In *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), Spivak considers the difficulty of representation, self-representation and representing others. In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"(1988) Spivak argues that the gendered subaltern will always be represented rather than represent herself. She seeks to deconstruct the ideologies of patriarchy and colonialism so as to expose their lack of unity in an effort to see the specificity of the marginalized figure caught between tradition and modernization.

Aijaz Ahmad criticizes the literary developments in colonial discourse analysis *In Theory: Classes, Nations and Literatures* (1992).Along with Marxist theories of ideology, he openly denounces post-structural theory's clear complicity with the dogma of the bourgeoisie. Ahmad insists that the history of materialities is important in interrogating and understanding literary questions of empire and oppression. For him, only Marxism makes noticeable and hybridizes social formations in areas designated by the West as a singular, homogeneous 'Third World'. He thinks that Said has been complicit in subjugating the 'Orient' assuming a single, linear Western history (Hawley et al. 9-10).

Homi Bhabha speaks of the concept of alterity[4] which he calls 'difference'; the very act of representing the colonial subject impels one to map out the experiences and essence of the colonial through difference. Bhabha leads us to see that colonialism is rooted in the ontological

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[4] Alterity: the state of being different and it has consequently found an important space in contemporary postcolonial theory. Alterity marks the threshold of otherness, the site where difference in skin colour, geography, sex, sexual orientation, and other historical and biological markers of difference are socio-politically discourse (Ashcroft et al. *Key Concepts*11-12).

and epistemological foundations of difference as it continues to support them. Bhabha develops the notion of mimicry. The normalization of the colonized subject as a 'mimic man' again brings to the fore the contradictory, built-in mechanism of colonial discourse.

As writers and critics became aware of the special character of post-colonial texts, they saw the need to develop adequate critical models to account for them. According to Ashcroft et al., those were national or regional models emphasizing the distinctive features of the particular national or regional culture, and race-based models identifying certain shared characteristics across various national literatures, such as the common racial inheritance in literatures of the African diaspora addressed by the 'Black writing' model (20). Various comparative models sought to account for particular linguistic, historical, and cultural features across two or more post-colonial literatures. It was the question of finding a name (Commonwealth literature, Third World literatures, New literatures, Post-colonial literatures). Issues of language and place questioned the appropriateness of an imported language to describe the experience of place in post-colonial societies. Thematic parallels and certain figures such as allegory, irony, and magic realism were found common among those literatures (Ashcroft et al. *The Empire Writes Back* 11).

They also came to terms with different theories such as the binary oppositions colonizer and colonized being the notion of imperial-colonial dialectic itself, upheld by Fanon and Memmi; the possibility of decolonizing the culture pioneered by Ngugi; Todorov and Said's elucidation of the dialectical encounters between Europe and the Other; Marxist analyses stressing the importance of ideology in forming the ideas of colonial subject, feminist perspectives which have drawn an analogy between the relationships of men and women and those of the imperial power and the colony and, the relations of oppressor and oppressed communities (dominated

and dominating) in French Africa, Quebec, Black America, the Caribbean, Australia and the aborigines (15).

As we have already mentioned, more comprehensive comparative models argue for features such as hybridity and syncretism[5] . For Homi Bhabha and Wilson Harris, Ashcroft et al. contend, hybridity in the present is constantly struggling to free itself from a past which stressed ancestry, and which valued the pure over its threatening opposite, the composite. It replaces a temporal lineality with a spatial plurality. Kamau Brathwaite, while stressing the importance of the need to privilege the African connection over the European, also stresses the multi-cultural, syncretic nature of the West Indian reality. Postcolonial theory has begun to deal with the problems of transmuting time into space (33).

Ngũgĩ among others has exposed the crucial function of language as a medium of power which demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place. These authors claim that there are two distinct processes, that of abrogation or denial (rejection of the metropolitan power over means of communication) and appropriation (reconstructing the language of the centre). The Creole continuum reaffirms the notion of language as a practice and reintroduces the "marginal" complexities of speakers' practice as the subject of linguistics. Bhabha advocates for the metonymic function of language variance, as it is preferable to read the tropes of the text as metonymy, which symptomatizes the text, reading through its features the social, cultural, and political forces which traverse it (Ashcroft et al. *The Empire* 44-45).

[5] Syncretism: "The fusion of two distinct traditions to produce a new and distinctive whole" (Ashcroft et al. *Key Concepts* 229).

Ashcroft et al. explain those strategies of appropriation employed by writers which are glossing for instance, "he took him into his *obi* (hut)"), the use of untranslated words such as "The dimdim yams are finished", an interlanguage or the fusion of the linguistic structures of two languages, syntactic fusion employing the syntax of tribal language and those lexical forms of English, and, code-switching and vernacular transcription mainly in the literatures of the Caribbean continuum; that is, the narrator who reports in Standard English moves along the continuum in the dialogue of the characters (*The Empire* 59).

The appropriation which has had the most profound significance in post-colonial discourse is that of writing itself. In writing out of the condition of "Otherness", post-colonial texts assert the complex of intersecting "peripheries" as the actual substance of experience. There can be distinguished some stages beginning with the imperial moment which meant the control of the means of communication. Then, the silencing and marginalizing of the Post-colonial voice by the imperial centre (colonialism and silence), followed by the abrogation of this imperial centre within the text (abrogating authenticity), towards an active appropriation of the language and culture of that centre (radical otherness and hybridity/appropriating marginality/appropriating the frame of power) (*The Empire* 78).

In the twenty first century, other ways to interpret Post-colonialism are those of Peter Hallward and Slavoj Žižek. As mentioned earlier, one of Post-colonial theory peculiarities is its own apparent resistance to distinction and classification. Hallward contends that Post-colonial theory often seems to present itself strictly as a kind of general theory of the non-generalizable as such. On the one hand, he states, it certainly claims an almost global authority. It is necessary to include everything affected by modernization and its consequences, rather than only addressing a reference to colonialism and its aftermath. On the other hand, there is no more characteristically an interpretation than one which aims to avoid the application of

generalizable categories. Thus, Post-colonial concepts as the hybrid, the interstitial, the intercultural, the in-between, the indeterminate, the counter-hegemonic, the contingent, and so on, are so many attempts to evoke that which no concept can capture. Hallward identifies Spivak's aversion to "general intelligibility, general or universal equivalencies" as typical of the field as a whole (x).

For Hallward, a theory which does not offer some general degree of clarity and distinction is no theory at all. He has tried to isolate a distinctly postcolonial domain, in terms that border the very limits of distinction itself naming these limits 'singular' and 'specific' to designate two abstract poles of distinction, i. e.

> … two fundamentally divergent conceptions of individuation (the manner in which a thing is identified as distinguished from other things) and differentiation (the act or process of differentiating; to make something different in some way). A singular mode of individuation proceeds internally, through a process that creates its own medium of existence or expansion. A specific mode operates thorough the active negotiation of relations and the deliberate taking of sides, choices and risks, in a domain and under constraints that are external to these takings. Post-colonial discourse is best interpreted as an essentially singular or aspecific (not comparable not caused by a specific organization) enterprise. (xii)

For Hallward, what is at risk is the global and contemporary discrimination of fundamental approaches to our general conceptions of agency and context, self and other, politics and particularity. In agreement with Benita Parry, Elaine Shohat and Aijaz Ahmad, he contends that the attempt to determine what qualifies as objectively postcolonial "can only turn into a futile argument over the authenticity of certain cultural identifications and the relative importance of various indicators of dispossession and complicity. Only a singular understanding of the Post-colonial provides a fully viable way of distinguishing it anti- or counter- colonial" (xiii).

Whereas both colonial and counter-colonial configurations operate in the medium of division and conflict, the postcolonial is generally associated with a more consensual, more harmonious domain of

> multiple identity, travelling theory, migration, diaspora, cultural synthesis and mutation. The Post-colonial is an open –ended field of discursive practices characterized by boundary and border-crossings. As a rule, no singular configuration can tolerate borders, either internal or external. Nothing is more obviously opposed to singularity than a duality, and nothing is as insistently Post-colonial as the refusal of all binaries. (xiv)

Hallward states that the category of Post-colonial has generally been attacked for being Eurocentric in its historical frame of reference and (broadly postmodern) theoretical orientation, being indifferent to the particularity of distinct historical sequences and situations, and privileging cultural, linguistic and rhetorical issues over social, historical and economic concerns. Hallward concludes that the fundamental orientation of distinctly Post-colonial configurations is best described as at least tendentially singular or non-relational. Rather than debate the question of centre and periphery, then, he identifies the Post-colonial orientation with a refusal of any identifiable or precisely located centre, in favour of its own self-regulating transcendence of location (xv). He also seeks to distinguish between 'specific' and 'specified' conceptions of difference, while suggesting that the Post-colonial asserts an ultimately univocal coherence on a plane of consistency above and beyond its very distinction. He claims that a singular orientation of the postcolonial undermines its very aspiration to specificity in advance. He comprehends Bhabha, Glissant, Harris and Mbembe singular Post-colonial critics (xvi). Slavoj Žižek corroborates Hallward's arguments, identifying in Post-colonialism as the mere global projection of multiculturalism, the functioning of a logic which could be called indifference (Malreddy et al. 39).

Hallward advocates for the distinctive quality of literature, its capacity to provoke people to think, rather than merely recognize, represent or consume. So, he proposes

> a sharp distinction of politics from culture, together with a re-affirmation of the limited autonomy of the literary sphere; an insistence on the partial transcendence in all creative expression of the immediately specifying characteristics of race, gender, and ideology; the recognition of certain transcendental features of a relational human nature; and, the rehabilitation of a prescriptive, situated conception of the universal that avoids its confusion with the contingent emergence of empirical tendencies or totalities.(xxi)

According to Ashcroft et al., the idea of “post-colonial literary theory” emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing. European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of ‘the universal’ (*The Empire* 11). Theories of style and genre, assumptions about the universal features of language, epistemologies and value systems are all radically questioned by the practices of post-colonial writing. Post- colonial theory has proceeded from the need to address this different practice.

These authors explain that the political and cultural monocentrism of the colonial enterprise was a natural result of the philosophical traditions of the European world and the systems of representation which these privileged. Nineteenth-century imperial expansion, the culmination of the outward and dominating thrust of Europeans into the world beyond Europe, which began during the early Renaissance, was underpinned in complex ways by these assumptions. In the first instance this produced practices of cultural subservience, characterized by one post-colonial critic’s ‘cultural cringe’[6] . Subsequently, the emergence of identifiable

[6] The Australian writer, critic and teacher A.A. Phillips coined the term 'the cultural cringe' in 1950 to describe an Australian tendency to identify our literature and art as inferior to work produced overseas, particularly in Britain and the United States.

indigenous theories in reaction to this formed an important element in the development of specific national and regional consciousness (12).

For Diane Brydon, as Ashcroft et al. point out, imperial expansion has had a radically destabilizing effect on its own preoccupations and power. The alienating process which initially served to relegate the post-colonial world to the 'margin' turned upon itself and acted to push that world through a kind of mental barrier into a position from which all experience could be viewed as uncentred, pluralistic, and multifarious. Marginality thus became an unprecedented source of creative energy. The impetus towards decentering and pluralism has always been present in the history of European thought and has reached its latest developments in post-structuralism (12).

Indigenous theories have developed to accommodate the differences within the various cultural traditions as well as the desire to describe in a comparative way the features shared across those traditions and Post-colonial readings. Depending on the peculiar features of each colonized territory, the literary theories varied. Although we are devoting our study to African theories, there were also Indian literary theories and the settler colonies (USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) which paid attention to indigenous textuality, language, place and theory (*The Empire* 116).

According to the same authors, 'Black writing', proceeding from the idea of race as a major feature of economic and political discrimination, is another grouping which traverses several of the literatures from post-colonial societies. It draws together writers in the African diaspora whatever their nationality, US Blacks, Afro-Caribbean's, and writers from African nations. (21). It overlooks the very great cultural differences between literatures which are produced by a Black minority in a rich and powerful white country and those produced by the

Black majority population of an independent nation, especially since the latter nations are often still experiencing the residual effects of foreign domination in the political and economic spheres. Black criticism has been exciting and theoretically adventurous, but it has sometimes run the risk of adopting, in Said's terms, "a double kind of possessive exclusivism … the sense of being an exclusive insider by virtue of experience" ("Orientalism Reconsidered" 106).

The concept of Négritude (1920s and 1930s) developed by the Martinican Aimé Césaire and the Senegalese poet and politician Leopold Sédar Senghor was the most pronounced assertion of the distinctive qualities of Black culture and identity, according to Ashcroft et al. Despite the fact that in making this assertion it adopted stereotypes which curiously reflected European prejudice, it was one of the decisive concepts in the development of Black consciousness (*The Empire* 123). Besides, it is the first assertion of those black cultures which colonization sought to suppress and deny. Négritude was more prominent in Francophone African colonies. The French critical magazine *Présence Africaine* founded in 1947 had initiated an interest in French writing of Africa and the Caribbean. These critics insisted that African cultures and their literatures had aesthetic and critical standards to be judged in the light of their differences and specific concerns rather than a mere offspring of the parental European cultures (161).

In the late 1950s and 1960s the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon's analysis in *Black Skins, White Masks*, denied the racist stereotyping at the heart of colonial practice and asserted the need to recognize the economic and political realities which underlay these assertions of racial 'difference', and which were the material base for the common psychological and cultural features of colonized peoples. Fanon was able to characterize the colonial dichotomy (colonizer-colonized) as the product of a "manicheism delirium" (Fanon *Black Skins* 183), the result of which condition is a radical decision into paired oppositions such as good-evil; true-

false; white-black, in which the primary sign is axiomatically privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship. However, he also recognizes its potential as a demystifying force set in motion for a new oppositional stance which would aim at the freeing of the colonized from this disabling position through the construction of new liberating narratives (Fanon *The Wretched* 39-40).

In Africa, Négritudinist ideas and the work of Fanon were more usually developed in the geographically more limited form of Pan-African ideology, which sought to articulate the common cultural features across the differences between the various national and regional entities which remained as the legacy of colonialism (Awoonor 1975; Irele 1981).

However, as Ashcroft et al. declare, Négritude was never so prominent a feature of the thought of the Anglophone African colonies, where it was developed as a social and functional theory (124). These authors quote Wole Soyinka's, one of the first generation of Anglophone writers, remark on Négritude 'a tiger does not proclaim its tigritude'. Although later acknowledging the pioneering achievements of Négritude, this claim describes the essential flaw of Négritudinist thought; its structure is derivative and replicatory, asserting not its difference, but rather its dependence on the categories and features of the colonizing culture.

In the same period Anglophone critics and writers were also asserting the need to recover and build upon uniquely African views of art – its function, the role of the writer, its traditional forms – and to stress their differences from the European models offered by the English literature departments of universities such as Ibadan and Lagos in Nigeria, and Makerere in Uganda. This insistence on the social role of the African artist and the denial of the European preoccupation with individual experience has been one of the most distinctive features in the assertion of a unique African aesthetic. The *locus classicus* of this demand are

Chinua Achebe's famous essays "The novelist as a teacher" (1965) and "Africa and her writers" (1963). They "moved and had their being in society, and created their works for the good of that society" (Achebe "Africa and her Writers"19). In varying degrees this attitude, despite their ideological differences, shaped the work of most African critics[7] in the 60s and 70s (*The Empire* 126).

This impulse to recover an African social context for the new texts generated a vigorous and persistent debate in African literature between the demand for recognition of the Africanness of literature and the rejection of universal readings (127). The cultural and political implications were disturbing as Achebe summed up the feeling of the time in his seminal essay on 'Colonialist criticism': "I should like to see the word *universal* banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochial ism of Europe." (Achebe *Morning Yet* 13)

This urge to resist the cultural incorporation of African writing in the 60s and early 70s has continued in projects aimed at the "decolonization" of African culture, and in the desire to return to pre-colonial languages and cultural modes (Chinweizu et al. 1983; Ngugi, 1981, 1986). The demand that African art should be seen as distinctive in its social forms was accompanied by the project of recovering a sense of the importance of oral art as the indigenous equal of the European literary tradition. The study of "oral performance art" was rescued from such limiting labels as 'traditional' or even 'primitive', and given equal status as a rich, sophisticated artistic tradition. The emergences of terms such as the contradictory 'oral literature' or the later 'orature' were signs of this change in consciousness. A number of accounts stressed the need

[7] Wole Soyinka's *The Writer in an African State,* Peter Nazareth's *Literature and Society in Modern Africa*; Emmanuel Obiechina Culture, *Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*; Kofi Awoonor's *The Breast of the Earth: A Survey of the History, Culture and Literature of Africa South of the Sahara*; S. A. Gakwandi's *The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa*; K. Ogungbesan's *New West African Literature* 1979; Eustace Palmer's *The Growth of the African Novel*.

to "forge a connection with indigenous poetic traditions of folk tales, conversations and meaningful recounting of personal moments of experience" (Mazrui "African Verse and African Tradition" 49).

The most influential formulation of this viewpoint was that of the so-called *bolekaja* critics Jemie Chinweizu, Jemie Onwuchekwa, and Ihechuckwu Madubuike[8]. They attacked many of the leading African writers in English including Wole Soyinka, John P. Clark and Christopher Okigbo, for a divorce from African oral poetic tradition although they advocated for Chinua Achebe's work's simplicity and relation to oral traditions. A number of younger African writers and critics have questioned the formalist nature of this project and its goal of recovering an authentic cultural essence. They are worried by its potential to encourage nostalgic nationalism and cultural exclusivism and are concerned that attention may be diverted from the problems of a contemporary society. As they see it, these societies are still bound to the continuing pressures of imperialism in its neo-colonial form and to the continuing stratification and inherited elitism of post-independence societies. For them, the central issue of a literary work is the strategic value of its content and the effectiveness of its intervention in the struggle to liberate African societies from economic injustice, social backwardness, and political reaction. The Kenyan writer, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has been a powerful influence due to the continued emphasis in his work on the political function of the writer in post-colonial societies (*Decolonising the Mind*). Decolonization must involve a much more radical movement away from European values and systems, including the language as a bearer of culture (Owomoyela 41-2).

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[8] It was published partially in the seventies and in complete form in 1983.

The emergence of a criticism which sees the text as the site of activity and 'decolonization' as a political action and not as an independent aesthetic manifestation of some ideal or recovered authentic African literature began to take shape. In Africa there have been only isolated examples of structuralist or poststructuralist accounts of writing, as that of Sunday O. Anozie[9] and these have not been very influential in general critical practice. Appiah's reading of Anozie contends that African texts are difficult to read through European literary theories ("Strictures on Structures" 127-150). Exceptions to this include JanMohammed's *Manichean Aesthetics* (1983), which develops Fanon's insight into the Manichean dualism of colonial societies to offer an account of the construction of Africa in writing over the last century. Emmanuel Ngara's *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel* (1982) offers an overview of those formalist accounts of African fiction which have been written. In Africa, the dominant critical concern has been an emphasis on literature social commitment and a broader socio-political perspective (Ashcroft et al. *The Empire* 132).

1.2. POST COLONIAL FEMINISM. From the Third Wave of North American Feminism to Afro-American feminisms.

Post-Colonial Feminism was born out of resistance to the exclusions and generalizations of second-wave feminism. Therefore, postcolonial feminism is a critical approach to theory that takes aim at the legacies of colonialism and their ongoing effects on women and gender. Though there is a rich diversity of social and political convictions among postcolonial feminists, they all share a commitment to attend to the literal and symbolic forms of violence that emerge from

[9] *Structural Models and African Poetics: Towards a Pragmatic Theory of Literature*. 1981. Routledge. Library Editions: Literary Theory. Volume 23.

universalist assumptions about women, including the idea that they are all united as a sisterhood (Humm 171-2).

Feminism of the third wave experienced a split in the 1990s. Women who did not belong to the First World, women who dwelled outside the centre, that is, from the periphery, started questioning their position within a movement led by white Western women who had never taken into account those different from them. From this point of view, the West positions itself in a privileged centre keeping the East in the economic, political and cultural border or periphery. At the same time, according to Zirión e Idarraga, Western feminism produces knowledge as well as subjects and identities; it speaks for the Other dominating and /or silencing those other voices. Refusing to accept other realities, other women, feminism in the centre is one more manifestation of neocolonialism. Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her seminal essay "Under Western Eyes" (1988), criticizes the monolithic vision of Third World women, as a group deprived of power, living in poverty and scarcity, uneducated and constrained by cultural and traditional practices. Mohanty advocates for the deconstruction of feminist hegemonic knowledge while reconstructing autonomous knowledge and strategies situated in history, geographies and cultures in the Third World (173-4). For Daniel Peres, "what is worthy about feminism is that it must be reckoned on the non-universalization of the model of women's resistance against oppression, as the response to such oppression varies depending on the different places and contexts" (158).

Apart from being oppressed under patriarchal modes they were also subjected to their race, class or religion. According to María Lugones, it is necessary to revitalize an intersectional approach opposing the Universalist system, an approach which undertakes the connection among the concepts of race, class, gender and sexuality which is a product of different overlapping exclusions from a colonial origin (164).

Raj Kumar Mishra in his review of Postcolonial feminism or 'Third World feminism' states that Post-colonial feminism emerged in response to Western mainstream feminism which has never been attentive to the differences pertaining to class, race, feelings, and settings of women of once colonized territories. It rejects Western feminism on the ground of its utter 'Eurocentrism'. Postcolonial feminists argue that colonial oppression particularly racial, class, and ethnic has in large part overlooked women in postcolonial societies (129). They oppose liberal and radical forms of feminism because they homogenize women experiences of the whole world. On the contrary, postcolonial feminism explores in different contexts, women's lives, work, identity, sexuality, and rights in the light of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities (131).

Sara Suleri addressed the questions of race and gender. For her, "the coupling of postcolonialism with woman… almost inevitably leads to the simplicities that underlie unthinking celebrations of oppression, elevating the racially female voice into a metaphor of `the good'. Such metaphoricity … certainly functions as an impediment to a reading that attempts to look beyond obvious questions of good and evil" (756). This field of study is mainly identified with the works of feminists of once-colonized nations. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Uma Narayan[10] do not share the monolithic vision of Western feminism.

Postcolonial feminists and Black feminists, Mishra contends, are closely associated as they fight for acceptance, not only by men in their own culture, but also by Western feminists. However, as we will see further on, African feminisms differ from them in key issues. Angela Davis' *Women, Race and Class* (1983), Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984) and, Alice

[10] Narayan's *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third-World Feminism*. Routledge, 1997.

Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1984) are some exponents of Black Feminists. In their engagement with the issue of representation, postcolonial feminist critics, in common with other US women of colour, have attacked both the idea of universal "woman," as well as the reification of the Third World "difference" that produces the "monolithic" Third World woman. They have insisted instead upon the specificities of race, class, nationality, religion, and sexualities that intersect with gender, and the hierarchies, epistemic as well as political, social, and economic that exists among women (Mohanty 175-6). Together with Lugones and Mohanty, American professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 also addressed the concept of intersectionality to denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences (Crenshaw "The urgency of intersectionality").

The eighties saw the publication of critical literature in the works of Asian and African women. For example, Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves edited *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature* in 1986, and Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa edited *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour in 1981*. When "Third World Women" speak in the voices of these feminists, it is to repudiate otherness, tokenism, stereotyping, exceptionalism, and the role of "native informant." As Mishra contends, they seek to resignify the attributes of Third World women – silence, the veil, absence and negativity, for instance. Krishnaraj writes:

> "We no longer think in terms of a universal female subordination for which there is some unitary causation but realize the historical processes occurred in different places at different times and in different ways; subordination was never uniform even within the same period across all groups or even within the same group. Women enjoyed spheres of influence and power as well as been victims of subjugation." (Krishnaraj qtd. in Mishra 131-32)

Mohanty (1991) in her influential article "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", criticizes Western feminism on the grounds that it is ethnocentric and does not pay attention to the unique experiences of women residing in postcolonial nations. She disapproves of Western feminism regarding all women as a homogeneous group, as a singular monolithic subject without having any sense of difference pertaining to race, class, and circumstance. As such they colonize the material and historical differences of the lives of women. Mohanty deconstructs the politics of image giving to postcolonial women of Western feminism. She is against portrayals of postcolonial women primarily as ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domesticated, family-oriented, and victimized. Mohanty feels that in such negative characterizations little attention is paid to history and difference (172-174).

According to Mishra, postcolonial feminists disapprove postcolonial tendencies to construct a single category of the colonized ignoring differences. They argue that colonial oppression undoubtedly hurt sentiments of both men and women but nature was quite different. Peterson and Rutherford coined the term 'double colonization' in relation to third World women who experienced oppression, first as a colonized subject and second as simply being a woman by patriarchy. Mohanty argued that, just as men reduced women to the other, so the white women had constructed the Third World women as the other to herself. She concludes, "It is time to move beyond the Marx who found it possible to say: They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (192).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak raises the question of voice (who speaks for whom and whose voices are being heard) in her most popular essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). There she explores possibilities to recover the long-silenced voices of the subaltern women. And it is the duty of postcolonial feminists to represent them. But when Western women speak for the

others, they only displace them, replacing their voices with their own. Therefore, Spivak concludes, “The subaltern cannot speak… Representation has not withered away” (308).

In his review of Postcolonial feminism, Mishra argues that the question of language accordingly is another necessity in the strengthening of ‘postcolonial feminism’. By formulating a new ‘postcolonial feminine écriture’, postcolonial feminists can provide new energy and authenticity to their project of transformation of society. Raja Rao long ago in his “Foreword” to Kanthapura (1938) wrote:

> The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own and the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought- movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word ‘alien’, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up- like Sanskrit or Persian was before-but not our emotional makeup. We are all ‘instinctively’ bilingual. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have to look at the large world as part of us…. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression. We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move, we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of India. And our paths are paths interminable (Rao, 1).

Nana Wilson-Tagoe’s analysis of African women’s literature is done within the framework of gynocriticism[11], an “aspect of feminist criticism [which] moves beyond revisionist interpretations towards a sustained investigation of women’s literary production although [it]

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[11] Ian Buchanan in *A Dictionary of Critical* theory defines Gynocriticism as a term introduced by American feminist literary critic Elaine Showalter to classify critical work such as her own which focuses exclusively on literature written by female authors. Its twofold aim is to recover ‘lost’ or ‘neglected’ women writers and to understand in its specificity women's construction of textual meaning. The term is not widely used today, but the two key examples of gynocriticism, namely Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic (1979) and Elaine Showalter's A Literature of their Own (1977), are still read today, so the practice of gynocriticism, if not the word, is very much alive.

identifies four models of difference - biological, linguistic, psychoanalytical and cultural - the emphasis placed on each model may depend on feminine priorities within cultures" (Newell 11). Wilson-Tagoe advocates for a feminist framework as it "introduces gender as a fundamental category in literary analysis, enabling the critic to see representation in texts as mediated by sexual difference and the aesthetic and political assumptions that surround gender" (11).

Post-colonial feminism helps shape feminism from universality to a movement of individual experiences and struggles against the after effects of colonial oppression that sometimes results in the glorification of pre-colonial cultures. In many places, the pre-colonial culture had traditions of power stratification along gender lines, and women had very little power. Cherríe Moraga, in her essay "Refugees of a World on Fire"[12], discusses how Postcolonial Feminists desire to push feminist theory to address how individual people can acknowledge racist presumptions, practices, and prejudices within their own lives and try to stop their perpetuation through this awareness (xv-xxxiii).

1.2.1. African Feminisms.

In this section we will deal with the study of Western Feminism to African Feminism and its influence in African women's literature. We will question if there is something like African feminism, the diffficulty of naming. We will develop the different manifestations of feminism in Africa, and its connection with Black feminism paying attention to the fluid character of these movements. We will depart from a common concern to African feminisms, to seek female agency and autonomy. In "Theorizing African Feminisms", Pinkie Mekgwe

[12] Forward to the Second Edition of *This Bridge called My Back.*

finds common to African Feminisms the fact that they emerge as activist movements and share the necessity of a positive change in society where women are full citizens.

We will trace African Feminism from, to name a few, Filomena Steady who in 1981 addressed female autonomy and co-operation; Buchi Emecheta about the importance of activism for African women; Ogundipe Leslie's STIWANISM, Obioma Nnameka's Nego-Feminism based on negotiation and cooperation, to Ecofeminism connected to Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement who advocates for women in rural communities putting forward their genuine voice speaking out for their human, environmental, civil and political rights.

Within this frame of knowledge, we tackle the specificity of African feminisms which do not spring from feminisms in the West. Women social movements sprung from the fight for independence side by side with their male counterparts. This fight for freedom saw that once in power, men forgot about equality in rights and representation. African feminisms are diverse but at the same time, they share some common features, to know, intersectional analysis, the need to name themselves and to define their own agenda and the vindication of equality within the community. We will later analyse the development of African feminist theory besides grassroots women's movements in Africa.

Because of its broad scope, we will be dealing with African feminisms both as an activist movement and as a body of ideas that underline the need for a positive transformation of society such that women are not marginalized but are treated as full citizens in all spheres of life. Following Pinkie Mewgwe, we will sketch the most relevant theoretical proposals.

Despite the fact of having attacked the elitism and homophobia of Western feminism, that is, white women feminism, Black feminism owes a debt to the cultural and literary space created by both Western and Afro-American feminisms. Nevertheless, as Maggie Humm

contends, it is necessary to highlight regional, national and class differences within each culture. For women and feminism, some crucial features have to be taken into account as women are so depending on their race, social class, religion, and origin, among others.

It was from 1974 onwards when feminist Afro-American criticism began with a special edition of *Black World* which included Zora Neale Hurston's photograph on the main cover, and the printing of Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens.* Its main repercussions were on the one hand, to check the literary tradition including a greater amount of work by black women, and on the other hand, to investigate and eradicate myths and stereotypes about the role of coloured women.

Alice Walker wrote about a new and fortunate time to be a woman, especially to be a black woman

> But it is a great time to be a woman. A wonderful time to be a black woman, for the world, I have found, is not simply rich because from day to day or lives are touched with new possibilities, but because the past is studded with sisters who, in their time, shone like gold. They give us hope, they have proved the splendour of our past, which should free us to lay just claim to the fullness of the future. (37)

Walker upholds the term *womanist* over feminist and so it begins her *Womanist Prose:* "a woman who appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility, and women's strength. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (xi). In these terms one can understand what wholeness means to Walker, as *womanist* comprises humanity and her idea of wholeness covers both humanity and community. To be able to reach that wholeness we need to have womanist's values which are the best way to achieve it. Walker as well as many other women writers and feminist critics in general, agree

that literature is not only a personal affirmation, it is also innately political and philosophical, the reason why its purpose is to bring changes on people. Many African women writers coincide in this aspect, those who, in spite of narrating experiences suffered by a particular woman, want to be a reflection or sample of a situation.

Black feminist criticism has to take into account issues relevant to literature such as cultural strain, intertextuality and hybridization which offer the intermingled discourses in black feminism and also subverts the limits among genre. If there are limits to identity,[13] those are not clear, neither are the limits among literary genre.

African literary criticism is quite diverse, although there are two main concerns over which pivot a shared feeling of the importance of history together with the refusal of Africa's static and primitive portrait. As Ngûgî wa T'hiongo defends, "Contrary to the myth and fiction of our conquerors, Africa was always turmoil of change, with empires rising and falling. African Traditional structures and cultures then were neither static nor uniform" (*Homecoming* 5).

Some writers like South African Lauretta Ngcobo were expelled from their countries, being their work an experience of inner and outer exile. Migration implies cultural displacement as well as a feeling of cultural inferiority. When confronted with the concept of hybridization characterized by being an exit door to a new culture, black feminist literary criticism champions for cultural flexibility which follows race and nationality battles.

Paying attention to literature written by African women, such as Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter*, or Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*, to name a few, criticism has to be based in simultaneous responses both cultural and artistic at the same

[13] As a sample, we mention the titles of some studies, *Migration of the Subject* and *Crossing Boundaries*.

time. Despite national differences, there is a constant historical feature, the betrayal to nationalist ideals and women's necessities to escape from them. Black feminist criticism is in an intersection between nationalism and Western feminism, none of them being totally committed to African women's culture.[14]

We will first include Emecheta's opinion about the reception of the feminist movement and its impact on African writers in an interview conducted by Adeola James. She explains that "It has had a great impact ... At the various conferences they always make sure that black women are well represented ... Unfortunately, there is still a hierarchy among women … the very white ones [,] feel they are the big guns in the movement" (43). In the same interview, Adeola James asks Emecheta about African women writer's commitment, stated by Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, another Nigerian writer and critic:

> [Adeola]…an African woman writer should be committed in three ways: as a woman, as a writer and as a Third World person…
>
> [Buchi] A writer is a writer and writing is sexless. But you can write from a different situation … But the financial question is still a determining factor in being a writer… The difference is not only the language, but also the fact that the female writers handle female characters more sympathetically than men. (43)

Criticism and writing are not split in black African literature; on the contrary, social and political issues are covered in their work which is sometimes didactic and many times intensely moralistic. African women writers, before and after independence used to be ready to serve to their communities. We can exemplify with the Ghanaian Efua Sutherland who by means of her plays[15], helped build the nationalist feeling after independence, and Ama Ata Aidoo whose

[14] Further on we will see some African writers defending feminism.
[15] *Edufa*, (1967) and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975).

works instilled a Panafrican[16] feeling. One of the elements which undermine one of the most important premises of literary criticism is the attention paid to African orature, as it interrupts and distorts a lineal progressive notion of literary history. This aspect is relevant to Ghanaian women's literature after independence. Stephanie Newell advocates for a double-edged representation in which the politics of history, race and gender intersect to reveal the very complex ways in which the African woman writer can relate both to a woman's sphere and to the wider world around (28).

Newell in relation to Showalter's gynocentric criticism argues that it is imperative to the African woman's text as a complex discourse with several intersecting points, criss-crossings and interrogating each other continuously … "to plot the precise cultural locus of female literary identity and to describe the forces that intersect an individual woman writer's cultural field" (349). This analysis of African women's writing stems from such a premise and from the belief that the theoretical concepts of gynocriticism are more meaningful in relation to what women writers actually write (Newell 27).

African women's literature is characterized as representative of a community in contrast to western beliefs in individualistic psychology. However, we do not agree with that having into account what Amma Darko, Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo's works portray from 1960s to 1990s together with Ayesha Harrunah Attah in the 2000s. Their main characters, Mara[17], Ampoma[18], Anowa[19], Zahra[20] and most women in their works show themselves as individuals

[16] Panafricanism was a political and cultural movement originated in the USA in the nineteenth century which celebrates what those people from African descent have in common. After 1945 the Nigerian Nnamdi Azikiwe and Jomo Kenyatta, and the Ghanaian Kwame Nkrumah recover it to lead African emancipation.
[17] Darko, Ama. *The Housewife.*
[18] Sutherland, Efua. *Edufa.*
[19] Aidoo, Ama Ata. *Anowa.*
[20] Attah, Ayesha Harruna. *Saturday's Shadows.*

declaring their insights to the reader. We find a justification in Aidoo quoting Virginia Woolf "what so many women write explains much and tells much and that is certain" (Petersen 163).

We would like to highlight and insist on diversity within African women. It is a fact how different is the situation of each woman depending on the African country she inhabits, if she lives in a rural or urban area, her job, her marital status, her level of education, as well as the way European colonization has affected her life. Our research is centred in Ghana, former Gold Coast, a British protectorate up to 1957.The novel, *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* by the writer Ayesha Harrunah Attah, will also cover the pre-colonial period before the European colonial powers arrived to the area, namely, British and Germans.

According to Coquery-Vidrovitch, all those factors mentioned above intersect in the condition and lives of women in Africa, something which differs from those of European women. It has not been until recently, that the African woman has been able to see herself since her identity has been subjected to traditional parameters such as fertility and maternity (1-5).

It is our contention to analyse the different influences of both feminist literary criticism and feminism as a social movement in Africa. For that reason, we will go over African writers' opinions about the concept, as well as feminist criticism. We consider relevant to our study to begin with the well-known *A Room of One's Own and three Guineas* by the British writer, Virginia Woolf, despite the fact that she has been questioned by critics like Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi: "what does a black woman novelist go through as she comes in contact with white feminist writing and realizes that Shakespeare's illustrious sisters belong to the second sex, a situation that has turned them into impotent eunuchs without rooms of their own in which to read and write their very own literature,….."(78). It is a seminal work for both European and American feminism, and we also can assert that it has been equally important for the so-called

Third World Feminism[21]. Examples of this are the Nigerian Emecheta and the Ghanaian Aidoo who consider it essential to have both money and space to write. Woolf affirms "When you asked me to speak about women I … [B]egan to wonder what the words mean … All I can do was to offer you an opinion upon one minor point – a woman must have money and a room of her own if she wants to write fiction" (3). Further on, she refers to maternity "You must, of course, go on bearing children, but, so they say, in twos and threes not in tens and twelves" (101). This reference to motherhood was relevant to African women writers who portray in their works the impact of motherhood in African women. Woolf upholds for a responsible motherhood as women in African are demanding, too. Woolf also deals with a lack of solidarity among women, although this is denounced by African women, who do not share the idea of a global sisterhood based on the clear differences among women in the West and women in Third World societies.

Even before Virginia Woolf wrote about money and space for women writers, an African woman, Adelaide Casely-Hayford (1868-1960), wrote about the difficulties to be a woman writer. She is well-known for having been married to the nationalist politician and writer from West Africa J. E. Casely Hayford. Mrs Casely Hayford was a descendant of British-African parents who was educated in Great Britain and lived in Sierra Leone. It was there where she created a vocational school for girls in 1932 whose main aim was to get them ready to earn their own living as they were imbued of both racial and nationalist pride. She had a public career and became the first spokeswoman in London Aggrey House where she delivered a speech about men's and women's equality. She belonged to an educated elite of creole women who enjoyed

[21] We have already shown the way African writers consider relevant to her profession, time, money and space.

certain freedoms and academic instruction. "Mista Courifer" is one of her most well-known short stories.

According to Holst Petersen, Casely Hayford was interested in feminism, in the role of women both within the family and within society; she was opposed to polygamy, "a woman must be economically independent to retain her self-respect" (110), as well as to cultural nationalism.[22] She agreed on passing on an education "which would instil into us a love of the country, a pride of race, an enthusiasm for the black man's capabilities and a genuine admiration for Africa's wonderful art work" (110). The topics which worry Casely Hayford are those we can find in African women contemporary literature before 2000, namely, feminism and Black Nationalism. She did not understand feminism as a specific ideology but as an interest for the role of women in society. So, within feminism she was concerned about the biological aspect and marital status, motherhood, the dowry and polygamy, apart from the economic independence of women[23]. Similarly, she addressed Black Nationalism as a celebration of African inheritance (as it later came across in the aforementioned plays by Efua Sutherland and Ama Ata Aidoo), as criticism or as a fierce refusal considering it "tribalist, superstitious, evil and backwards" (111).

In 1986, Femi Ojo-ade in "Female writers, male critics" stated that writing for African women was a minority art as the level of illiteracy was very high. She quotes the Nigerian Buchi Emecheta

[22] This provoking racist and nationalist feeling was influenced by Blyden. Before independence, this woman worked side by side with men.

[23] We will see how some of the eldest characters in the novels by Attah share those worries and criticize younger women; some others do accept more modern women and rural and uneducated women are portrayed as more traditional with the roles assigned by society.

> To be a good novelist the writer must operate within a conductive atmosphere. She must have time and space to reflect and to indulge in introspective thinking. For many potential writers in this country neither the time nor the space is available. In addition to family drawbacks, the government seems no to appreciate the value of home-produced works. It seems to be doing very little to encourage writers, financially and otherwise. (Jones 159)

Similarly, in the 2000s, women writers find it difficult to publish their works in national publishers. Most women writers receive an education abroad and find it difficult to return to Africa. We can name the Nigerian Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Ghanaian Taiye Selasi, for instance. The first of these contemporary writers denounces the continuing inferiority of women in Nigeria in her essay "We should all be Feminists":

> Not long ago, I wrote an article about being young and female in Lagos… Gender as it functions today is a grave injustice. I am angry. We should all be angry. Anger has a long history of bringing about positive change…I am also hopeful, because I believe deeply in the ability of human beings to remake themselves for the better. (11)

Despite the difficulties, women have made their voices heard both within and outside Africa, as they write about resistance and commitment. By the end of the twentieth century, Florence Stratton in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* criticised the lack of critical studies about women's literature in Africa. "It is especially pathetic to keep on writing without having any consistent, active, critical intelligence that is interested in you as an artist" (8). She insists in one of the responsible aspects of the lack of Women's literature in Africa, the lack of access to education to girls under colonial rule. According to Boyce Davies,

> The sex role distinctions common to many African societies supported the notion that western education was a barrier to a woman's role as wife and mother and an impediment to her success in these traditional modes of acquiring status. With

> few exceptions, girls were kept away from formal and especially higher education. The colonial administrations … imported a view of the wold in which women were of secondary importance. (3)

Western feminist criticism is Eurocentric as it represents as universal according to race ignoring its own cultural and historical specificity which is also, as Eldred Jones suggests[24], inscribed within a European system of thought full of imperialism.

Although she does not totally agree with the term African feminism, Filomena Chioma Steady states that there is a specifically African feminism as she does not understand it as a Western import but rather as a strategy developed and adopted by women writers to survive to racial, sexual and class oppression. She analyses socio-literary relationships as they are determined by the categories of race or gender and also because of the heterogeneous constitution of the subject. She also refers to the character of the influence of patriarchy both indigenous and imported from fiction. The sexual allegory she talks about derives from Jan Mohamed's Manichean aesthetics who, following Fanon, characterizes colonial society as a Manichean structure organized according to a racial allegory. Besides, there is evidence to suggest that a certain sexual allegory also organizes the structure of both colonial and post-colonial African societies. Ogundipe Leslie suggests that "the ideology that men are naturally superior to women in essence and in all areas, affects the modern-day organization of societal structures in Africa" (Jones 15).

Most African women writers think about the convenience of their union and experience has shown that other movements have been stronger because they joined together to reach a

[24] Introduction to *African Literature Today* 13.

common goal. Aidoo admits its importance and the Tanzanian playwright Penina Muhando stresses "I would say there is a lot to gain through that kind of union" (James 87).

Trinh T. Minh-ha states

> … the women's movement as being necessarily heterogeneous in its origin, even though it may be claimed more readily by certain groups and remains largely white in its visibility … issues raised by third World women have less to do with questions of cultural difference than with a different notion of feminism itself – how it is lived and how it is practiced … it is crucial to keep open the space of naming in feminism. ("Women, Native, Other" 66)

Highly quoted is Ogundipe Leslie's assertion that "the female writer should be committed in three ways: as a writer, as a woman and as a Third World person; and her womanhood is implicated in all three" (James 60). This assertion has been the pretext for many African women to consider themselves as feminists or not feminists.

Ama Ata Aidoo, Micere Mugo and Buchi Emecheta among others, support the necessary connexions among gender, place and writing as they are aware of the risk of the prescriptive. Besides, they feel that they identify with feminist politics but this concept needs redefinition in the African context. Western concepts cannot be applied to non-Western contexts as such. The role and the history of feminist politics or activism for the rights of women in Africa is a discourse that African women are investigating and clarifying for themselves. Many African writers think that just by being a woman writer one does not necessarily become a feminist, as there are many writers who dislike being labelled feminists although they agree with its politics. Flora Nwapa, for instance, prefers to be called a womanist "because it conveys a commitment of the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female" (Owomoyela 338). Filomena Steady refers to an African feminism which expresses the strength

of the precolonial woman, her autonomy and her respect for motherhood and her contribution to society. However, we partially agree with this assertion as precolonial women were also subjected to religious norms and traditions which objectified them.

Amina Mama in the first issue of *Feminist Africa* argues that feminism in post-colonial contexts presents a praxis that directly opposes the hegemonic interests of multinational corporations, international financial and development agencies and nation-states, as well as the male domination of disparate traditional structures, civil society traditional structures, civil society formations and social movements. Gender politics in post-colonial Africa are deeply contested, within and beyond the minority who might name themselves as feminists. Since independence, the persistence of patriarchal hegemony across the African region has stimulated a visible proliferation of feminist scholarship and strategy. In the year 2002, the African Gender Institute launched the continental initiative Strengthening Gender and Women's Studies for Africa's Transformation, CODESRIA's (The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) symposiums, the Women's Worlds Congress. The magazine *Feminist Africa* responds to the triumphalist rhetoric of globalization, the re-marginalization of women in the new African Union, the ongoing salience of poverty and outbreaks of conflict, civil and militarism, all deeply gendered phenomena. Over the years alternative organizations were established, beginning in 1977 with AAWORD (Association of African Women for Research and Development); off-campus, information and training NGOs have also proliferated, as Gender in Africa Information (GAIN), recently joined by the emergent Feminist Studies Network (1-5).

In 1981, Filomina Chioma Steady in *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally* defined African feminisms as "emphasizing female autonomy and co-operation; nature over culture; the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship" (28). Steady also considers

paramount the involvement of men which underlies every African theorization of feminism: the need for cooperation. As Steady does, Carole Boyce-Davies and Ann Graves in *Ngambika* recognize the common struggle of African men and women, challenging men to be aware of those aspects of women subjugation which are not common to the generalized oppression of all African people (8).

The Nigerian Buchi Emecheta has highlighted in her novels, such as *The Joys of Motherhood*, the importance of activism for the African woman trying to address the problems derived from social inequality. She has also addressed the difficulty of naming faced by feminists in Africa (Bryce 1983). Similarly, Molara Ogundipe Leslie in 1987 defines herself as "a woman, an African and a third world person" (10). She argued for an African-centred feminism which she termed STIWANISM or Social Transformation Including Women in Africa in her book *Re-Creating Ourselves*. STIWANISM advocates for resisting Western feminism giving specific attention to African women and bringing to the forefront indigenous feminism together with the inclusion and participation in the socio-political transformation of the African continent.

The African American Alice Walker coined the term 'Womanism'. "A womanist is someone who appreciates and prefers women's culture . . . committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female…" (xi). This term was adopted in Africa by Chikwenge Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole who evolved in the direction of African Womanism in the work *Womanism and African Consciousness* (1997). The Nigerian Womanist literary critic Oyeronke Oyewumi does not agree with the concept of 'sisterhood' in Africa as, from her point of view, it demands theorization; and it is alien to African cultures. Instead, she prefers to emphasize motherhood.

The Ghanaian writer, Ama Ata Aidoo in an interview with María Frías, asserts that there are womanists and feminists, but the most important thing is what they are trying to get across. She discusses the validity of the term for African women in terms of clarity. “I learnt my first feminist lessons in Africa”, she says “feminism is not new and I really refuse to be told I’m learning feminism from abroad” (26).

Ayesha Harruna Attah in the blog “Feminist Book Fortnight” names herself a womanist:

> There was a word that reassured me on my journey, one that became a bridge between the way I previously perceived feminism and my embracing of it: womanist. Coined by Alice Walker, in *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens*, she wrote that “Womanist is to feminist, as purple is to lavender,” and that it is “Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female.” It was the crystallization of what I had felt in college, it explained why I’d been so hesitant to be called feminist. It was because the feminism I saw in college didn’t include me as a black woman, as an African. I loved the term womanist for embracing everyone. (1)

In “West African Feminisms and their Challenges”, Naomi Nkealah’s contention is to provoke a critical re-assessment of African feminist theorization addressing the challenges which face a set of African feminisms built on indigenous models. ‘Motherism’, an Afrocentric alternative to feminism by Catherine Acholonu who supports the traditional role of the African woman was essentially that of a matriarch and a social nurturer and her status ranged from that of royalty or leadership to that of a goddess, a priestess, a soldier and a quintessential partner to man in the African society.

‘Womanism/woman palavering[25]’ is a term described by Chikwenye Okongo Ogunyemi which applies especially in West Africa (Nigerian Womanist literary criticism). In her essay,

[25] A negotiation or discussion concerning matters in dispute.

"Womanism: The Dynamics of the contemporary Black Female Novel in English", she states that a black woman writer, be she African or American, has to incorporate in her writings, along with her consciousness of sexual issues, racial, social, national, economic and political considerations into her philosophy (78). For her the factors that bind together black women novelists are those common to womanism. Ama Ata Aidoo positions herself on being a feminist:

> I am not a feminist because I write about women. Are men writers' male chauvinist pigs just because they write about men? Or is a writer an African nationalist just by writing about Africans? … Obviously not … no writer, female or male, is a feminist just by writing about women. Unless a particular writer commits his or her energies, actively, to exposing the sexist tragedy of women's history; protesting the ongoing degradation of women; celebrating their physical and intellectual capabilities, and above all, unfolding a revolutionary vision of the role [of women]," he or she cannot be pronounced a feminist. (Phillips 33)

"Africana Womanism" was a term coined by Clenora Hudson-Weems by means of which she names Africanans to Continental Africans and Africans in the diaspora. To support her concern with men and women working together, she cites the words of the Ghanaian Ama Ata Aidoo when speaking for black women writers: "Life for the African woman writer is definitely 'not crystal stair'. It is a most peculiar predicament. But we also share all, or nearly all the problems of male African writers" (Phillips 32). Hudson-Weems is critical with the term African feminism, as problematic, an opinion supported by Rose Acholonu and Filomina Steady as its nature suggests an alignment with feminism in some way. For her neither the terms black feminism nor African feminism are sufficient to label women of such complex realities as African women. She advocates for 'Africana Womanism', a term she coined and defined in

1987. 'Africana' identifies the ethnicity of the woman being considered establishing her cultural identity related to her ancestry and land base, Africa, and 'Womanism', after Sojourner Truth's speech "And Ain't I Woman" where she questions the accepted idea of womanhood (47). She also disagrees with the root of the word 'feminism' as 'female' can belong to any species whereas 'woman' only belongs to female human race. Her term does not equal in meaning to Walker's Womanism, as Hudson finds a clear affinity between it and feminism (48). African Womanism is, therefore, an ideology created and assigned for all women of African descent, grounded in African culture. It necessarily focusses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of Africana women. It critically addresses the dynamics of the conflict between the main stream feminist, the Black feminist, the African feminist and the Africana womanist.

Clenora Hudson-Weems does not connect to Black feminists as bell hooks does, since she thinks that white American feminist only grants her temporary recognition as representative and spokesperson for Africana people but they have never granted her the relevance of Gloria Steinem or Betty Friedan. She opens her essay with Aidoo's quotation, central to the spirit of Africanans. "Feminism. You know how we feel about that embarrassing Western philosophy? The destroyer of homes. Imported mainly from America to ruin nice African women" (37).

Mary Modupe Kolawole in *Womanism and African consciousness* (1997) defines the ideology of 'womanism' as the totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural ways. She goes over a critical history of indigenous oral and written genres by and about women to conclude that African women writers are not voiceless. Nigerian Chioma Opara is an important African feminist theorist who coined the term 'Femalism'. Her work has been influential in studies of gender in Africa. She describes the female body as a site of patriarchal abuse and violence on the African continent as the bearer of European

colonialism and exploitation. She centers the female body, which as well as mothering will also constitute the systemic site. She states that

> …applying the theory of Femalism, a variant of African feminism, the female body as well as mothering will constitute the systemic site of discourse and hermeneutics. Parallels will be drawn between the lacerated female body and the mutilated African nation jostled by wars, poverty, disease, colonialism, and postcoloniality. Simply put, the feminized African country evokes Mother Earth, Woman Earth--an abstract projection of the African female body. The scarred body not only aligns with the spiritual in the representation of the natural and the cosmic but also manifests the dents of a scrambled and ailing nation. In the mothering of texts, we shall limn some African writers, transcending to embrace the Sartrean concept of freedom. The existent may, however, in spinning the web of transcendence in a utopian precinct subordinate reproductive maternity to productive creative art. (190)

'Misovire' ('man-hater, the opposite for mysoginist) is also another term coined which stands for a particular kind of woman. The Cameroonian Werewere Liking in her chant novel *It Shall Be of Jasper and Coral* "appropriates the productive force of myth through the misovire consciousness…" (Fombele, 370). The concept supports Likings specific understanding of what gender relations among men and women have been in postcolonial society in opposition to what they ought to be. She is dissatisfied by the fact that men and women cannot complement each other. Edward Sankara in *Postcolonial Francophone Literatures* refers to 'misovire' as the frustration of the African woman who could not manage to find a man who met her aspirations within modern Africa.

As we can see, those challenges under discussion are what to include under the term African feminism and also about conceptualization and the target of these works by women writers and how they position towards naming and classification. Mar Gallego advocates for a symbiosis

among feminisms. From her point of view, “other” feminisms are necessary to key issues in order to understand the complex and multiple identity of women. She concludes that “repensar el género, reconfigurar los feminismos son, pues, algunos de los grandes retos a los que nos enfrentamos en estos momentos, partiendo desde posicionamientos mucho más flexibles, más fluidos y en los que todas nos sintamos más representadas” (82).

Karen J. Warren in 1987 established connections among feminism and ecology. “She argued for a basic ecofeminist position: that feminist ought to pay attention to environmental issues and ecological interdependencies” (Cuomo 1). Ecofeminism grows from the idea that a woman’s ethics are closer to nature than a man’s and it revalues feminine traits. It aims to connect politics with spiritualism. The control over and exploitation of nature is linked to control over and exploitation of human beings.

The grassroots environmental movement is fueled by persistence, resistance, stubbornness, passion and outrage. In the south women were experiencing particular hardship, as commercial farming invaded their traditional way of life as they were drawn into highly exploitative and health threatening forms of production. Common to women’s campaigns are their vulnerability to environmental problems and their lack of access to the centres of decision making which cause them. Ecofeminists practices in Africa can be seen in Kenya with the Green Belt Movement led by Wangari Mathai who advocates for women in rural communitie putting forward their genuine voice speaking out for their human, environmental, civil and political rights.

Obioma Nnaemeka coined the term ‘nego- feminism’ in 2004. Nego-feminism is the feminism of negotiation. “In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise and balance. African feminisms challenge through negotiation and compromise. African women do feminism; feminism is what they do

for themselves and for others" (377-8). Among the drawbacks Nnaemeka still finds in neocolonial Africa, it is noteworthy the fact exposed about the double morale of NGOs working in the continent in the way they discredit the work done by their African counterparts.

According to Nnaemeka, for the true development of human beings, there must be a sense of empowerment and inner fulfillment. She mentions a third space of engagement (in Sartre's definition: the process of accepting responsibility for the political consequences of one's action. Sartre spoke of the socially responsible writing or littérature engagée) "which allows for the coexistence, interconnection, and interaction of thought, dialogue, planning, and action and constitutes the arena where I have witnessed the unfolding of feminisms in Africa" (377).

As other feminists in the academia, dealing with theory and engagement, Nnaemeka speaks of positionality from the social and personal to the intellectual and political, and the intersectionality of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, culture and national origin. For her, it is necessary that for true global feminism, we go across borders, which entails learning about the "other", as the other teaches community, alliance and connectedness. Learning from someone requires humble listeners. Related to nego-feminism she developed the phrase "building on the indigenous" (after Claude Ake,[26] the Nigerian political scientist). The indigenous is whatever the people consider important to their lives, whatever they regard as an authentic expression of themselves:

[26] The indigenous is not the traditional, there is no fossilized existence of the African past available for us to fall back on, only new totalities however hybrid which change within each passing day. The indigenous refers to whatever the people consider important in their lives, whatever they regard as an authentic expression of themselves. We build on the indigenous by making it determine the form and content of development strategy, by ensuring that developmental change accommodates itself to these things, be they values, interests, aspirations and / or institutions which are important in the life of the people.

> Building on the indigenous by making it determine the form and content of development strategy, by ensuring that developmental change accommodates itself to these things, be they values, interest, aspirations and social institutions which are important in the life of the people. Traditional is not indigenous. It is a dynamic, evolving hybrid of different histories and geographies. (376-7)

We agree with Nnaemeka when talking about engagement, coexistence, interconnection and interaction of thought where feminism in Africa unfolds. It is not clear that there exists African feminism as Feminism, but a concern among women for recognition, negotiation and cooperation. In "Standing at the Edge of Time. African Women's Visions of the Past, Present and Future", Abena P.A. Busia, Marame Gueye, Pauline Dongala and Omotayo Jolaosho's [27] conclusions connect with Nnaemeka's nego-feminism, "in the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are principles of give and take, compromise and balance" (Nnaemeka, 377). The past and the present together give our life continuity and coherence. It is necessary to look into the past to envision our future, to imagine or expect that something is a likely or desirable possibility in the future.

1.2.2. Women's Movement in Africa.

African feminisms are shaped by a variety of contexts, movements and historical moments. The African feminist movement is characterized by "an ongoing process of self-definition and re-definition; a broad-based membership, a resistance to the distortions and misrepresentations by western global feminism; a 'feminism of negotiation'; as well as efforts to reconcile the power dynamics of the continent, nationally and within the movement" (65-6).

According to Sinmi Akin-Aina, the Aba Women's War in South-eastern Nigeria in 1929 was a seminal display of women's political action in African history (74) together with the

[27] De Hernández, Jennifer Browdy et al.

Lagos Market Women's association in the mid-1920s, the Nigerian women's party and the Abeokuta Women's Union in the 1940s. These groups were distinctly concerned with the organization of women's markets, the mobilization for women's welfare, and anti-taxation protests. These economically-focused groups also provided mutual support, personal development and communal aid (79).

In many postcolonial African nations, the formal women's organization was co-opted by state powers in a bid to further the party agenda, as for example, in Ghana Nkrumah's party and the 31st of December movement. As a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s, African states were unable to provide services and guarantee protection; people then looked to informal organizations to cope with the difficulties they faced (80). The state reaction to this surge of global interest and independent organizing was to integrate these groups into the political infrastructure in what Amina Mana terms a 'femocracy' or State-directed feminism operated via the first ladies (wives of African presidents and heads of state). With the dual intention of cornering the increasing international funding for women's organizations and directing efforts away from protests, femocracy emerged in the 1980s as an alternative mode of organizing the relations between the state and women's organizations (Mama 1994). We will see this situation depicted in Ayesha Harruna Attah's *Harmattan Rain*. This also happened to Maendeleo Ya Wanawake (MYW), Kenya's oldest and largest women's organization, active since the independent struggles of the 1960s, which embodies the tensions and transformations inherent in African Feminism (66). It was allied with the dominant Nationalist Party but has built an extensive nation-wide independent base of women's groups genuinely involved in large scale zonal mobilization of women. As a result of its connection to the ruling party and the previous colonial government, MYW has benefited and prospered from it. MYWO was a vocal critic of Kenyan Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai and her activism around the Green Belt Movement, a

grassroots movement concerned with sustainability and the protection of the environment. Despite having been subject to the dysfunctions described, MYW also engages in a 'feminism of negotiation' in their campaign against female genital mutilation (FGM) (84-5).

We have already mentioned the importance of social and grassroots activism. There are two documents designed in Ghana, the Women's Manifesto and the Charter of Feminism that we consider relevant when talking about African feminisms. As we will see later, the importance of such documents are portrayed by Ayesha Attah in her novels.

Following the general election in 2000 and after a bill on Domestic violence was presented, women in Ghana gathered to oppose the creation of a Ministry for Women's affairs, triggered by the new political situation and the women's murders[28] which took place in Accra, Ghana's capital city. The mobilization was supported by ABUNTU for Development and The Network for Women's Rights (NETRIGHT), refusing the sponsorship of patrons who could bias their petitions. The manifesto was the result of consensus among women from the 110 districts in Ghana, each of them with different problems and necessities. It was released at the Accra conference in 2004. It sought for equality and higher participation of women in governance, better access to resources to make a living, women's health, women's poverty, harmful and discriminatory social practices justified in the name of culture, violence against women, the disabled, widowed, aged women and single mothers. Their commitment to collective action was important, so as to make a difference to the situation of men, women and children and achieve gender equality. It is worth mentioning the important role played by women assemblies, among them market women in Ghana. According to Usman Abass, "women's political and voluntary groups and associations sprang up in post independent Ghana,

[28] This fact will be treated further on in chapter three.

such as the Ghana Women's League and the 31st of December movement" (154-5), being this last one a branch of the party in the government led by the first lady, Madam Rawlings. However those women were victims of military attacks in the 1970s and 80s. There was an economic recession and market women were accused of it. They were punished in their trade. With Rawling's second coming under the Provisional National Defence Council, measures were even harsher with consequent fear and panic in the population, mainly among women. Emmanuel Akyeampong also addresses the violence inflicted by junior officers on market women. Under Rawlings military rule, he contends, some major markets were destroyed in Accra, Sekondi, Koforidua and Kumasi in 1979. He explains that soldiers even caned nude women in public (222). Similarly, Abena Ampofoa Asare based on the documents which hold the testimonies of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) in Ghana, and which commenced work in September 2002, examines the position of market women in the country. Since colonial times, market women have been seen as a menace to the country's economy. Despite the fact that they fought in anti-colonial movements, they were under government scrutiny for corruption. Accused of violating price control, they were beaten, their goods were seized and some were even imprisoned. Some of the testimonies in the NRC report the situation, for instance the testimony of a woman "[who] was three months pregnant and one of the soldiers pressed down her swelling midsection" (77).

The African Feminist Forum took place in Accra Ghana in 2006, in order that African feminists from all walks of life and different levels of engagement could reflect on a collective basis and chart ways to strengthen and grow the feminist movement on the continent. A key outcome of the forum was the adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles which celebrates their feminist identity and politics. By naming themselves feminists they politicize the struggle for women's rights, question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated and

develop tools for transformational analysis and action. Charmaine Pereira stresses the importance for women to work together:

> The present conjuncture is marked by crises of various kinds: deepening existential insecurities arises from intensified capitalist relations of extraction and exploitation that have left devastation in their wake. Facing the challenges ahead requires renewed determination to craft the theoretical frameworks for deepening our understanding of our varied contexts in order to dismantle existing relations of oppression and domination … creating more liberatory possibilities for African women and societies will necessarily be work-in-progress, drawing on and amplifying the possibilities for inspiration and strength through the building of feminist solidarity and collective action. (29)

1.3. Ghana and its Cultural Production.

1.3.1. Contextualizing Ghana.

It is our contention to go over Ghana's past, the country that we devote our study to. We will highlight those moments in history before and after the colonization of West Africa by European colonial powers during the nineteenth century.

Ghana, formerly named the Gold Coast, is situated at the heart of the region which has led the culture in sub- Saharan Africa form the I BC as far as metal mining, sculpture and agriculture is concerned. According to Allison Knopf and Samantha Batdorff when the trans-Saharan trade began, Ghana also traded in jewels, silk and furs from the Middle East and even Central Asia. Trade also brought the Islamic faith to Ghana. Missionaries, merchants and travellers brought Islam as well as written literature, which appeased some of the population's conversion to Islam, although many held onto their traditional religions. Most of those had one supreme god and many lesser gods (19). Many believed that all things, living and non-living had a soul. Religions had many variations and different traditions as well. For the most part, people allowed

each other to follow their own religions without issue. Colonialism began in Ghana with the Portuguese in the 15th century and it continued through the 19th century which changed Ghana's traditional government systems. The relationship between Ghanaians and Portuguese began with bartering for gold. Ghana traded mainly with gold and ivory for firearms. This quickly turned into trade of human beings for firearms. The Europeans began using their trading forts to trade human beings as slaves. They even began building castles just for this purpose. Two of the well-known slave castles in Ghana are Elmina Slave Castle and Cape Coast Slave Castle. In both of these places people were traded in the triangle trade (21). Ghana traded hands between different European nations, and gained its independence from Great Britain on March 6, 1957. Slavery existed within Ghana and Africa as a whole, long before Europeans arrived. Historically ethnic groups would go to war for various reasons and the winning group would take slaves from the losing group. When the Europeans began looking for slaves, some ethnic groups would sell their captives of war to them. The northern regions and southern regions of Ghana have been unequal throughout history. During the time of colonialism and slavery, the Southern ethnic groups would war against the Northern and sell their captives into slavery. The Ghanaian ethnic groups in the South were stronger than those in the North for multiple reasons. To start with, all of the major crops desired by other nations were grown in the south, while the north could only grow cotton and other resources that were unwanted by the Europeans. Besides, the South grew cocoa, tropical fruit, lumber, gold, and other resources. Because of these resources and the location on the sea where they could trade with Europeans, the South was stronger economically and had a much bigger population than the north. This was detrimental to the northern regions' population. At this time the north was intentionally cut off from education and was labeled as a labor source. The North and South remain unequal today. There are multiple theories to why this continues, but the problem seems to have its roots in

colonial history. Today, all of the cash crops are still in the South. All of the shipping ports, the airports, established road systems, big cities, and political leaders are in the South. When it comes to the North and South, the North has almost no public voice, while the South as a whole refuse to represent the north when making political decisions. Ghanaians across all regions have a strong sense of national pride. While the nation is made up of hundreds of ethnic groups, the vast majority of people get along. For reasons of population density, urbanization, political representation, and natural resources, the North and South regions of Ghana continue to be unequal to this day (23).

Odamteen in *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo* summarizes Ghana's colonial past from the British abandonment of their possessions in the South. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in search of gold; later on, the slave trade became an even more lucrative enterprise. By the end of the XVII century, there were a number of small states in the Gold Coast which towards 1750 had emerged as the only states with remaining Fanti and Ashanti. In the twenty first century, the Ashanti wanted to control the trade in the coast, mainly those commercial ports in Elmina. By then, the British had already settled there and they controlled the Ashanti expansion (44). The British also had to fight against the Fanti, and in 1874, the British formerly established the Gold Coast British Crown Colony. In this way, they legalized the colonial policy which has been working since 1844 after the signing of the bonds between the chiefs from the kingdoms on the coast and the British (45). Among the many consequences of this early trade was the additional stimulation of the political and economic ambitions of coastal western African states. The rise of the Ashanti did not go unchallenged, for others among the Akan had similar political and economic aspirations. There was a long and complex history of European contact with peoples of the Gold Coast as the forts, castles and trading posts testified. The Dutch, Danes, English, French, Brandenburgers, and Swedes came after the Portuguese;

however, by the 1790s only the Dutch and the British were a significant non-African presence in the area. The delicate balance of power between the Fanti, Ashanti and British was radically altered in 1806 when the new Asantehene[29] attacked and defeated the Fanti army in the state of Abura. The three forces collided in open war resulting in the defeat of the Ashanti and British penetration into the interior of what was modern Ghana at the close of the nineteenth century (46). De jure colonial rule was immediately established by the British. By 1819 the Ashanti finally gained the upper hand over the Fanti which resulted in the British Company of Merchants (BCM) signing a treaty that recognized the Ashanti as overlords of the Fanti. The British government gave the BCM de facto control of the castles and European-African trading contacts along the Fanti coast expecting in return, that the BCM put an end to both the transatlantic and domestic slave trade in the area. However, they could do little without military support about slavery. Ultimately, profit and the maintenance of the status quo determined that the BCM did nothing to antagonize the foremost military power in the area. After the abolition of the company, the British government moved against the Ashanti. The British government formally withdrew from direct intervention in the region, allowing the English merchants and the Fanti counterparts to sort things out among themselves. In 1828 governor Maclean embarked on a process of informal colonization. He did nothing about either domestic slavery or the illegal transatlantic variety. In 1842, the British government turned the de facto colonization of Fantiland by Maclean into de jure colonization under the authority of the governor of Sierra Leone. By 1844 Maclean and the lieutenant governor had signed a series of treaties or bonds throughout Fantiland, the Bond of 1844, obligating the British to protect the signatories in case of aggression from the Ashanti who were seen as the principle enemy of the

[29] The absolute monarch of the Kingdom of Ashanti.

British. In 1874 the British finally defeated the Ashanti, converting the former protectorate and the Ashanti domains into the British crown colony of the Gold Coast (49).

As Knopf et al. explain, Fanti and Ashanti traditions in relation to education, territorial and political organization were kept. Besides, its impulse towards economy remained throughout the years which lasted the British dominion. The Gold Coast enjoyed a unique worth among the British colonies, it was the wealthiest, and the most educated, the first to have a majority elected in Parliament together with the well-organized native authorities (23). As we will see in the later study of the literature written by Ghanaian women writers, such an important role was reflected in the role played by women in the beginning of the fight for independence. It is worth mentioning the significance of their political commitment which equalled them to men, although unfortunately, as we will see later on, it was only in the former years and it has not received the same recognition.

This period of splendor in the aftermath of independence and also in the years it was being gestated is very significant to the literature written by women at the time. Likewise, Fanti and Ashanti traditions have to be taken into account. However, there were also drawbacks emerging at this very time in history such as all kinds of discriminations related to class, gender, and religions, which were either born there or became stronger.

Ali A. Mazrui explains that the 1948 revolts signalled the beginning of the people's rebellion to attain independence and they were determinant for the change to be produced in British politics. Nevertheless, it is necessary to take into account all those factors outside Africa which led to decolonizing movements in the big European empires. Those were the two world wars and their consequences in the economy in the metropole, apart from both, the birth of workers' movements and the awareness of the situation in colonized countries (105-13).

Kwame Nkrumah, who was the catalyzer in this fight, was a charismatic leader. He was born in the Gold Coast in 1909 and educated in the UK and the USA. In 1949, he founded the Convention's People's Party whose main aim was to achieve his country's self-government. The party had an overwhelming majority in February 1951 turning the Gold Coast into the first West African colony to accomplish self-governance. Independence came on the 7th March 1957 making Kwame Nkrumah the first President of Ghana which, in 1960, became a republic with the same leader as its first president. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

We will now analyse the different factors both internal and external which led Africa to its decolonization. We will highlight the rebirth of intellectual movements which led colonized countries in their fight for independence.

1.3.1.1. Historical and Political Framework: Ghana before and after colonization.

We will consider both the causes and consequences of decolonization. We will see the impact caused by Western political structures in contact with African traditional systems of ruling. As a consequence of such an impact, it is worthwhile mentioning the rebirth of nationalist feelings (also brought from Europeans alien to African culture as those beliefs were based on race, skin colour, language, flag, and so on. The idea of "nation" was imported and implanted in former clans, tribes and kingdoms.). According to the historians included in José Urbano Martínez Carreras in his *Introducción a la historia contemporánea from 1917*, history from 1945 cannot be written from Europe as the centre. There has been a change in focus since the emergence of decolonizing movements by means of which colonial empires began its extinction by the mid twentieth century (13-15).

The so called "Third World" emancipation derives from a series of internal causes to name; mobilization of both human and material resources from the colonies to warlike endeavour, the

creation of industries and massive ways of communication for war. As a direct consequence, it is necessary to mention the upsurge and development of different classes and native elite which worked to get those national rights and democratic freedoms promised by colonial governments (Martínez Carreras 453).

The own evolution, progress and development within colonized peoples was crucial to the emerging of the decolonizing process. There were both a continuous transformation and an inner growing at social and economic levels. As far as social transformation is concerned, cultural and ideological movements stand out from the spreading of education and intellectual formation which share some common features. On the one hand, the assimilation of Western systems of thought, and on the other, anti-Western reaction and the search and renovation of their own ideas and traditional values asserting their own historical identities against western colonialism (Martínez Carreras 455).

As a product of the evolution of the inner growing of cultural and ideological movements, colonized societies base the affirmation of their own sociocultural personality in a proper system of values which will be the ideological stand of nationalist movements, the fight against imperialism and the basis of its independence. The concept of *Négritude* is relevant as the exaltation of traditional African values as it has already been explained. It was later on extended to the concept of *Africanity.* Other African personalities would later try to create affinities between Africanism and socialism (Martínez Carreras 461).

The development of nationalism was also a key factor to African decolonization, which is a sample of its political evolution. The previous basis on which such nationalism is placed are economic, social and ideological and are projected onto a political nationalism which at the same time manifests quickly in favour of independence (Martínez Carreras 462).

The Third World is characterized by feudal social structures with a wealthy dominant class and a numerous class of peasants engrossed in misery and poverty whose only social protection is patriarchal family. The creation of big cities radicalizes the peasants politically and they immigrate in big groups to the city populating the outskirts. Common to them all, is the technical and industrial setback which means coexistence of enormous contingent labour and scarce performance. The benefits obtained by mines, refineries and plantations go to international corporations or the ruling class which accumulates wealth, land and precious metals, thus opposing to the necessary agrarian and social reforms which only a revolution such as the Cuban was able to achieve.

Some other distinguishing features of the Third World are demographic explosion, poverty, famine and illnesses which cause about 40 million deaths a year. Economic progress does not stop misery as it does not develop the creation of inner capital. Besides, there is also an insufficient economic and work performance determined by the difficulty of creating in a very small time span the necessary cultural and technical basis.

Among the political and social problems, a superficial adoption of European state formulae stands out, which allows old social structures, secret societies, sects, and tribes to subsist. Needless to say, there spring enormous tensions, provoked by the contrast between new modern cities and primitive villages, religious, ethnic and language differences, as well as the contradiction between a non-literate mass and a selected superior cultural layer in society. Those tensions bring about a constant political instability: revolutions, wrong application of laws, racial discrimination, religious hatred/hate, military coups and wars. We have to bear in mind that most of these African states were born at random of old colonial borders. They are supported by political parties, trade unions, the army and the moral issue of national pride. They tend to adopt authoritarian politics either under the rule of traditional kings or politicians

educated in Western institutions, military chiefs, nationalist rulers or Marxist leaders brought up in the Soviet Union or other parts of Europe (Martínez Carreras 479).

As Martínez Carreras explains, another common feature to African countries is the social problem which is not a national but a world problem, the wide gap between rich and poor countries. Not so much for ethical considerations but because of political and economic reasons, the help provided by the first world to its former colonies cover rescuing measures which as they are not coordinated, are not as efficient as those coming from the Socialist block. This meant that the African emergent nations' political leader inclined in favour of Marxist regimes although a majority of just-independent nations opted for non- alignment (482).

In relation to non-alignment politics, a Conference was held in Bandung in 1955 where 29 Afro-Asian countries condemned colonialism, racial discrimination and atomic armament. Two years later, the first Afro-Asian conference in Cairo took place where pacific coexistence was proclaimed. Likewise, there resolutions were passed against racist and interventionist policies, as well as against neocolonialism and economic domination disguised beneath big monopolies (Martínez Carreras 456).

We will now be dealing with the situation in Ghana after independence. The Second World War wakens up the consciousness of the African peoples and it also encourages its confidence. After 1945, Europe does not carry out all its promises. In the UK, Atlee's government starts constitutional reforms, which originates national movements such as political parties, trade unions, secret societies and federations. As we have already mentioned, Ghana became the first independent black state signaling the end of the British protectorate on the Gold Coast. Nkrumah declared himself partisan of neutral activism and Panafrican politics. His dictatorship and political bias supported by China and the Soviet Union brought about its fall in 1966 after

a military coup d'état. Nkrumah saw himself as the father of all African peoples whose aspiration was independence from European powers. He coined the concepts of Pan Africanism and African socialism which originates in the 1960s with the formulation of an official ideology. Some common features to the tendencies showed by those socialisms, especially those without Marxist traits were: the search of roots in a proper African past, refusal to class fights, the concern for economic development, the efforts to adapt the situation of each new country through the interpretation of their rulers and the formulation of specific and practical issues more than on a wide theoretical ideological basis (Martínez Carreras 466).

The Panafrican movement was born in the USA in the 1920s. After 1945, some African intellectuals such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, first Nigerian president after independence in 1960; Mzee Jomo Kenyatta first president of Kenya, and Nkrumah from Ghana led African emancipation. Both Panafricanism and African socialism would be especially relevant in the former years of independence in the countries which became independent after Ghana.

Nkrumah also coined the term "neocolonialism" to suggest that

> although countries like Ghana had achieved technical independence, the ex-colonial powers and the newly emerging superpowers such as the United States continued to play a decisive role through international monetary bodies, through the fixing of prices on world markets, multinational corporations and cartels and a variety of educational and cultural institutions . . . it was more insidious and more difficult to detect and resist than the older overt colonialism. (162-3)

According to Peter Okigbo, from 1973 to 1982, there was a development crisis, as African economies showed their weaknesses and dependency on the economy of the metropolis. From 1982 up to the 1990s the situation in most African countries was catastrophic. Okigbo mentions a period of lack of hope and total despair as the problem of food was the origin of social

insecurity. Besides, national inflation had aggravated the situation. In Ghana inflation rose up to 42, 5 % in this period. The miserable conditions of those countries worsened with high rates of inflation, population and unemployment growth together with a lack of food. No matter which political regimes had been ruling the country, the key note had been economic degradation (3-4). We will overview those regimes below.

According to the information provided by Ghana's Information Service Department, Nkrumah, who advocated for a united Africa and supported the Commonwealth and the non-alignment movement, was ousted by the police and the army on the 24th February 1966. General Akwasi Amankwaa Afrifa became president of a presidential commission made up of three men which paved the way to the 1967 general election won by the Progressive Party who formed a government with Kofi Abrefa Busia as Prime Minister and Edward Akufo Addo as President of the Republic. On the 13th January 1972, colonel and later general Ignatius Kutu Acheampong overthrew the government by means of a military coup d'état, becoming the chief of state and President of the National Redemption Council, to become known as the Supreme Military Council. Later on, Acheampong was replaced by Frederick William Kwasi Akufo in a presidential coup that took place in July 1978. The Supreme Military Council was overthrown in June 1979 due to junior ranks rebellion in the Ghanaian army. Then the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council was founded being Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings head of state. His army restated order in the three months he was in charge leading to a new general election which took Dr. Hilla Limann from the People's National Party to power. In December 1979 Limann was overthrown by Rawlings again who opened a new revolutionary period as President of a provisional council with nine members called the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), with state secretaries in charge of several ministries responsible of the party.

This party organized a National Commission for Democracy (NCD) whose aim was to establish elected district assemblies to bring the local government to popular politics.

In 1990 debate forums were organized in order that the citizens could give their opinion about different systems of government. The result was that the people preferred a multiparty system of government. With the 1957, 1969 and 1979 PNDC's proposals and the experts' assembly which gathered for that purpose, the Constitution was passed in April 1992, a legal system based on jurisprudence and British Common Law. In this constitution there was an Executive President elected by adult universal suffrage every four years who could be re-elected for only one more additional mandate.

In the 1992 Presidential elections, Rawlings became elected with his party, the National Democratic Congress winning with 58, 8% favourable votes; in Parliamentary elections it won the Progressist Alliance made up by the NDC among other parties. On the 7th January 1993 the fourth Republic was inaugurated with Rawlings as President and Kow Nkensen Arkaah as vice-president (Information Services Department).

According to Nohlen et al., Ghana held general elections in 1996 with the currently holding office Jerry John Rawlings' National Democratic Congress victory. He had undergone two coups d'état previously and before 1996 he had been a dictator. There was a time of political and social unrest in Ghana in the 1980s and 1990s (435).

On the 7th December 2000 in agreement with con the 19th anniversary of Revolution, general elections took place, a year after the celebration of Independence's 44th anniversary. These elections were the first ones where a Third Parliament had been elected within the same Republic. It had also been the first time that an elected president had resigned after having

completed his perceptive second mandate, as *The Graphic* reported. Later, John Agyekum Kuffour, the National Patriotic Party leader became president in 2001.

In January 2009, John Atta Mills became president with the National Democratic Congress. As he died in office, John Dramani Mahama became president in July 2012. In the 2017 general election, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo was the first opposition leader to win an election against a sitting president in Ghana with the New Patriotic Party.

After more than sixty years from the beginning of the process of independence and decolonization Africa, south of the Sahara, is in a very different situation to that wished and hoped for in the 1960s'. Africa has met a shattering historical evolution in every statement. Such an evolution occurred under the difficulties and adaptation problems to independent life, political instability derived from action and presence of militarisms and coup d'états as well as economic stagnation and underdevelopment in an occasion of dependency, disorder and social tensions. Added to this, are the differences among the states on the continent as the projection influence of African divergences of international rivalries among the big world powers which deploy their neo-colonial interventions.

Other determining factors to take into account were also the economic situation of underdevelopment together with neo-colonialism besides the ideology of negritude and socio-political systems as well as African Socialisms. The political evolution was affected by the rising of problems both internal such as constitutionalism and militarism and external directly related to the country borders and the conflicts originated in them. It was also necessary to consider African international juncture which turns around Panafricanism, The Organization of African states and the non-alignment politics (Martínez Carreras 462).

The advent of the African Union[30] (AU) can be described as an event of great magnitude in the institutional evolution of the continent. On the 9th of September 1999, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity issued a Declaration (the Sirte Declaration) calling for the establishment of an African Union, with a view, inter alia, to accelerating the process of integration on the continent to enable it to play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalization.

The main objectives of the OAU were, among others, to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonization and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity among African States; to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states and to promote international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. Indeed, as a continental organization the OAU provided an effective forum that enabled all member states to adopt coordinated positions on matters of common concern to the continent in international fora and defend the interests of Africa effectively.

Through the OAU Coordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, the Continent worked and spoke as one with undivided determination in forging an international consensus in support of the liberation struggle and the fight against apartheid. The OAU initiatives paved the way for the birth of African Union. In July 1999, the Assembly decided to convene an extraordinary session to expedite the process of economic and political integration in the

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[30] African Union. au.int/en/history/oau-and-au. Accessed 10-01-2019.

continent. Since then, four Summits have been held leading to the official launching of the African Union in 2002.

These changes produced by the evolution of traditional African societies affected everything. Currently African societies display common and similar patterns in their development which are marked by demographic pressure and the development of the cities as far as human geography is concerned. The map of the economic geography comes determined by agrarian necessities, lack of industry and wealth in mining resources and raw material controlled by Western capital.

At the same time there were policies to invest on education and health, the rearrangement of classes in a renewed social order where emerged a new middle class which gained power between the traditional oligarchic minority and the popular masses. This was a new social class made up by technicians, professionals, civil servants, soldiers and similar statements which little by little were taking control over the new political, social and economic situation.

In Africa nowadays, Adedeji states, in the socio-economic sphere which transcends the political, underdevelopment is related to and identifies with neo-colonialism (or in Ngugi's words 'corporalism') (91) the last stage of the new politics in a new Africa getting to both national and continental levels. Cultural imperialism, Nkrumah's neo-colonialism, is a very deep and serious problem in independent Africa. Due to neo-colonialism, colonial powers left untouched the economic structures which, controlling society, allowed them go on dominating the state, only independent in theory.

Within this context, the already mentioned thoughts of 'négritude' and 'africanity' lost the reference they had in the 1960s. Besides, it was more relevant in Francophone African

countries than in Anglophone ones. Even the Nigerian Wole Soyinka was critical with the defence of one's negritude (Taiwo, 46). According to Ashcroft at al., "Soyinka's remark does place its finger on the essential flaw of Négritudinist thought, which is that its structure is derivative and replicatory, asserting not its difference, as it would claim, but rather its dependence on the categories and features of the colonizing culture" (124). In this sense, many new African states had their own peculiar cultural revolution in search of African authenticity by means of the nationalization and Africanization of names and designations.

Martínez Carreras states that, apart from neo-colonialism, some other problems contributed to shape the political situation in a new Africa at continental and national levels. Within the country, the question of national identity was relevant for the consolidation of a new and authentic nationalism. Within the continent some of the new born nations fought in border conflicts. It is worth mentioning the problems caused by the maintenance of political and administrative institutions left by the Europeans under the name of republics and monarquies which caused either their adaptation or their refusal as they had been imposed over Africans who were looking for their adaptation and adjustment throughout repeated constitutional ways.

According to Martínez Carreras, European Liberalism and an emerging socialism have influenced on the formation of groups with political power and its leading function within African societies. Together with these trends, it is important to mention the imposition of some pressure groups which embody power by means of violence and force. This leads to the uninterrupted sequence of coups d'état and military dictatorships which spread an increasing political militarism as well as the inner conflicts and attempts of secession. Those conflicts drift into civil wars promoted by groups and vested interests which tend to result in revolutionary or counter revolutionary control in order to bring influence to bear from political power. All these circumstances have made the political evolution of African states unstable and discordant which

shows structural instability and tension next to western interests and foreign interventions provoked by them (478-9).

African societies are shaped by this set of circumstances which, needless to say, affect women in a more particular way, as we will see now.

1.3.1.2. Social Framework in Relation to Gender and Sexuality.

Women also suffered from the effects of decolonization. Neo-colonization had equally affected the area which employed them and their role in the social structures had changed starting with the high number of female population. The total population in Ghana was estimated at 28.8 million people in 2017, according to the latest census figures. Looking back, in the year of 1960, Ghana had a population of 6.7 million people.

The final results of the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC) showed that the total population of Ghana as at 26th September, 2010 was 24,658,823. The results indicated that Ghana's population increased by 30.4 percent over the 2000 population figure of 18,912,079. The recorded annual intercensal growth rate in 2010 was 2.5 percent as against 2.7 percent recorded in 2000. The results revealed that there were 12,633,978 females and 12,024,845 males. This implied that females constituted 51.2 percent of the population and male's 48.8 percent, resulting in sex ratio of 95 males to 100 females. It also showed increase in population density from 79 people per square km in 2000 to 103 per square km in 2010. Taking these data into account, women as a social group have to be part of strategies for the future in Africa.

Other indicators, from the United Nation's World Population Review Report (2017) estimate that life expectancy for females in Ghana is 64 with fertility rate at 3.8 children per woman. It has been expressed the need for access to quality education and healthcare, especially

reproductive health and the need to empower women economically, as well as entrepreneurial skill development to drive economic growth. The census coordinator agrees on topics to be investigated for the 2020 census which would help to take coignance of the country's obligations to eradicate poverty, ensuring gender equity, and justice and climate change, to be achieved by 2030 under the Sustainable Development Agenda.

According to Jennifer Asuako, UNDP (United Nations global development network) analyst, women constitute 51.2% of Ghana's population and still their participation at levels of decision making is very low. This can be attributed to patriarchy or male dominance, a key aspect of the Ghanaian social system perpetuated by custom, law and even religion. Women's political participation in political leadership in Ghana is still very low compared to other African countries. A report on African Human Development in 2016 by the UNPD, continues Asuako, recognized women's political voice and leadership as a key driver in advancing gender equality. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 has a target to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life." As Asuako declares, Ghana has signed and ratified various regional, continental and international[31] frameworks and has pledged in various forums and platforms its commitment to promoting gender equality and women empowerment.

As has happened in the rest of the world, the role of women at important changing times tends to fade, nearly disappearing. This has been the case with African women in most countries once colonized by European powers who far from recognizing and favouring them, consigned them to the traditional role of women according to Victorian values. However, Europe is not the only one to blame, as traditional African societies recognized and valued women as mothers,

[31] As the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the rights of women in Africa and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

in their fertility (as mother Africa to nurture her people). If we add the violation of human rights over women, we have to go back to 1979 when the United Nations created a Commission for the elimination of violence against women. It was then when human rights were connected to women's rights, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 2).

It was not until the decade 1975-1985 declared by the UN, the decade of Women, when their situation in most of the so called Third World countries, that she was brought to the front of information, recognition and unfortunately, discovery in the broadest sense of the word. As it is declared on the official web page of the African Union, within the African Union, the Directorate of Women, Gender and Development promotes gender equality in Africa and within the AU. Among its actions/activities are the design of programmes and projects based on policies adopted by AU Member states; it oversees the development and harmonization of gender-related policies; initiates gender-mainstreaming strategies[32] and supports capacity building by providing training on gender policies and instruments. It also acts as the Secretariat for the African Union Women's Committee (AUWC). In 2003, it was adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human's Rights and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The AU also created the Fund for African Women in 2010 in order to directly support and enhance women's participation in the economic process as well as to increase African women's participation in economic decision making. In 2009, the African Women's Decade (2010-2020) was adopted with the overall theme: 'Grassroots approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment' (GEWE). The aims included in the UN 2063 Agenda, are classified in the 'aspirations' for an Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential

[32] In 2004 AU Heads of State adopted the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA).

offered by African People, especially its women and youth, and caring for children; in 'goals' such as full gender equality in all spheres of life and women and girls empowerment; and violence and discrimination against women and girls as priority areas**.**

As Coquery-Vidrovitch, among others, defends it is necessary to fight against the generalization of the situation of women and against stereotypes, as it is also necessary to take into account the origin of the written sources which at pre-colonial and colonial times gave information about it. There is not much difference between the situation of women at colonial and postcolonial times. Nevertheless, inter and trans cultural influences and cultures' superposition have been stronger from the beginning of colonization for both male and female population (3).

It was at the beginning of 1980s, when due to the combined impact of economic crisis and the influence of Western media that the turn in the situation of women radicalizes. We have to take a firm stand in those factors contributing to such change. First of all, the general and gradual change of social scope brought about the depopulation of the countryside. There were also other determinant aspects such as the area in the country where they lived and worked (the North has always been considered poorer than Central and coastal Ghana)[33], their job, their social position, religion and the colonial legacy inherited (Coquery-Vidrovitch 5).

In the 19th century West African women enjoyed certain autonomy given by the commerce and laboring the land. The trade in cash crops began then. Husband and wife had their properties and accounts separated, and women refunded their husbands the credit given to start her business. Polygamy, brought by Islam trade made unworkable maintaining any common property, as every wife was in charge of her progeny. This brief independence enjoyed

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[33] See "Contextualizing Ghana" above.

by certain women faded with colonialism as the system of production changed, making the selling of their products untenable.

Colonialism worsened the life of country women as it altered the fragile balance existing between dependence and autonomy with regard to the relation between sexes at work and at all levels of social organization. Such instability was due to the intensification of cash crops and the production of food surpluses destined to be sold which ended up with subsistence farming as well as the acquisition of land and products by big foreign companies who frequently destroyed the commercial contacts among women. The tendency in the twentieth century was that of cash crops for men and subsistence farming for women (Coquery-Vidrovitch 63).

As we will be dealing with in the following chapters, this situation of the commerce is portrayed by African women writers. Other African writers like the Nigerian Buchi Emecheta, who analyses the situation just described by the historian Coquery-Vidovitch already mentioned in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Emecheta reflects competition among women in a polygamous household to maintain their progeny. It is noteworthy the worth of male children as they will later make their mothers' subsistence safer, so they have to be guaranteed a good future. Ama Ata Aidoo in her collections of short stories also describes this situation to the point of the tragedy of the accidental death of a son. The most respected women in society are those who have given birth to boys. We can also see how some mothers in this earlier literature repudiate their daughters as they are not able to give birth to sons but only daughters.

Male depopulation of rural areas in favour of the city is also a striking feature during and after decolonization as the colonial trade developed transactions. Men were in search of a better paid job whereas women stayed behind looking after the family. However, there was also a big population of young women who left the village in search of a better future after the

colonial period. The posts these young women occupied in the city was according to their social status, so women from the elite started working as midwives, nurses and teachers, jobs previously done by men as their education had been better and had lasted longer (Coquetry-Vidrovitch 73-4).

As literature written by women portray, women's migration to the city was stimulated by themselves, no external agent neither colonizers nor tradition took part in it. We should mention the Ghanaian Ama Darko's *The Housemaid* as an example. The bourgeoisie Victorian spirit did not accept women's independence; the missionaries emphasized the women's role as mothers and family careers. Colonial administrators blocked female migration as soon as they could as they assimilated it to prostitution. It was well after the Second World War that arguments about health and education reached the working class, the time the atmosphere became more permissive. Until then, a sort of Euro-African consensus kept young women far from the cities (Coquetry-Vidrovitch 78).

It is also noteworthy the change in gender balance in most workers in the tertiary sector, that is, service market. Surprisingly, most of these subaltern jobs of domestic service were occupied by men (also Aidoo portrays so in her short stories). In the end, women's jobs in the city were deemed necessary. Nowadays, urban migration is balanced between sexes. The tendency towards girls' education is also changing, although the difference in access to education among affluent women is still a fact (Coquetry-Vidrovitch 77).

Twentieth century Africa has seen an emergence of independent women in the cities. It is necessary to mention prostitution in big cities after colonization. Much has been devoted to female prostitution, despite which women were able to find other jobs which made it possible

for them to maintain some privileged places in the small capitalist market in the informal sector first and in the domestic service later on[34].

We could wonder if the passage from colonization to decolonization was seen as an asset or a drawback for women. Further than the unique cultural heritage linked to each region, they created outstanding differences in factors such as age, social and geographical origin, as well as the relationship among sexes. This intersectionality made the situation of nearly every woman unique. The place of women in society advanced or on the contrary worsened in relation to class. Middle class women were more dependent in the city whereas the working woman enjoyed more independence as she benefited from the opportunities of the petty trade. On the contrary, middle class women imitated the model of the Western housewife or even if she had a job, her salary was inferior to that of her husband (Coquery –Vidrovitch 91-2).

In Accra, Ghana's capital city, there were hardly any unemployed women under colonialism as most of them worked at the market. What is important now it is to highlight the role played by women as urban labour force since colonial times. Although those markets which need capital and international contacts are led by men, women from the coast in Ghana have dominated the market before colonialism, trading with food and clothes (Coquery –Vidrovitch 94).

By 1990 Africa had faced up to political and economic contradictions, liberalization or protectionism. There has always existed a tendency in Africa towards the military coup d'état, despite neocolonialism and African socialism. In this way, despite the foreign pressure towards democratization, several political regimes favour a dictatorship.

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[34] Some Ghanaian writers have portrayed so, such as Ama Ata Aidoo in "Two Sisters", Ama Darko in *Beyond the Horizon*, and Taiye Selasi in *Ghana Must Go*, to name but a few.

According to Shaw, the appearance of democracy together with indebtedness as the main ideological concept in the international sphere has encouraged not only constitutional changes, national conventions and multiparty elections; it has also expedited the expansion of international networks of NGOs making popular the notion of civil society. Such interests' coalitions tend to get together around certain current issues such as feminism. In the 1990s, different political regimes started trusting on 'corporatism', "a set of structural relations which both include and exclude major groups in the political" (Adedeji, 90). Corporatism revolves around some understanding between labour and both national and international capital, also including other major social institutions in civil society such as religious, academic, NGOs and women groups among others (91).

Within plans for development in Africa, this is understood as a process centred on human groups, among which, it is understood the support to women's groups as well (Emmerij, 108). Such groups share the difficulty to get together and to enjoy themselves. Traditionally they have been considered providers of both food and life, and as we have already mentioned, there is very little attention devoted to African women in written documents before the United Nations Women's decade (1975-85). Fortunately, in the late nineties, the importance of women's work for the maintenance of African societies was recognized, as Louis Emmerij concludes. The Mozambiquean Graça Machel, who shared the "Príncipe de Asturias" Award for International cooperation in 1998 with six other women committed to the defense and dignification of women, said in an interview to *El País* newspaper "We are working with the aim that the role of the woman represents true hope for Africa … promoting women and their organizations to have a more active role and to speak louder (…). We believe that women are the future of our continent." Akua Britwum, the fifth convenor of NETRIGHT, in her article "Women Organizing in Ghana" traces Ghanaian women's activism back to pre-independence

nationalist struggles including the trade blockades of 1917 and 1918. Ghanaian women also contributed significantly to the success of the Council People's Party in National elections, although such political actions were not directed specifically towards women's rights and gender equality concerns. The Ghana Women's League and the Ghana Federation of Women merged to form the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW). Because of its close alignment with the CPP, it was disbanded by the military junta in 1966 from when women's groups were mainly charity oriented hardly questioning women's social status. It was not until the early 1980s that broad-based women's organizations emerged, namely, the Ghanaian Women and the 31st of December Women's Movement (DWM). The DWM suffered its demise when the regime within which it was embedded the Provisional National Defense Council first and the National Defense Council came to an end in 2000. The NETRIGHT has played a vital role on the landscape of women's rights work recently. They include the women's wing of the main national trade union centre, the Trades Union Congress, Ghana and some of its affiliated unions. It was formed in 1999 after that it was identified the weak impact of isolated civil society actions from where it was decided that a national body bringing together all groups would magnify their influence. Britwum explains that NETRIGHT emphasis was placed on incorporating rights discourse into work on women's equality from the understanding of women's experience of subordination as historical and context-specific while also working towards economic justice for women in national policy-making.

In the same issue of *Feminist Africa*, Fatimah Kelleher, views

> …women's economic empowerment and justice as central to the struggle for gender equality and equity… The inclusion of an economic justice framework is needed to hold accountable and dismantle the institutions perpetuating the deep-rooted structural inequalities impacting women within patriarchal economic spheres. (128-29)

Kelleher cautions against the appropriation of women's economic empowerment by wider global agendas due to current international interest in women's economic empowerment. To prevent that, she advises women to become more vocal on the issues across all areas of engagement.

We have to go back to statistics once more in order to analyse female unemployment rates. According to data revealed by the International World Bank, Mary Chinery Hesse revealed that a 31 % rise in urban unemployment was predicted in 2000 in comparison to the 18% rise in 1990. Unemployment contributed enormously to poverty whose impact was three times higher among youths and it affected women twice as much as men. Chinery-Hesse believes that the movement towards a market-oriented economy is at the same time both a challenge and an opportunity. However, the free market also damages the weakest population sectors. As we have already concluded, in order to secure equality and social justice, there is global assent to carry out measures which increase the capacity of the most vulnerable groups, women, youngsters and the poor (149).

In 2007, according to the United Nations Development Programme, Ghana's gender inequality's index was 0.5472. Progress has been made in legislation on domestic violence. The ration of female-to-male labour force participation was 0.97. The ratio of female-to-male wage equality for similar work was 0.69, according to a survey. The advancement of women to

leadership roles score is 0.63. The maternal mortality ratio is 319, with 70.8% of birth rates having been attended by skilled health personnel. According to the World Bank, adolescent fertility rate is 66.1 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19.

We have already analysed the economic, social and political consequences of the decolonizing process in the female population. We will be now dealing with those cultural aspects which have characterized it, besides the influence of matriarchal societies against Western patriarchy.

It is believed, as we have seen in Coquery-Vidrovitch's analysis that the future development of marginal people is in education. If education is important to any social group, for women in Africa it becomes the main propellant for changes in their situation. In pre-colonial times, young women were educated by their mothers and female relatives, so critics wonder what changes colonization brought about.

As Boyce Davies has stated in *"Feminist consciousness and Africa Literary Criticism"*, education was only kept for the bourgeoisie that in spite of a socialist government in Ghana; the percentage hardly rose in the years after independence. It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that the education of young women was taken seriously. There had been underlying factors of little significance such as the unchanged educative levels, level of development, per capita income, religion and even ideology. However, significant factors are the level of urbanization, traditional value given to rural women work, colonial history as well as single-sex schools. Discrimination is more outstanding in working women's animist traditions mixed with a francophone catholic colonial legacy. Protestant tradition was apparently less hostile to girls' education. It is also necessary to pay attention to a Eurocentric belief which would connect education to women's education.

With regards to sexuality and gender, we have to mention Silvia Tamale, a Ugandan academic and human rights activist who has also researched and theorized sexualities in Africa. For her, sexuality and gender go together as a product of culture and society both playing a crucial role in maintaining power relations in every society. The subject of sexualities comes together with silence, taboos and privacies. What's more, in Africa many acts associated with sexualities are criminalized or stigmatized. Tamale argues that language has been a determinant factor for knowledge production on African sexualities as Foucault stated, knowledge and power are produced through language and narratives. During imperial expansion and colonization, the construction of African sexualities followed an ethnocentric and racist pattern. As Tamale argues "the instrumentalization of sexuality through the nib of statutory, customary and religious law is closely related to women's oppression and gender constructions. The colonial legacies of African sexualities linger today, seen in contemporary accounts and theories…" (24).

Sexuality research began as an issue of public health in Africa. In colonial times, the focuses of public health were disease, pregnancy prevention and limiting sexual excesses. In the decades of 1960 and 1970, as Tamale explains, demographers in the North raised panic on a population explosion. The HIV/AIDS pandemic brought about a re-medicalization of African sexualities leaving research on HIV/AIDS as a product of the commodification of sexual health. As reproduction was the role given to women in patriarchal societies, the objective to modernize Africa passed over reducing fertility rates, which caused a link between overpopulation and underdevelopment. In the 1990s, development partners directed significant funds to research centers and institutes suggesting population control (27).

According to Tamale, there is important research on sexual citizenship and identity politics where tradition, religion and the law overlap. She states that "most of what is

understood as culture in contemporary Africa is largely a product of constructions and reinterpretations by former colonial authorities in collaboration with African male patriarchs. The tendency is to commence from the premise that views culture as being hostile to women, an antithesis to their rights" (31).

Sexual rights became part of human rights after the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994. From then onwards, the concern on women's sexualities developed Tamale states. In 2003, the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town, in collaboration with the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, organized a pan-African workshop on mapping African sexualities to understand the link between women's sexualities and their subordinate status in society. Feminist institutions, networks and scholars in Africa researched sexuality in new ways. For instance, the South Africa Feminist journal, *Agenda* published a special issue[35], and the pan-African network AMANITARE (African Partnership for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of women and Girls) was founded to support research and publication within Social Rights Network, The African Women's Development Fund. There was a need to analyse sexuality away from biomedical and public health frameworks. The anthology edited by Signe Anfred in 2004, *Rethinking Sexualities in Africa,* was relevant to challenge Eurocentric approaches to the issue. Women's Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML) is an important network which works for women's human rights too, as well as the Nigerian women's rights organization BAOBAB. Their aim has been to create knowledge to "facilitate innovative and transformative social change" (39).

Tamale argues that

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[35] Volume 17, 2002-3.

> …the close link between what is termed a universal human rights corpus and Western liberal democracy has diminished voices other than those of the West, and differing concepts of sexualities have remained largely buried in the cultural practices of various non-western communities. The concept of sexual rights, for instance, is not alien to many African and Islamic communities. Take the example of a wife in many pre-colonial African cultures who was (and still is) guaranteed the right to sexual pleasure; or the fact that sexual violence within marriage was frowned upon; or that denial of such formal rights constituted a clear ground for divorce in these traditions. (38)

We can see an example of this in Attah's *The Hundred Wells of Salaga.* Tamale agrees with Bibi Bakare Yusuf who prevents researchers from completely ignoring Western views on sexuality as we cannot disregard Africa contribution to "European cultural and intellectual history and vice-versa" (Yusuf qtd. in Tamale, 40). She also finds it useful in analysing sexualities in Africa Western frames of knowledge such as, Michel Foucault's conceptualization of sexuality in terms of power relations, Judith Butler[36]'s implicit theory of heteronormativity and Gayle Rubin[37]'s concept of sexual hierarchy. Besides the hierarchical constructions of sexuality Africa and the West "are linked by the force of gender to labor, authority and performance against the backdrop of capitalism and patriarchy" (Tamale, 41). However, as Tamale declares, there are ideologies and practices unique to Africans such as aspects of cultural ideology, namely, community, solidarity and the ethos of Ubuntu or humaneness, and the legacies of colonialism, capitalism, imperialism and globalization inscribed in cultures.

For Tamale, there are also relevant aspects when theorizing women's sexualities, such as the machinations of Africa's 'structurally adjusted' economies and the attendant

[36] *Gender Trouble Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
[37] "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex" in Rayna R. Reiter (ed.) *Toward Anthropology of Women*. Monthly Review Press.

'feminization of poverty' when analysing women's involvement in commercial sex work and the heightened prevalence of HIV/AIDS. It is also necessary to make the philosophical link between institutionalized and state-inspired homophobia and Africa's autocratic and dictatorial regimes" (42).

In 2003 Lynn Thomas[38] published analysing the link between women's reproductive capacities and patriarchal state interests in Kenia which showed how women's bodies constitute an important site of political struggle in Africa and their connections to the political economies of the state. So, as the concepts of sexuality and gender denote both power and dominance, Tamale suggests talking about gendered sexualities and/or sexualized genders which allows for the analyses of the intersections of the ideological and historical systems that underpin each concept, an important factor in knowledge production. (47)

In *Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa*, Signe Arnfred edited a series of essays in 2004 where the reflection on African sexualities dealt with women's agency and pleasure:

> The time has come for re-thinking sexualities in Africa: The thinking beyond the conceptual structure of colonial and even post-colonial European imaginations, which have oscillated between notions of the exotic, the noble and the depraved savage, consistently however constructing Africans and African sexuality as something 'other'. This 'other' thing is constructed to be not only different from European/Western sexualities and self, but also functions to co-construct that which is European/Western as modern, rational and civilized. (7)

According to Hendricks and Spronk, this scholarly literature on African sexual realities and erotic worlds has, to a certain extent, managed to untie itself from the HIV, health and development framework from which it sprang. There are many reasons for the explosion and

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[38] *Politics of the Womb. Women, Reproduction and the State in Kenya.* University of California Press.

diversification of sexuality studies[39] in Africa. Hendricks and Spronk contend that sexual landscapes are profoundly changing due to economic hardships and religious programmes which transform gender relations. Besides, the sexual and reproductive rights discourse, together with "its underlying premise of the self as a rights-bearing individual is being appropriated and transformed by many actors in different settings and with different results". (28) Whereas most feminists have been focusing, instead, on gender, female agency, matrifocal cultural logics and harmful traditional practices, rather than on sex, many are now, taking into account issues of sexuality in ways that are meaningful for African women themselves. (28) As the study suggests, sexuality can be taken as the effect of a set of intersecting medical, psychological, pedagogical, and moral discourses. In Foucault's sense[40] sexuality produces subjects for whom 'sexuality' constitutes the essential core of their inner self. "For these reasons, sexuality is a peculiarly sensitive conductor of cultural ideologies, social influences and political divisions" (Hendricks and Spronk, 29).

Sylvia Tamale argues that we should "speak of sexualities in the plural in recognition of the complex structures within which sexuality is constructed and in recognition of its pluralistic articulations" (2). Based on social anthropologist Henrietta Moore[41], Hendricks agrees on a rethinking of the nature of the sexual subject in order to resituate it within regimes of power and affect that the term sexuality does not necessarily capture. Such a re-conceptualization, he contends, "involve[s] not only a break with the analytic category of sexuality and the pre-theoretical commitments in which it is founded, but a radical rethinking

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[39] For example, those included in Ampofo, Akosua Adomako, Josephine Beoku-Betts, Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi and Mary Osirim . "Women's and Gender Studies in English-Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Research in the Social Sciences." *Gender & Society* 18, pp. 685-714. 2004.

[40] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I, An Introduction*. New York. Vintage Books. 1978.

[41] *Feminism and Anthropology*. Polity Press, 1998.

of sex as the site of rights, and of sexual identities and categories as the self-evident starting point for policy and programme intervention" (30).

As well as the study of sexuality in Africa, which currently needs a more sustained critique of the concept, Hendricks contends that a similar critical attitude is also needed towards the ethnocentricity of sexuality from an African perspective invariably present in contemporary sexuality studies on the African continent. It needs a parallel critique of Africa from a sexual perspective. Historically speaking, Hendricks argues, the sexualisation and racialization of Africa acted together (30).

As well as the studies done by Tamale, Hendrick and Spronk, whose research projects on gender and sexuality in Africa in the twenty first century are worth mentioning, it is also necessary to social media in Ghana where women can speak openly about issues of sexuality and those related to it.

According to Ngozi Cole, in Ghana young feminists and activists are breaking the silence and long-held cultural beliefs about women's bodies and sexuality in their own way, questioning long-held beliefs around women's bodies and sexuality. By creatively merging theater, dialogue, and activism in Ghana, Drama Queens[42], a nonprofit feminist organization, is challenging patriarchal norms and ideas and changing the damaging narratives about rape culture and sexuality that are deeply entrenched in many African societies. This organization was founded in 2016 by Ghanaian writer and actress Nana Akosua Hanson. Drama Queens uses a number of tools and platforms, including social media, filmmaking, and theater, to educate

[42] Drama Queens seeks to use theater as a means of restoring gender equity and balance to achieve a world state where women would no longer be a group of the oppressed, but would be creative and active agents, playing their key roles in contributing to universal progress. dramaqueensgh.com/.

its audiences about topics relevant to their mission, such as LGBTQ rights, sex and sexuality, rape and consent. They launched #Let'sTalkConsent, a hashtag campaign as well as a series of workshops, held at various high schools and colleges that highlight the importance of consent and awareness about rape in Ghana. Such a campaign illustrates Drama Queens' work to remove deeply embedded cultural norms. In Drama Queens website, Millicent Adjei, Ashesi University's associate director of diversity and international programs at Ashesi University, said that sexual misconduct is a public safety issue, and that it should be dealt with through policies and cultural attitude shifts.

In April 2018, the organization also started the Survivors Anonymous project, an offshoot of #LetsTalkConsent that provides a support group for victims/survivors of sexual abuse to heal and recover from trauma. In addition, Drama Queens conducts other programs that provide safe spaces for open discussions about feminism and sexuality such as a monthly event called SpeakEasy, during which a pan-African or feminist topic is chosen as the focus of conversations that aim to lead the group to a better understanding of it. They acknowledge that there is still much left to be achieved. As Nephety Mac-Okang, communications manager for Drama Queens, declares, "We hope that Drama Queens will establish a movement of young Africans who challenge systems of injustice and are committed to building a more loving and freer world" (dramaqueensgh.com/).

In Ghana, and in many other developing countries, family planning is a matter of life and death, especially for girls and young women, Esenam Amuzu explains. The lack of sex education has caused severe harm to Ghana's youth. Birth control can be a lifeline for young women in particular. The United Nations Population Fund, for example, estimates that increased use of contraceptives in developing countries would reduce annual maternal deaths by 70,000, and infant deaths by 500,000. In Ghana, broadening access to modern contraception is a crucial

starting point for improving the long-term health of children and expectant mothers. Governments should emphasize young people's sexual health by offering comprehensive instruction in reproductive health issues, and also increase partnerships with civil society groups. Esenam Amuzu has helped launch a youth-led initiative called 'My Teen Life'; to give young people a voice in how we talk about sexuality in rural parts of Ghana. Thanks to the generous support of the 'Global Changemakers' initiative in Switzerland, this is now educating parents and guardians on how to talk to their children about sexual health, providing skills training to teenage mothers, and working to break the cycle of poverty and early childbirth reaching more than 100 teenagers and their families. They are empowering young girls they work with to stay in school, and stressing that if they express their sexuality, they must retain control over what happens to their body.

1.3.2. Overview of literature in Ghana.

Taking this frame into account, we will now be dealing with literature written in English in Ghana. We will start with pioneering works in poetry, drama and novels ending with contemporary literature written by women.

1.3.2.1. Pioneer Writers in Vernacular Language.

Jonathan A. Peters in *A History of Twentieth Century African Literature* analyses the production of fiction in West Africa since the traditional lore from the many ethnic groups which have produced folktales which form part of a corpus known as orature as it were the griots or traditional bards, who kept this oral tradition alive. Written literature came much later with Arab and European influences.

The beginning of the twentieth century found the affairs and destinies of African nations largely controlled by Europeans as Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford depicts in Ethiopia

Unbound (1911) with clear Afrocentric aims. This novel shares a common spirit with later works as the one by the Nigerian Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Richard Emmanuel Obeng's *Eighteenpence* (1943) also documented the judiciary and legal systems of the Gold Coast.

In this section we will be dealing with poets, novelists and playwrights who were born before Ghana's independence in 1957. This first generation of writers in English dealt with issues related to the impact of Victorian values in native societies, tradition versus modernism, colonial and generational conflicts, together with ethnicity, politics and religion. Other issues also relevant were the battle of the sexes, the alienation of the child of two worlds, the spread of Christianity, colonialism and its clash with indigenous cultures or village life. They addressed new issues such as those of nationalism, orature versus written world, corruption among African elite of politicians and new born middle classes, as well. These topics continue in the second wave along with new themes, such as polygamy the relationship between the human community and the deities and the individual's role in the community (Peters 28).

During the second wave, marked by the publishing of Wole Soyinka's novel *The Interpreters* (1965), optimism over the end of colonialism soon faded as economic independence lagged behind political independence. Corruption, violence and military coups came hand in hand. There were a large number of writers whose audience and talents were more diversified together with the popular market literature of Onitsha[43] and the popular literature of Ghana. Women writers began publishing works of fiction.

[43] Onitsha Market Literature refers to a number of pamphlets, books and other publications sold at the Onitsha Market in Nigeria in the 1950s and 1960s. Emmanuel Obiechina argues that this African popular literature is "an integral, if unique and startling, part of the West African creative scene" (1).

The Ghanaian Ayi Kwei Armah was the most successful writer at the time. He dealt with issues of corruption and materialism in Ghanaian society in his first novel *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* (1968). In his five novels he analyses ethnicity, and African and world history[44]; *Fragments* (1970), *Why are we so blest*? (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and *The Healers* (1978). For Armah, the disintegration of African society began following the encounter with the Arabs, not with colonialism. Although images of desolation and despair permeate his first three novels, Armah looks to the future for salvation (Peters 31).

Joseph Abruquah, for whom education was the key to prosperity, published *The Catechist* (1965) and *The Torrent* (1968). The young Christina Ama Ata Aidoo published the play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* in 1965 about the adjustment of a son lately returned from a stay in the USA. Her first novel, *Our Sister Killjoy*, was written in 1966 and published in 1977. Aidoo together with the Nigerians Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta viewed from a feminine, and sometimes a feminist, perspective society in English-speaking West Africa. The Ghanaian poet Kofi Awoonor published his novel *This Earth my Brother* in 1971, combining the mythic with the realistic and projecting African history through and individual consciousness (Peters 33).

The writers of the Third Wave are younger people mainly attempting to reach a far wider African audience. The problems faced by West Africa are the same as the rest of the continent, far more complex than politicians, bureaucrats, artist and the average individual had contemplated. They seek to entertain, to edify and instruct, as well as to forge a common cause with common people. Being more concerned with neocolonialism, European and American publishing houses began publishing their African Series (Heinemann, Oxford, Longman, or

[44] Ayesha Harruna Attah is highly influenced by Armah's novels, as we will see further on.

Three Continents Press to name but a few), together with Ghana Publishing Company indicating the important function played by local publishers in providing access to new writers. This was the case of Amu Djoleto's novels *The Strange Man* (1967) and *Money Galore* (1975); J. S. Kwarteng' s *My Sword is my Life* (1973), E.Y. Egblewogbe's *The Wizard's Pride and Other Poems* (1974), Kofi Aidoo's *Saworbeng: A Collection of Short Stories*, 1977 and the science fiction of J.O. Eshun, *The Adventures of Kapapi* (Peters 37).

We agree with Peters in the necessity of including constructive criticism since "it helps engender a budding literature, and indeed, the role of the creative writer and critic are complementary and mutually reinforcing" (40). Worth mentioning are periodicals on African literature and society like *Black Orpheus, Transition, African Literature today, Research in African Literatures* and *Okike*. From this period the old concerns about themes and language together with a nationalist fervor makes the cultivation on literatures written in indigenous languages part of the new nationalism, thus emerging the notion of ethnic literature. The bolekaja critics, Jemie Chinweizu and Ihechukbu Mabdubuike, in the 1980s criticized writers like Soyinka who wrote in English (Owomoyela 365).

When tracing poetry in West Africa, we need to mention Ghanaian poets born between 1926 and 1936. Kwesi Brew published *The Shadows of Laughter* in 1968 and *Panorama* in 1981. Kofi Awoonor, Ghana's most important poet at the time published *Rediscovery* in 1964, *Night of my Blood* in 1970, *Ride Me, Memory* in 1973, *The House by the Sea* 1978, and *Until the Morning After* in1987. In those poems he develops his own richly textured version of the historical myth. He is resolutely a poet of hope. Significant poetry was also written by Ayitey Komey and Frank Kobina Parkes. These poets share, according to Thomas Knipp, similar educational and political experiences. They worked their way back to their own indigenous oral poetry. The next generation, the so-called 'disillusioned generation' (1970s -1980s), understood

the present as a betrayal of the past and of the political leaders and intellectuals of previous generation. Kofi Anyidoho's *A Harvest of Our Dreams* (1984) also stood out together with Atukwei Okai and Kobina Eyi Acquah (Owomoyela 105).

As far as drama and theatre are concerned, we have to mention the 'Experimental Players', a group created by Efua Sutherland. Ismael Jonhson pioneered, according to J. NDukaku Amankulor, a "popular tradition of theatre, the concert party[45], a new form of dramatic entertainment which drew upon indigenous as well as foreign influences" (qtd. in Owomoyela, 145). In the 1960s, Kobina Senyi's *The Blinkards* and J.B. Danquah's *The Third Woman*, dealt with social responsibility and the cultural image of the African having acquired European civilization. In the BBC 'African Theatre series' Ghanaian playwrights, Joe de Graft and Ama Ata Aidoo appeared. Following Amankulor, "the themes of the plays written from the late 1950s through the 1980s range [from] social relationships and institutional changes affecting marriage and family life, ethnic taboos, prejudices, chauvinism, and social responsibility, … corruption among the ruling classes, … even conflicts among the new religions and their corruptive influences" (qtd. in Owomoyela 150).

Since the early 1960s Efua Sutherland has worked toward the founding of a national theatre and dramatic culture in Ghana with her most important plays, *The Marriage of Anansewa, Foriwa* and *Edufa.* She succeeded in converting the traditional African folktale convention into a contemporary dramatic form. Joe de Graft's plays *Sons and Daughters* (1964) and *Through*

[45] Ghanaian concert parties are professional groups of itinerant artists who stage vernacular shows for the rural and urban audiences that combine slapstick musical comedies, folk stories, acrobatics, moral sermons, magical displays and dance-music sessions….besides drawing on the indigenous and imported, old and new, they have accreted to themselves local highlife music and dance, sign painting, … comic literature and the film/video format. … Since the 1960's the concert party and its associated guitar band has been one of Ghana's important most influences on and avenues for contemporary popular performers" (Collins 85).

a Film Darkly (1970) also had a great impact. Other major playwrights were Kwesi Kay and Kofi Awoonor. Worth mentioning are Mohammed Ben-Abdallah's plays, *The Slaves, The Fall of Kumbi and The Alien King,* and Asiedu Yirenkyi, who in the early 1960s, became involved in the Ghana Drama Studio founded by Sutherland. His plays were *Kivuli and other plays* (1980), *Dasebre: a play on African rituals and games* (1990), and *Two Plays: Dasebre and The Red Ants* (2003) (Owomoyela 153).

In the 1960s, a Conference of African writers in English was held in Makerere (Uganda). It dealt with the question of writing in indigenous languages or not coinciding with the process of independence of most African colonies. The questions raised and debated were about African literature corpus, if literature written by Africans was that which depicts African experience, and if African literature should be written in African languages.

Even today, the question of writing in indigenous languages in Africa is a controversial issue. Just recently however, Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ states efforts have been made "to subvert the hegemony of the English metaphysical empire" (Mwesigire 1). In 2015 Cassava Republic, a Nigerian publishing house published a multi-lingual digital short story anthology through its Ankara Press imprint. Each of the stories in the anthology was translated to African languages. Overall, the anthology has Kpelle, Hausa (one of the government-sponsored ethnic languages in Ghana), Kiswahili, Pidgin, Yoruba, and Igbo alongside French and English (Owomoyela 355).

More recently, in October 2019, five African organizations related to writing and publishing, including leading Nigerian publisher Cassava Republic Press, were awarded a $20,000 grant each by the African Publishing Innovation Fund. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, co-founder and publishing director of Cassava Republic Press, said to *Brittle Paper* that she had "been

nursing the idea of a publishing imprint devoted to African languages forever. The idea became even more urgent after reading Mukoma wa Ngugi's *The Rise of the African Novel."*

1.3.2.2. Contemporary Ghanaian writers in English.

According to the Gird Centre[46], a Writing, Editorial, and Training Services Company based in Accra to support writing and writers, these are some of the most outstanding contemporary Ghanaian writers living and writing in Ghana nowadays. Martin Egblewogble is one of the finest of Ghana's new generation of writers and he is the author of a collection of short stories, *Mr. Happy and The Hammer of God*. Franka Maria Andoh, whose short story "Mansa**"** was published in the Caine Prize for African Writing 2009 edition, like former Ghanaian writers, Efua Sutherland and Ama Ata Aidoo, has also published children's stories *Koku the Cockerel* and *Dokono the Donkey* in 2011. Franka's collection of short stories, *I Have* Time *and Other Stories* was published 2014. She is also the founder and Editor in Chief of an annual magazine for women entrepreneurs called AWE. Mawuli Adjei is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English, University of Ghana, Legon, where he teaches African Literature, Creative Writing, and other courses. He has published the novels *The Jewel of Kabibi, The Witch of Lagbati, Taboo* and the poetry collection *Testament of the Seasons*. Nana Nyarko Boateng is a writer, a poet and an editor. Her short story "Small Poles" appeared in *Summoning the Rain***,** a Femrite[47] Anthology. Her short story "Swallowing Ice" was published in the 2015 Caine prize for African Writing anthology, *Lukaska Punk*. She has a unique ability to discomfort the reader in the realities she unveils in fiction. Nana Awere Damoah (1975) is an author, poet and non-fiction writer worth mentioning. Among his written production he includes, *Nsempiisms* (2016), *Sebitically Speaking* (2015), *I Speak of Ghana* (2013), *Through*

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[46] girdblog.com/2016/09/09/ten-contemporary-ghanaian-fiction-writers-you-should-have-read-by-now/. Accessed 10th February 2019.

[47] Uganda Women Writers' Association. An NGO based in Kampala, Uganda.

the Gates of Thought (2010), *Excursions in my Mind* (2008) and a collection of short stories: *Tales from Different Tails*.

1.3.2.3. Women Writers in Ghana.

1.3.2.3.1. Forerunners.

We would like to mention the forerunners of the Ghanaian writer who occupies our study, Ayesha Harruna Attah. For that purpose, we will start with Mabel Dove Danquah who was born in Gold Coast in 1910, married to the diplomat J. B. Danquah. They both travelled to Europe and the USA and worked for independence as well as the role of women in the Gold Coast. She served in parliament and under the pseudonym Marjorie Mensah contributed to the West African Times. She started writing short stories in the 1930s in which there was a strong awareness of the complexities of gender discourse. The publication of her stories between 1930 and 1960 "The Happenings of a Night", "Anticipation", "The Torn Veil", "Payment", "The Invisible Scar" and "Evidence of Passion" contradict those conjectures that African women writers started writing in the 1960s.

The next outstanding writer is Adelaide Casely-Hayford who despite the fact that she was born in Sierra Leone in 1868, is worth mentioning in this context. She was born to British and Fanti parents which makes her one of the leading voices of the half-cast elite in her country. She looked for unity and the recognition of traditional African values and culture. She was married to the Ghanaian lawyer J. Casely- Hayford who wrote *Ethiopia Unbound.* They both work to get Africans ready to face political freedom with responsibility, education and pride on their own values.

1.3.2.3.2. Post- Independence: Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo and Ama Darko.

We are compelled to start with Efua Theodora Morgue Sutherland who was born in 1924 and who is well known for her dramatic production. She worked for Ghana's

independence and also wrote works for children as well as short stories. We have already mentioned her role in the Theatre Studio which helped President Nkrumah to spread Panafricanist ideas. The themes in her works do not deal with the cultural clash between African and European values, the anticolonial protest, or alienation or adaptation problems. According to Lloyd Brown in "The African Woman as Writer", Sutherland is sceptical about the idealized images of women as they ignore certain realities of her position. Such scepticism goes deep to reach a tragic sense of some women treated as victims. Gilbert and other authors state that this treatment of women positions both the native men and the colonizers under the same gaze towards women, "with their bodies anatomised by the imperial gaze, the women as positioned as merchandise and are thus denied all sense of subjectivity" (216).

One of the most influential African writers in the twentieth century is Ama Ata Aidoo who was born in Abeadzi Kyiakor (Ghana) in 1940, then the Gold Coast. She is a writer committed to her country and to the African woman as she shows in her wide literary production. She projects the role of women in Ghanaian society whose identity in the intersection of gender and class reflects her Africanity and her womanhood. She also deals with the constraints of motherhood, poverty, gender inequality, polygamy, and marriage. Aidoo deepens in issues relevant to women in society as one's personal fulfillment versus her role in her community, as well as questions of reproduction and women's health. The women portrayed by Aidoo are strong and confident, most of the time facing an internal struggle between tradition and modernity. Ama Ata Aidoo published her first plays, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa* in 1965. In 1970, she published her first collection of short stories *No Sweetness Here*. Her first novel, *Our Sister Killjoy- or Reflections from a Black- eyed Squint* was published in 1977. She also wrote poetry collected as *Someone Talking to Sometime* (1985), *Birds and Other Poems* (1987), and *An Angry Letter in January* (1992), besides stories for

children *The Eagle and the Chicken* (1986). Later, she wrote the novel *Changes: A Love story* (1991), two more short stories collections *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and *Diplomatic Pounds and Other Stories* (2012), and she is the editor of *African Love stories: An Anthology* (2006).

Ama Darko was born in Tamale, Ghana in 1956. She studied at the University of Science and Technology of Kumasi where she graduated in 1980. She spent several years in Germany where she had to do housework for a living. She went back to Ghana in 1987. Her novels were *The Housemaid* (1998) *and Beyond the Horizon* (1995), which was first published in German *Der Verkaufte Traum* in 1991. They deal with the role of women in Ghana after independence where corruption, polygamy, prostitution and the big men, as well as motherhood are central issues. Her later novels are *Faceless* (2003), *Not without flowers (2007),* and *Between Two Worlds* (2015).

1.3.2.3.3. Contemporary Ghanaian women writers.

Women's literary scene in the twenty first century in Ghana is multifarious. Together with the poet Nana Nyarko Boateng, we have to mention Elisabeth Sutherland, playwright Efua Sutherland's granddaughter. She co-founded the Accra Theatre Workshop in 2013 along with director Emelia Pinamang Asiedu. Besides, she wrote "Ananse's Wife, Kwaku's Daughter", a performance and digital installation that is based on Ghanaian folklore. It looks at the Ghanaian folk tales of Kweaku Anansi, who often takes the shape of a spider and whose wife is always on the sidelines. "So, it is looking at these mythological tales from the wife's point of view, putting her at the center," said ANO[48] founder Nana Oforiatta-Ayim.

[48] ANO (*From ɛno (grandmother) in Akan, in which Abrewa, the old woman, is the first human being and origin of all things*) a non-profit organization founded in 2002 by Cultural Historian Nana Oforiatta Ayim, to uncover and create new cultural narratives of the African continent.

Elisabeth Sutherland and Emelia Pinamong Asiedu at the Accra Theatre Workshop interpreted a collection of short plays called "An African Walks into a Psychiatrist's Office" (2013); "An African Walks into an echo chamber", short pieces written by Ghanaians, which are stitched together in a theatre production to explore the theme of communication and life in the age of social media.

Nana Akosua Hanson runs Drama Queens, **"**a nonprofit theatre organization that seeks to tell the varying stories of the modern woman, particularly black women on the continent and in the diaspora through edgy, modern plays. A form of political theatre, … seeks to challenge the status quo, … and empower women by engendering a richer conversation around women's lives, their roles in society and in world progress" (dramaqueensgh.com/).

Although they belong to the African diaspora of contemporary women writers, due to the relevance of Ghana in their novels, we feel compelled to mention both Taye Selasi and Yaa Gyasi. Taiye Selasi, the author of *Ghana Must Go* (2013), was born in London in 1979. She is from Ghanaian-Nigerian descent and thinks of herself as 'Afropolitan', a term she coined to describe "the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you… We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world" ("Bye-bye Babar" paragraph 3). She also published "The Sex Lives of African Girls" in Granta UK literary magazine in 2011. It also appeared in *Best American Short Stories 2012*.

Yaa Gyasi was born in Mampong, Ghana in 1989 but she later moved to the USA where she graduated at Stanford University. Yaa Gyasi's debut novel *Homegoing* was longlisted for the $25,000 PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize for Debut Fiction, awarded "to an author whose debut work—a first novel or collection of short stories published in 2016—represents distinguished literary achievement and suggests great promise" (qtd. in *Brittle Paper*). She was also awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award for her debut novel and *Homegoing* became Honoree, '5 under 35' National Book Foundation and American Book Award in 2016. She has published short stories in *African American Review* and *Callaloo*. Brittle Paper informed in September 2019 that Gyasi's new novel will be released in July 2020 by Alfred A. Knopf. It will be entitled *Transcendent Kingdom*, and tells the story of a small Ghanaian family in Alabama.

In October, The Miles Morland Foundation announced the shortlist for the 2019 Morland Writing Scholarships. Among the shortlisted authors the Ghanaian Elinan Agbo and Cheryl Ntumy are included. Cheryl Ntumy was born in Ghana but she grew up in Botswana. She studied in South Africa for ten years and now works as a freelance journalist and writer in Botswana. She also writes short stories and plays. Her first novel, *Crossing*, was published in Botswana in 2010. The novel won first prize in the Bessie Head Literature Awards (2009). Elinam Agbo was born in Agona Swedru in Ghana and grew up in Kansas, the USA. She holds a BA from the University of Chicago and an MFA from the Univeristy of Michigan's Helen Zell Writers' Program. She won the 2018 PEN/Dau Short Story Award for Emerging Writers. She receiced the honorable mention prize for fiction in the 2019 Hurston/Wright Award for College Writers and she is currently working on a novel. She has also published reviews in *Sojourners Magazine* and *MQR Online*. Canadian author of Ghanaian heritage, Esi Edugyan has also been longlisted for the 2020 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Awards for

Washington Black, as it is featured in *Brittle Paper* in November 2019. Edugyan is an author who, as well as Ayesha Harruna Attah, is interested in her family lineage. As she declares in an interview to *The Guardian* reported by Geeta Dayal, "There is always that part of you that needs to know where you came from and needs to have a fuller sense of your history. My parents were immigrants and we lived in a bubble ... we ended up making a big trip back to Ghana in 2007. I had never been before. … I felt this sense of familiarity and deep fulfilment. And I didn't know that I needed that."

Taking this literary context into account, we will now deal with the author chosen for our study.

1.3.2.3.4. Ayesha Harruna Attah.

According to her biography on her website, Ayesha Harruna Attah was born in Accra, Ghana's capital city in the 1983 under a military dictatorship. She studied Biochemistry at Columbia University (USA). She wrote and published her first novel, *Harmattan Rain (HR)*, with a fellowship from Per Ankh Publishers and Trust Africa. *Harmattan Rain* was shortlisted for the 2010 Commonwealth Writers' Prize, Africa Region. Ayesha was educated at Mount Holyoke College and Columbia University and received a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from New York University in 2011.*Saturday's Shadows* was published in 2015 and it was shortlisted for the Kwani Manuscript Project in 2013. It was published in English and Dutch. She won the Miles Morland Scholarship 2016 for her nonfiction proposal, *Kola! From Caravans to Coca Cola,* where she would outline the history of the kola nut from its West African origins. Her last novel *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* was published in 2018. Apart from these novels, she has also written non-fiction, articles and essays published in several magazines such as *New York Magazine, Imagine Africa, African Magazine, Asymptote Magazine Accra Daily Mail, 801 Magazine and Yachting Magazine.* She has also written short stories and she

has had "Ekow" published in the *Caine Prize Writers' Anthology* 2010 *Work in Progress and Other Stories* also included in the Spanish anthology *Ellas también cuentan.* Apart from this last short story, none of her works have been translated into Spanish.

After having done research on the life and works of some Ghanaian women writers in our Master thesis, namely, Mabel Dove Danquah, Adelaide Casely-Hayford, Efua Sutherland and Ama Darko, we kept on working on the literary works by Ama Ata Aidoo. It was when we were working on her last collection of short stories, *Diplomatic Pounds and Other Stories* that we came across the young Ghanaian writer Ayesha Harruna Attah. After reading her first novel, *Harmattan Rain,* we realized it was like a catalyst of the Ghana we have learnt about when working on the precursors, Ghanaian women who had helped build the country as we know it nowadays. She showed resilient women who decided not to comply with the rules of their times, with the role assigned, who opposed resistance to parents, customs and rulers who wanted to subjugate them; women who worked together with men to build a country after independence. They are women who tell their stories in order to heal after a trauma caused by systemic violence in a country with long periods of social unrest. The way Attah tackled these issues inspired by historical novel and journalism in her two last novels, as well, together with the recovery of lost memory of inner slavery in Africa contend that they are worth studying.

In *Harmattan Rain (HR),* she tells the life of three generations of women in the same family alongside the history of Ghana from 1957 up to 1990s. The lives of these women run parallel to Ghana's history. Lizzie's enthusiastic point of view about Ghana's independence, together with the role played by Nkrumah and his praise to the work done by women to achieve independence from British rule, is the spirit which underlies the novel.

The story begins a few years before Ghana's independence when Lizzie Achiia's lover disappears from her village. Tired of being beaten by her father who wants her to get married to any wealthy old man to save his farm, she runs away in search of him.

In the succession of violent coup d'états, Akua Afriyie's story develops. It is Lizzie's daughter who in secondary school gets pregnant by a married man who abandons her. She decides to give birth to Sugri who is brought up over protected. It is not until she moves to New York to study at university that she learns to manage her freedom. In the end, most secrets concealed throughout the novel are unveiled, those which have determined their lives and their most important decisions in life.

In *Saturday's Shadows*, a former affluent family is nowadays badly treated by an economic crisis after the political transition from dictatorship to democracy. The Avokas are a middle-class family. Theo Avoka is a civil servant under Doctor Saturday's military dictatorship; he has a university degree, as does Zahra his wife. Zahra Avoka, the main character in *Saturday's Shadows*, works for Duell and Co., a company which provides women farmers with training, capital and equipment and help to find markets with a commission of the earnings. She has been suffering from severe migraines, nauseas and blurred vision for a while but it worsens when she is doing her Christmas shopping. They have an adolescent son attending a private school whose fees are causing them troubles. Atsu, the housemaid plays a vital role together with Zahra's mother and Auntie Adisa, a farmer whom Zahra ends up working for. The struggles that Zahra and Atsu undergo in a violent run-down city throughout the novel contrasts with 'paradise', as Zahra describes Auntie Adisa's farm, a cooperative of literate women who have chosen to work the soil while being respectful to nature.

Saturday's Shadows is written as the compilation of the diaries written or thought (since Atsu is illiterate) by the main characters while the readers are driven by the lives, chores and

deeds of these unsophisticated heroes and heroines. The characters' lives are really delimited by the running history of the country, a country in West Africa. Although Ghana is not mentioned, paying attention to the events depicted, one may presume it is.

In the novel *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, Attah places the story in pre-colonial Ghana, where in spite of the legal abolition of slavery, slave commerce was still a thriving business. The story focuses on the period right before the war in Salaga in 1892 until the downfall of Salaga to German forces in 1897. The lives of the characters are affected by the dawn of the scramble for Africa which took place between 1881 and 1914. Attah deals with internal fights for power within African chieftaincies as well as European intervention to take away native power. She also deals with internal slave trade, the role of women in Muslim societies and the encounter of native religions and those brought by the caravan trades from the North, together with the European influence. Wurche is a princess and Aminah is a slave girl and both run different lives until their destinies meet in Salaga. Young Aminah lives peacefully in Botu until she is brutally taken away by a slave's raid. All this experience turns her into a resilient woman. Wurche is the daughter of a chief desperate to take an active part in her father's court. Against her will, she has to get married to please her father's lust for power.

Chapter 2

Methods

2.1. Gender violence and trauma: vulnerable women as subalterns.

Cathy Caruth[49] has defined trauma as "a response to an event 'outside the range of usual human experience'" (3). In medical literature and in Freud's work, trauma is considered a wound inflicted upon the mind "which is not like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that … is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (3-4). Caruth goes on to state that "trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves" (11).

After Caruth's seminal work on trauma, Geoffrey Hartman[50] and Dominick La Capra[51], among others, started questioning its validity, as well as, when applied to postcolonial trauma. Among them, Stef Craps in *Postcolonial Witnessing* managed to reconcile trauma theory with postcolonial studies in a critique of the 'hegemonic trauma discourse' (28) evident in the writings of established trauma theorists and practiced by psychotherapists worldwide.

As Crap states,

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[49] *Unclaimed Experience:Trauma, Narrative and History.*
[50] "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies".
[51] *Writing History, Writing Trauma*.

> … the founding texts of the field … largely fail to live up to this promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement. They fail on at least four counts: they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-western minority traumas. (2)

Crap develops a theory re-situating trauma theory in a postcolonial context adapting it in psychotherapeutic, historical and literary fields. For him, "trauma theory should take account of the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received, and be open and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance which these contexts invite or necessitate" (43).

According to Irene Visser in "Decolonizing Trauma", "postcolonial fiction dramatizes the notion that the trauma of colonialism can and must be addressed" (258). In this essay, Visser goes back to the first attempts to decolonize trauma theory which started with the publication of a special issue of *Studies in the Novel* whose topic was the rapprochement between trauma theory and postcolonial literary studies. There were critics who presented trauma's theorists inconsistencies and contradictions as those cited by Crap. Those are Roger Luckhurst, who published *The Trauma Question* in 2008, and Michael Rothberg who advocated for the developing of tools "in the simultaneously intellectual, ethical and political task of standing against ongoing forms of racial and colonial violence", this he named "decolonizing trauma studies" (251). In a special issue of *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* in 2009, editors and contributors emphasize the importance of a continued postcolonial critique of historical and

political processes[52] as the original sites of trauma for postcolonial communities as opposed to trends in trauma studies that neglect or elide such processes (254).

Visser opens her retrospective overview with the points highlighted by Rothberg as inadequate. She explains that trauma theory is Eurocentric as it is based on an event conception of trauma. Besides, it focuses narrowly on Freudian psychoanalysis and its approach to literary trauma is deconstructionist. Early trauma theory, according to Rothberg, presupposes "the completed past of a singular event – while colonial and postcolonial traumas persist into the present" (Visser, 252). Visser refers to The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V of 2013) of the American Psychiatric Association which made the definition of trauma more inclusive than earlier versions, allowing trauma to occur along a continuum of responses and broadening it to include 'vicarious trauma', such as that incurred by witnesses or other recipients of traumatic events. It also removes the emphasis on individual traumatization. Rothberg's suggestion is to rethink trauma as "collective, spatial, and material (instead of individual, temporal and linguistic)" (Visser, 252).

Stef Craps argues that the social and historic relations have to be taken into account, and that traumatic histories of subordinate groups should be situated against the histories of socially dominant groups (53). Craps' thought takes us back to the aim of the Subaltern Studies group, which is, as Navarro-Tejero claims in "Telling (her)story: An Overview of Subaltern Studies", "to produce historical analyses in which the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of their own history" (87).

As we have said before, Visser contends that much postcolonial scholarship has discarded the Eurocentric, event-based model of original trauma theory in 2015. This redirecting of trauma theory has also moved away from the restrictions of the Freudian

[52] We think about the relevance of slavery in the corpus we are about to analyse.

foundation of classic trauma theory. It is necessary to pay attention, Visser argues, to the trauma of concrete historical factuality: of dispossession, of land loss, and of instances of racial discrimination. For a decolonized trauma theory, the intersection between postcolonial theory and dominant trauma theory has needed to be reconceived to theorize the dynamic of life-affirming and activists processes. Crap posits the critical commitment of postcolonial studies "to make visible the creative and political" (254). Since 2008, Visser continues, postcolonial trauma fiction assigns meaning to themes of recuperation, redress, and resilience. Resilience and growth are possible in the aftermath of traumatic wounding. Crap agrees with Bracke's conclusions about resilience as the product of neoliberalism that we have dealt with previously.

Caruth, in a later study on trauma, *Literature in the Ashes of History* (2013) postulates that trauma calls for a turn to life, "emphasizing its imperative to live" (Visser, 255) shifting her original perspective. In order to adequately understand trauma during and after colonization, Visser considers necessary the resolution of the controversy about the value of narrative, as it has been a crucial concern the debate about early trauma theory's deconstructionist approach to narrative, in particular its aesthetics of the indeterminacy or impossibility of meaning (256).

In her review about the power of narratives, Visser mentions Judith Herman who views narrative as an empowering and effective therapeutic method in the treatment of trauma victims. Narratives of trauma as an "organized, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical content" contribute to healing and recovery (256). Likewise, Susan Y. Najita's *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific* concludes that dominant themes in literary texts are of recovery and redress, often through political activism which oppose the orthodoxy of Caruth's passivist melancholia as well as trauma's theory denial of the value of narrative. While trauma is a disorder that can remain latent for a very long time, even then is not beyond healing once it is brought to light in narrative (257).

Since 2008, Visser concludes, postcolonial scholars have increasingly discarded the approaches of Freudian psychoanalysis and deconstructionism for their work and have expressed preferences for less prescriptive theories, for example from sociology and anthropology. She mentions *The Splintered Glass: Facets of Trauma in the Post-colony and beyond* (2011) where editors Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué argue for a sociological orientation. Sociology and anthropology are capable of providing modes for collective trauma. Also, sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander addresses the "trauma process", that which gives narrative shape and meaning to "harmful or overwhelming phenomena which are believed to have deeply harmed collective identity" (qtd. in Visser 258). This involves the construction and interrogation of the history of colonialism and decolonization through narratives. As Achille Mbembe remarks, "In African self-writing *the colony* is depicted as an original scene which does not merely occupy a space of remembrance, as if reflected in a mirror" but it is also "one of the significant matrices of language, operating on the past and the present, identity and death" (28-9). According to Rothberg, "attentiveness to complicity ("the colonized people have allowed themselves to be duped, seduced, and deceived" (Mbembe, 35)) marks one promising direction for a 'differentiated approach' in a decolonized trauma theory" (Visser, 258).

An area of expansion that is important to understanding the traumatic legacy of the colonial situation, Visser claims, is the complexity of the involvement of complicity, agency and guilt. Those themes are relatively unexplored today whereas postcolonial literature often dramatizes conflicted traumatic memories of individual and collective complicity with hegemonic systems of oppression.

Rothberg in "Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response" highlighted a response to trauma "that asserts the relevance of localized modes of belief, ritual, and understanding, thereby undermining the centrality of Western knowledge and expertise. Cultural and

theoretical paradigms that equate progressiveness and secularism may mask the fact that there is a kind of orientalism still operative" (Visser, 260). Wole Soyinka in *Myth, Literature and the African World* asserted that "the harmonization of human functions, external phenomena and supernatural suppositions within individual consciousness merges as a normal self-adjusting process in the African temper of mind" (122).

Visser claims that a cycle of violence, wounding, and suffering is broken and healed by forgiveness which is not a recognized concept in trauma theory as Julia Kristeva states that forgiveness has not been a psychoanalytical concept. Kristeva's notion of forgiveness "suspends judgement and time" (16). We will see in further chapters the way the writer whose corpus we have chosen to analyse, deals with reconciling differences and healing wounds of the past in her female characters. Forgiveness invites serious conceptualization in postcolonial trauma studies as a factor in the engagement with trauma, including attention to resilience, non-western modes of spiritual counselling and reception of trauma. We will exemplify the way forgiveness in the works of Ayesha Harruna Attah is a key issue when dealing with healing traumas. As well as forgiveness, the relevance of the past to previous generations also concerns Attah. Barbara Arizti Martín refers to Walter Benjamin's appeal to the responsibility of present generations in righting the wrongs of the past. In his essay "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" from 1940 "there is a secret agreement between the past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim" (693-94).

Aritzi-Martín brings about the relation of history and trauma, and the connection of trauma and place. This is a relevant issue in Ayesha Harruna Attah's novel The Hundred Wells of Salaga, as we will see in chapter four. She addresses Joseph Flanagan's claim that the affinity (in an experience of trauma shifted from the personal to the historical and the political) "lies in

the re-enactment of historical trauma within the constitutive processes of subject formation. Individual trauma recalls follows the path of the historical, not the other way around" (qtd. in Aritzi-Martín 202). In relation to the connections of trauma and place, Michelle Balaev's study on literary trauma theory argues that the role of place is "to portray trauma's effect through metaphoric and material means, inserting the traumatic experience of the individual in a larger cultural context" (qtd. in Aritzi-Martín 204).

In Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies, the editors develop the meaning of the concept subaltern which was adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups of society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. He was interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes (215). Gramsci claimed that the history of the subaltern social group is necessarily fragmented and episodic since they are always subject to the activity of ruling groups even when they rebel. Clearly, they have less access to the means by which they may control their own representation, and less access to cultural and social institutions. As we have already advanced, we will deal with Sara Bracke's "subject of subaltern resilience" in the next section.

The Subaltern Studies group of historians adapted the term for South Asian post-colonial studies. The group was formed by Ranajit Guha and it included Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman and Gyan Pandey. It has produced five volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, essays relating to the history, politics, economics and sociology of subalternity as well as the attitudes, ideologies and belief systems- in short, the culture informing that condition (216).

As we have already seen, Gayatri Spivak is critical to the 'subaltern taxonomy' established by the subaltern studies group. She asks 'what taxonomy can fix such a space?' For the 'true' subaltern group, she says, whose identity is difference, there is no unrepresentable

subaltern subject that can know and speak itself. One cannot construct a category of the subaltern that has an effective voice clearly and unproblematically identifiable as such, a voice that does not at the same time occupy many other possible speaking positions (218). Her point is that no act of dissent or resistance occurs on behalf of an essential subaltern subject entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the language and the conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks. Clearly, the authors state, the existence of post-colonial discourse itself is an example of such speaking, and in most cases the dominant language or mode of representation is appropriated so that the marginal voice can be heard (219).

According to Ashcroft et al. Bhabha, Spivak and Jan Mohamed among other critics of colonial discourse have sought to offer ways of dismantling colonialism's signifying system and exposing its operation in the silencing and oppressing of the colonial subject. For Spivak, there is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak. By implication, the silencing of the subaltern woman extends to the whole of the colonial world, and to the silencing and muting of all natives, male and female (*The Empire* 177). Bhabha, unlike Spivak, finds ways by means of which the subaltern has spoken and that properly symptomatic readings of the colonialist text can and do recover a native voice by the use of mimicry, parody, and appropriation (178). [53]

We are going to develop Spivak's subaltern. Spivak in her essay on the subaltern argues against Foucault and Deleuze in "Intellectuals and Power: A conversation between MF and GD", as an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as subject. She agrees with Jacques Derrida in his deconstructionist analysis of the subject and object departing from a critique of current Western efforts to problematize the subject to the question of how the third-

[53] Concepts previously mentioned when we have been dealing with Postcolonial theory.

world subject is represented within Western discourse. Spivak claims that the contribution of these post-structuralist critics is, on the one hand, that the networks of power/desire/interest are so heterogeneous that they cannot be reduced to a coherent narrative; and on the other, that intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society's Other. She is critical with their ignorance of the question of ideology and their own implication in intellectual and economic history. That is the reason why she quotes Marx assertion that "The small peasant proprietors cannot represent themselves: they must be represented", to imply a critique of the subject as *individual* agent and also a critique even of the subjectivity of a *collective* agency (276).

Conversely, she contends, contemporary invocations of 'libidinal economy' and desire as the determining interest, combined with the practical politics of the oppressed (under socialized capital) 'speaking for themselves,' restore the category of the sovereign subject within the theory that seems most to question it (278).

In the Foucault-Deleuze conversation, the issue seems to be that there is no representation, no signifier (the signifier has already been dispatched?). There is, then, no sign-structure operating experience, and; theory is a relay of practice and the oppressed can know and speak for themselves. This reintroduces the constitutive subject on at least two levels: the Subject of desire and power as an irreducible methodological presupposition; and the self-proximate, if not identical, subject of the oppressed. She agrees with Edward Said's

critique of power in Foucault as a captivating and mystifying category that allows him to "obliterate the role of classes, the role of economics, the role of insurgency and rebellion," (280) adding the notion of the surreptitious subject of power and desire marked by the transparency of the intellectual. For Spivak the project to constitute the colonial subject as Other is the

clearest available example of such epistemic violence as well as the disproportional erasing of "the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (280).

Further on, Spivak insists that the colonized subaltern is irretrievably heterogeneous. For the 'true' subaltern group (dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local levels), whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation. With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak? She agrees with Foucault when suggesting that "to make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level addressing oneself to a layer of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognized as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value" (285).

Spivak contends that the notion of the feminine (rather than the subaltern of imperialism) has been used in a similar way within deconstructive imperialism and within certain varieties of feminist criticism. Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced, she states. The question is that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (287). The woman, so, is doubly in shadow as the subject of exploitation who cannot know and speak the text of female exploitation, even if the absurdity of the no representing intellectual making space for her to speak is achieved (291). For Spivak the question of "woman" seems more problematic in this context:

It is not just a question of a *double* displacement, as it is not simply the problem of finding a psychoanalytic allegory that can accommodate the third-world woman with the first. The cautions I have just expressed are valid only if we are speaking of the

> subaltern woman's consciousness-or, more acceptably, subject. The subaltern woman will be as mute as ever. It is not easy to ask the question of the consciousness of the subaltern woman. In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than to listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual *systematically* "unlearns" female privilege. (295)

Spivak concludes that between patriarchy[54] and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, into a violent alternation which is the displaced figuration of the "third-world woman" caught between tradition and modernization. These considerations would revise every detail of judgments that seem valid for a history of sexuality in the West (306).

Veena Das in her discussion on Subaltern Studies agrees with Spivak in that to deny that "we write as people whose consciousness has been formed as colonial subjects, is to deny our history" (310). However, Das claims that their consciousness as colonial subjects is itself modified by their own experience and by the relation they establish to their intellectual traditions. We agree with Das in the case of African writers in the twentieth century and the heroines they portray. We will see that Ayesha Harruna Attah's characters 'consciousness is not that of a colonial subject but a subject of subaltern resilience.

2.2. Power and resilience.

In this section we contend to analyse Michel Foucault's development of the concept of power which leads him to the concepts of biohistory and biopolitics in relation to sovereignty and its implications to the body. Slavoj Žižek's analysis of violence connects with the concept of power and the way this is exercised by the state on subjects' bodies. Who those subjects are, and how

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[54] We would add the control exercised by religion, as well.

those subjects are constituted will lead us to the question of both, the gendered subaltern body subject to violence and her healing after trauma. We will be dealing with Judith Butler's study on precarity, an induced human condition derived from the exercise of power on vulnerable subjects, to end with Sara Bracke's analysis of resilience which concludes that this condition is again a direct consequence of state control. As Foucault claimed in *Dits et Écrits*, society's control over its members it is not only exerted by means of consciousness or ideology, but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist societies, the biopolitical is what matters above all, the biological, the somatic, and the corporeal. The body is a biopolitical entity, medicine is a biopolitical strategy. The way power is exerted in postcolonial societies, is by depriving citizens of their rights in a violent way, which makes these subaltern subjects employ those strategies of resistance in which they become agents of their own stories.

Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze believe that there is a demand for scholarly theories that illuminate the relations between life and politics, so they include the following authors in their collection. Foucault's first analysis of 'biopolitics' appeared in "Right of Death and Power over Life" which belongs to his 1976 book, *La volonté de savoir* which first appeared in English as Part III of *The History of Sexuality (*implications of Foucault concept of power for Freudianism and Marxism*).* Feminist readings of Foucault's biopolitics, especially Donna Haraway's 1989 essay on postmodern bodies, were relevant to place biopolitics as a central category in postmodernity. Paul Gilroy and Étienne Balibar among others adopted the term in the 1990s as a conclusive perspective for studies of the politics of race. It was not until 1998, with the English translation of Giorgio Agambem's provocative rereading of Foucault's "Right of Death and Power over Life" in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* the editors claim that Foucault's text on biopolitics was reactivated in its current form (4). Other scholars, however, have tended to denounce the emerging discourse on biopolitics for its neglect of

historical and cultural contextualization, for its monolithic, reductive, and homogenizing claims, and for its embrace of a theological lexicon that seems to be mystifying and vague, if not also politically regressive (5).

In “The Subject and Power”, Michel Foucault’s objective “has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in or culture, human beings are made subjects” (777). He deals with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects, namely, the modes of inquiry which consider themselves sciences; the objectivizing of the subject in ‘dividing practices’, for instance the sick and the healthy, and, the way a human being turns him/herself into a subject in the domain of sexuality. Foucault analyses the links between rationalization and power. He suggests the study of resistance and the attempts made to dissociate power relations to investigate what those relations are about. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. For ‘subject’ he understands both, subject to someone else by control and dependence, and, tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.

Foucault also differentiates among three kinds of social struggles, one against forms of domination (ethnic, social and religious), a second one against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce, and the last one against that which ties the individual to him and submits him to others in this way. Foucault states that nowadays, the struggle against the forms of subjection against the submission of subjectivity is becoming more and more important although the struggles against forms of domination and exploitation have not disappeared. The state’s power is both an individualizing and a totalizing form of power, according to Foucault (780). He calls it the ‘pastoral power’, which derives from the state and Christian institutions which promise salvation, a salvation currently synonym to health and well-being.

He recovers Kant's question about 'what we are', as he understands it in a very precise moment in history and which can also be recalled nowadays as an analysis of both us and our present. The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our day is to liberate us from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. There are mechanisms or structures of power as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others (785).

Foucault also makes it necessary to distinguish power relations from relationships of communication which transmit information by means of language, a system of signs or any other symbolic medium. The three types of relations that Foucault distinguishes, relations, relationships of communication, and objective capacities, turn into disciplines as an increasing better invigilated process of adjustment has been sought out after- more and more rational and economic- between productive activities, resources of communication and the play of power relations (788).

He goes on to assert that the exercise of power is a way in which certain actions modify others. The relationship of power is not by nature the manifestation of a consensus but a mode of action which acts upon the actions of others. Further on, Foucault links the 'government' to 'conduct' in its two meanings, "to lead others and [as] a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities" (789). Power relations are rooted deep in the system of social networks. The exercise of power is elaborated, transformed, organized; it endows itself with processes which are more or less adjusted to the situation.

In contemporary societies the state is not simply one of the forms or specific situations of the exercise of power, even if it is the most important, but that in a certain way all other forms of power relation must refer to it. Power relations have been progressively governmentalized, that is, elaborated, rationalized and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions (790).

Once Foucault defines strategy, he establishes the relations of power and relations of strategy. For Foucault, between a relationship of power and strategy of struggle, there is a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal. The relationship between adversaries in society may, at every moment give place to the putting into operation of mechanisms of power. The consequence of this instability is the ability to decipher the same events and the same transformations either from inside the history of struggle or from the standpoint of the power relationships. Foucault contends that the interpretations which result will not consist of the same elements of meaning or the same links or the same types of intelligibility, although they refer to the same historical fabric and each of the two analyses must have reference to the other. In fact, it is precisely the disparities between the two readings which make visible those fundamental phenomena of "domination" which are present in a large number of human societies (791). This is clearly the point in postcolonial societies, most importantly in relation to gendered struggles.

Foucault claims that domination is a general structure of power but at the same time a strategic situation more or less taken for granted and consolidated by means of a long-term confrontation between adversaries. What makes the domination of a group, a caste, or a class, together with the resistance and revolts which that domination comes up against, a central phenomenon in the history of societies, is that they manifest in a massive and universalizing form, at the level of the whole social body, the locking together of power relations with relations of strategy and the results proceeding from their interaction (795).

In relation to resistance against domination, Judith Butler in "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance" states that those who gather to resist various forms of state and economic power are taking a risk with their own bodies, exposing themselves to possible harm. As people get together, she explains, vulnerability is enhanced by assembling. Butler contends that we need

to rethink this sequence that gives narrative structure to our understanding of the relationship between vulnerability and resistance. In this way, vulnerability emerges earlier when people demonstrate to oppose the precarious conditions in which they live. The vulnerability to dispossession, poverty, insecurity, and harm that constitutes a precarious position in the world itself leads to resistance, whose modes emerge in opposition to a failing infrastructure. She wonders whether vulnerability still remains an important part of that mode of resistance, whether resistance requires overcoming vulnerability and whether we mobilize our vulnerability or not (12). According to Butler, vulnerability (the sense of "exposure" implied by precarity) is not exactly overcome by resistance, but it becomes a potentially effective mobilizing force in political mobilizations (14). There is plural and performative bodily resistance at work that shows how bodies are acted on by social and economic policies. Those bodies showing precarity are also resisting these very powers; they enact a form of resistance that presupposes vulnerability of a specific kind, and opposes precarity. What is the conception of the body, how do we understand this form of resistance? (15). Butler claims that it is not just that this or that body is bound up in a network of relations, but that the body, despite or by virtue of its clear boundaries, is defined by the relations that make its own life and actions possible. Butler concludes that we cannot understand bodily vulnerability outside this conception of social and material relations (16).

At this point, we need to go back to Foucault in "Right of Death and Power over Life", where he states that

> … deployments of power are directly connected to the body-to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures; far from the body having to be effaced, what is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another, bound together

> in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective. I do envisage a "history of bodies" and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested. (151-2)

In his connection of power to the body, Foucault claims that the right of life and death is a dissymmetrical one; it is a right to *take* life or to *let* live. Power in this instance was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it (136).

His analysis of power starts in the 17th century when this power over life evolved in two basic forms; the first one centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of this usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficiency and economics controls, all this ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body. The second one focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanisms of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was achieved through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: 'a bio-politics of the population' (139). Foucault concludes that "the old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life" (140). This bio-power was essential in the development of capitalism which would have not been possible without the controlled insertion of the bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes (141). The investment of the body, its valorization, and the

distributive management of its forces were at the time indispensable which was clearly seen in colonial societies then.

It was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, which gave power its access even to the body. If, Foucault contends, bio-history can be applied "to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of *bio-power* to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life" (143).

According to Foucault, a normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life (144). This is the background that enables us to understand the importance assumed by sex as a political issue. Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species with the objective of disciplining the body and that of regulating populations (146). At the juncture of the "body" and the "population", sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death (147). As we mentioned in the previous section when dealing with gender issues in Africa, this same target of power organized around sex. Foucault believes that "we are on a society of 'sex' or rather a society 'with a sexuality': the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, its stamina, its ability to dominate, or its capacity for being used" (147).

Foucault states that in the process of histerization of women[55], 'sex' was defined in three ways: as that which belongs in common to men and women; as that which belongs, par excellence, to men and hence is lacking in women; but at the same time, as that which by itself

[55] The process that has led us to think of the female body, first as highly sexual and second as an object of medical knowledge.

constitutes a woman's body, ordering it wholly in terms of the functions of reproduction and keeping it in constant agitation through the effects of that very function (153). Foucault concludes, that "it is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim – through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality – to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance" (157).

Judith Butler in relation to the body identifies both dependency and vulnerability as part of the performative account of agency. Feminism is a crucial part of these networks of solidarity and resistance because feminist critique destabilizes those institutions that depend on the reproduction of inequality and injustice, and it criticizes those institutions and practices that inflict violence on women and gender minorities ("Rethinking Vulnerability" 17). She suggests rethinking the relationship between the human body and infrastructure to call into question the body as discrete, singular and self-sufficient: she proposes to understand embodiment as both performative and relational where relationality includes dependency on infrastructural condition and legacies of discourse and institutional power that precede and condition our existence (20). The resistance (as an embodied enactment) to vulnerability (as a deliberate exposure to power) is often based on political anxieties. Those groups marked as 'vulnerable' become reified as definitionally 'vulnerable', fixed in a political position of powerlessness and lack of agency. Butler states that "vulnerability is also a socially induced condition which accounts for the disproportionate exposure to suffering" (26). For her, the undoing of this binary, vulnerability as the opposite of agency is a feminist task. Vulnerability is a constituent feature of a human animal both affected and acting. In such practices of nonviolent resistance, we can come to understand bodily vulnerability as something that is actually mobilized for the purposes of resistance. It is in this instance when we agree that in vulnerability there is agency,

where the agent is a subject, so in the corpus we are about to analyse, we can affirm that if subaltern women have not the capacity to speak, it is by means of resistance and vulnerability that they speak, that they mobilize and become agents of change. They are not spoken by, they are not acted upon, and they are vocal women who, through strategies of resistance, bring about an amelioration of their lives both private and public (26).

What interests Butler are those "forms of nonviolent resistance that mobilize vulnerability for the purposes of asserting existence, claiming the right to public space, equality, and opposing violent police, security, and military actions" (27). It would seem that without being able to think about vulnerability, we cannot think about resistance and that by thinking in resistance, we are already under way, dismantling the resistance to vulnerability in order precisely to resist (27).

Foucault, in "Society Must Be Defended", deals with and addresses the issue of biopolitics. He claims that the very essence of the right of life and death is actually the right to kill; a new right which permeates the old right is the power of 'make' live and 'let' die.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a new technology of power, a biopolitics of the human race was born as a set of processes such as the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population and so on. These processes together with a whole set of related economic and political problems became biopolitics' first objects of knowledge and the targets it seeks to control. At the end of the century, it was endemics not epidemics what were the issue (the form, nature, extension, duration and intensity of the illnesses prevalent in a population) (243).

As we have already covered when dealing with sexuality in Africa in the first chapter, (Africa in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, against pandemics or endemics AIDS, mainly sexually transmitted diseases, the use of preservatives to prevent both illness and as a

tool to control population), an issue of public health, Foucault goes over illness in Europe at the time. Illness is considered a phenomenon affecting a population with institutions to coordinate medical care, centralize information, and normalize knowledge; hence campaigns to teach hygiene and to medicalize the population (244).

In order to deal with these phenomena, Foucault contends that this biopolitics will establish charitable institutions and also indirect mechanisms such as insurance, individual and collective savings and safety measures, among others. According to Foucault, biopolitics' last domain is control over relations between the human race (birth rate, mortality rate, and various biological disabilities), or humans as species, insofar as they are living beings, and the direct effects of their geographical, climatic, or hydrographic environment (245). Biopolitics deals with the population as a political, biological and power problem. The phenomena addressed by biopolitics are, essentially, aleatory events that occur within a population that exists over a period of time. It is a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized (247).

Beneath that great absolute power, the power of sovereignty, which consisted in the power to take life, Foucault addresses the emergence of the power over 'the' population as such as they are living beings (247). Superimposed technologies of power from the eighteenth century established at different times: one is disciplinary (adjusting power mechanisms to the individual body by using surveillance and training), which centers on the body, and the second one is centered upon life; in which bodies are replaced by general biological processes (249). Sexuality became a field of vital strategic importance in the 19th century as a matter for discipline and for regularization. It is the privileged position that sexuality occupies between organism and population, between the body and the general phenomena, that explains the extreme emphasis placed upon it at that time (251). As it happens in Africa's structures of power

in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, the element that circulates between the two is the norm, something that can be applied to both a body one wishes to discipline and a population one wishes to regularize (252-3).

Foucault states that racism is the means by which the power of death, the function of death can be exercised in a political system centered upon biopower. It is indeed the emergence of this biopower that inscribes it in the mechanisms of the State, that racism is inscribed as the basic mechanism of power, in the way it is exercised in modern States. Racism, according to Foucault, is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and must die. The functions of racism are both to fragment and to allow the establishment of a positive relation of this type. In the biopower system, killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results in the elimination of the biological threat and the improvement of the species or race. Once that the State functions in the biopower mode, racism alone can justify the murderous function of the State, Foucault concludes (255-6).

Later on, in 2008, Slavoj Žižek dealt with violence exercised by states on citizens after Foucault's conclusions. In *Violence. Six Sideways Reflections*, Slavoj Žižek identifies three kinds of violence, subjective violence, performed by a clearly identifiable agent (crime or terror); a 'symbolic' violence embodied in language and its forms which apart from in the obvious cases of incitement and of the relations of social domination reproduced in our habitual speech forms, there is a more fundamental form of violence still that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning. The third is 'systemic' violence, the catastrophic effects of economic and political systems. Subjective violence is seen as a perturbation of the normal, peaceful state of things while objective violence is the violence inherent to this normal state of things, and in consequence, invisible (2). Systemic violence has

to be taken into account to understand what could seem to be irrational explosions of subjective violence.

Žižek, in agreement with Foucault, cites Etienne Balibar who distinguishes two opposite but complementary modes of excessive violence: the 'ultra-objective' or systemic violence that is inherent in the social conditions of global capitalism, which involve the 'automatic' creation of excluded and dispensable individuals from the homeless to the unemployed, and the 'ultra-subjective' violence of newly emerging ethnic and /or religious, in short racist, 'fundamentalisms' (14).

According to Žižek, in liberal communist ethics, the ruthless pursuit of profit is counteracted by charity, the humanitarian mask hiding the face of economic exploitation. The developed countries 'help' the undeveloped with aid, credits and so on, and thereby avoid the key issue, namely, their complicity in and co-responsibility for the miserable situation of the undeveloped (24). Today's capitalism, he contends, cannot reproduce itself on its own. It needs extra-economic charity to sustain the cycle of social reproduction. Again, West Africa and many other parts of the continent comply with Žižek's description of charities as the mask which hides the face of economic exploitation. Those vulnerable subjects have been created by a mechanism of systemic violence which affects primarily to women in postcolonial countries. As it has been stated above in relation to Ghana, Fatimah Kelleher cautions against the appropriation of women's economic empowerment by wider global agendas, which in our view, is a way to increase and maintain women's position of subalternity. Those vulnerable women are necessary to keep the social order agreed by capitalism. For these reasons, the violence against women inherent to this normal state of things is invisible. However, as it has been stated in the case of Ghana, violence is also visible. Terror, as an example of systemic violence, was inflicted on women. For instance, terror spread on women as the ritual killings which were

taking place were said to be inflicted by the government. The testimonies provided at the truth commission report brutal beatings, as well. Besides, the position of vulnerability is also maintained through symbolic violence inflicted by language as it imposes a certain universe of meaning which connects with Spivak's conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak. Nevertheless, such position of vulnerability can be used to transform subalternity. The strategy then is for subaltern subjects to be agents of their own vulnerability. Such position of vulnerability can be used to transform subalternity. This is so because vulnerability here brings us the question of social transformation, while resilience effectively undermines the capacity to resist, therefore it should be resisted and rejected. The strategy then is for subaltern subjects to be agents of their own vulnerability. According to Sarah Bracke, under such conditions, a subject of subaltern resilience appears that who has survived colonization, exploitation and wars and which maintains positions of subalternity. Where a vulnerable collective survives, is in its own transformation that is vulnerability's resilience. Therefore, individuals transform themselves into the willing subjects of a moral discourse through the subject's agency.

Žižek claims that today's predominant mode of politics is post-political bio-politics. He defines post-political as a politics which claims to leave behind old ideological struggles and instead focus on expert management and administration, whereas bio-politics designates the regulation of the security and welfare of human lives as its primary goal. These two dimensions overlap: once one renounces big ideological causes, what remains is only the efficient administration of life. With the depoliticized socially objective the only way to actively mobilize people is through fear, a basic constituent of today's subjectivity. For this reason, bio-politics is ultimately a politics of fear; it focuses on defense from potential victimization or harassment (40). According to Žižek, post-political bio-politics also has two aspects which belong to two opposite ideological spaces: that of the reduction of humans to 'bare life', to

Homo sacer[56], that so-called sacred being who is the object of expert caretaking knowledge but is excluded from all rights; and that of respect for the vulnerable Other brought to an extreme through an attitude of narcissistic subjectivity which experiences the self as vulnerable, constantly exposed to a multitude of potential 'harassments' (42). What these two poles share, Žižek claims, is the notion that the ultimate goal of our lives is life itself. This is why there is no contradiction between the respect for the vulnerable Other and the readiness to justify torture, the extreme expression of treating individuals as *Homini sacer*.

Žižek contends that what increasingly emerges as the central human right in late-capitalist society is the right to be harassed, which is a right to remain at a safe distance from others (41). Likewise, Judith Butler in "Precarious Life, Vulnerability and the Ethics of Cohabitation", raises questions of proximity and distance, "Is what is happening so far from me that I can bear no responsibility for it? Is what is happening so close to me that I cannot bear having to take responsibility from me?" (135). In 2004, Butler had previously dealt with the value of life, "Whose lives count as lives? What makes for a grievable life? …. women and minorities… are, as a community, subjected to violence, exposed to its possibility, if not its realization…. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure" (20).

Žižek states that verbal violence is the ultimate resort of every specifically human violence and it is on the basis of racism. It is the symbolization of language which makes reality intolerable. Žižek recalls Heidegger's phrase "the house of being" where a fundamental violence exists in this 'essencing' ability of language (64). There is a direct link between the ontological violence and the texture of social violence (of sustaining relations of enforced

[56] After Giorgio Agambem's concept.

domination) that pertains to language. The white racist ideology exerts a performative efficiency. It is not merely an interpretation of what blacks are, but an interpretation that determines the very being and social existence of the interpreted subjects (71).

Critics insist that blacks are not inferior but merely ‘inferiorised’ by the violence imposed on them by white racist discourse. Žižek claims that the true “dialectics of globalization”, it is ‘things’, (commodities) which freely circulate in the free circulation opened up by global capitalism, while the circulation of “persons” is more and more controlled, so the segregation of the people *is* the reality of economic globalization. The new racism of the developed is unabashed economic egotism. The fundamental divide is one between those included in the sphere of the relative economic prosperity and those excluded from it (102). As we have previously shown in the part of Africa we are covering in our research, this is what happens.

Finally, we will address the concept of resilience in connection to vulnerability and resistance within the frames of power and violence already analysed.

In her essay “Bouncing back. Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience”, Sara Bracke deals with the power that resilience exercises on subjects and the way such subjects come into being and are maintained. She deals with resilience as a powerful idea whose deployment spans the macro level of ecological and economic systems to the micro level of selves, and the complex circuits of power that connect and constitute these different levels of social reality (53).

Resilience permeates popular culture; psychological theories around the notion of the ‘resilient self’ which belongs to a particular political economy, the prevalence of resilience at the beginning of the hegemony of neoliberalism. Resilience has become a force to be reckoned with within the realm of hegemonic ethics of and truths about the self. Bracke explores the notion of resilience in relation to vulnerability and resistance as well as in relation to social

relations of gender, and also what a politics of resistance to resilience might look like. Butler connects precarity to vulnerability, "Whereas all lives are born precarious, that is, vulnerable and hence finite, precarity refers to a politically induced condition derived from (in)action on the part of social and economic systems, usually maintained by nation-states, which fail to protect human lives from physical impairment for reasons such as disease, poverty, starvation, or political violence" ("Precarious Life" 25).

Bracke understands resilience[57] as a keyword. She goes on to explore the concept of resilience in different fields as it is its polysemous and contested qualities which contributes to its social force. In ecological thought, Bracke summarizes Carl Folke[58]'s argument that the meaning of transformability, the meaning of adaptability joined the concept's original emphasis on persistence. Within sociology, she explains Gérard Bouchard[59]'s distinction among three ways of recovery after shock which are, by resisting stress and returning to the original state (conservative form of resilience); by adapting through adjustment, negotiation, and compromise (adaptive form of resilience); by seizing on the occasion by 'creatively' responding to the challenge of the shock or trauma (progressive form of resilience). Bracke summarizes Peter Hall and Michèle Lamont[60]'s "social resilience" shifting focus from the individual toward the institutional (55). After her review of the term in different fields, she concludes that resilience as a key word mobilizes all of those meanings at once, and shifts between them, oftentimes unaccountably (56).

To complete the consideration of resilience as a keyword, it is necessary to attend to the particular connection of resilience to the question of security; the sensibilities of resilience and

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[57] In OED definition, resilience revolves around shock absorption.
[58] "Resilience Thinking: Integrating Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability."
[59] In Hall et al.
[60] *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era.*

security have become intimately intertwined in contemporary biopolitics[61] driven by the "threats from terrorism, natural disasters, health pandemics and other disruptive challenges" (56). Following Mark Neocleous[62], Bracke claims that resilience might be considered as part of a new security apparatus, as resilience "connects the emotional management of personal problems with the wider security agenda and the logic of accumulation during a period of crisis" (56). In precarious times, Bracke states, resilience is the new security.

She addresses Butler's account of vulnerability, dependency and grief, to which is central the resilience committed to entail precisely the erasure of the transformation (58). Resilience, in line with Žižek's thought, depends on disaster or threat. This lack of security is socially differentiated in terms of social relations of class, gender, ethnicity, and race, and those of the international division of labor. Secure selves and secure societies, sovereignty and mastery, are not fantasies to which most populations are entitled. For Bracke, a second contemporary figure of a resilient subject emerges, a subject of *subaltern resilience.* Subaltern resilience provides the infrastructure for global processes of economic production and consumption. Raw material also invokes the late capitalist keyword of human capital including knowledge, skills, and personal traits embodied in the ability to produce value through performing labour. A resilient subject is one who can absorb the impact of austerity measures and continue to be productive (60).

Bracke contends that there are subjective differences in how people cope with such stress, shock and trauma. What falls out from a psychological approach are the operations of power involved in the very constitution of the subject, and the possibility that such a shock might profoundly reconstitute a subject. She connects in her analysis with Foucault's notions

[61] As we have already analysed in Žižek's work.
[62] "Resisting Resilience."

of state power and biopower, taking resilience as a key to investigate contemporary operations of power and notably to further explore processes of subjectification that belong to the realm of neoliberal governmentality and biopower. It understands neoliberalism as a cultural project bent on reshaping the structure of social relationships and subjectivities (62).

In order to appreciate how moral codes, relate to the subject, according to Bracke, it is rewarding turning to Foucault who argues that a moral code calls for the formation of oneself as an ethical subject, and becoming an ethical subject takes place through modes of subjectivation that are supported by practices of the self. Thus, a resilient subject comes into being when an individual, directly or indirectly, feels or is made to feel that the moral code of resilience applies to her, and acts accordingly. In this approach, the modality of power through which individuals transform themselves into the willing subjects of a moral discourse is the subject's agency: the capacities and skills required in undertaking particular kinds of actions, and these capacities and skills are acquired through submitting to articular disciplines. Therefore, the specific biopolitical power at work in and through resilience as a keyword produces a new regime of subjectivity, that is to say, new resilient subjects (63).

Bracke introduces the subject *postfeminist resilience,* that which is relevant to our research, "the female subject who continues to survive patriarchy, increasingly exposed to the neoliberal (65). Some critics suggests that resilience as a keyword rely on gendered understandings of subjectivity and agency, and more particularly those gendered as female. For Neocleous, the juncture between the subject and the social experience of resilience manifests itself in experiences that are gendered as feminine as resilience core concepts of elasticity, flexibility or pliability are connoted as feminine. Bracke considers the gendered dimension of resilience as a particular reconfiguration of qualities commonly considered as feminine or

masculine. Bracke goes back to Robin James[63] who states that the rise of resilience suggests a shift in hegemonic notions of femininity (fragility and vulnerability; connection between feminine body comportment and feminine structures of subjectivity). In a neoliberal 'affective economy' women must overcome the fragility and vulnerability learnt and turn their 'gendered damage' into human capital (in times of resilience damage is reworked into resource). "In a neoliberal postfeminist political economy, 'good girls' have become resilient and able to turn damage into opportunity" (67).

Bracke contends that relations of race, sexuality and class shape the understandings of femininity in terms of fragility and vulnerability. For her, the postfeminist "Look, I Overcame" narrative, shaped by racial politics, is a forceful one nowadays and is particularly revelatory of the gendered politics of resilience. This is the complex relationship between frailty and vulnerability on the one hand, and "overcoming" on the other (68).

As a way of conclusion, Bracke contends that *we are not resilient.* Vulnerability seeks to reconstruct an ethical condition of human life, domesticated and obscured within contemporary political economies of neoliberalism and the War on Terror which make vulnerability and resilience operate as political opponents. This is so because vulnerability here brings us the question of social transformation, while resilience further separates us from it. Neocleous concludes that resilience effectively undermines the capacity to resist, and therefore should be resisted and rejected[64] (70).

Resilience means different things in different geopolitical contexts and according to different positionalities. So, are our heroines resilient subjects in a positive way because of their geopolitical context and positionality? In sharp contrast to the ubiquity of resilience under a

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[63] *Resilience & Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism*.

[64] "Stop calling me RESILIENT. Because every time you say, "Oh, they're resilient," that means you can do something else to me. I am not resilient." A poster produced by the Louisiana Justice Institute (70).

regime of biopower, Bracke claims, that there are effective strategies of resisting it which could do well with accounts of situated processes of resilient subjectification and the kinds of embodied agential modalities they encourage and preclude (72).

We have finished this section with Sara Bracke's account of resilience with which we very much agree. Departing from her subject of subaltern resilience we are about to analyse questions of trauma and vulnerable women as subalterns.

PART II

Chapter 3

Vulnerable characters in Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels.

3.1. Introduction and historical context.

It is our contention to deal with gender violence and trauma in Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels and to analyse the role played by vulnerable women as subalterns. As we will see, Attah, however, since considering herself a womanist, "committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (xi) that is, both men and women together, under similar circumstances of vulnerability, she addresses both male and female violence and trauma in a similar way. We will see the way Bador Samed, a character in *Harmattan Rain,* is beaten and abused as his torturer considers he behaves as a woman when he is being beaten. In *Saturday's Shadows*, market women are brutalized and serial killings take place in the capital city. This kind of gender violence in the public arena has its counterpart in the private enclosure of households where parents beat their daughters and husbands their wives. However, when both

men and women are at the most vulnerable is when they are held as slaves. It is then when they turn into objects, public commodities, or war loot completely dehumanized.

In her novels published so far, the Ghanaian writer Ayesha Harruna Attah is aware of the role played by history in the lives of her characters. In an interview to James Murua, Ayesha Attah states her passion for the historical novel in the fashion of Gabriel García Márquez's, *A Hundred Years of Solitude* where the life of a family is intertwined with the running of a country. "I gravitate towards the historical also because a part of me is searching for who we are as Africans, for what our essence was before outside influences of religion, philosophy, and ways of living became so rooted in us" (2).

We have chosen the three novels to illustrate the issues of gender violence and trauma because the main women characters suffer from abuse, be that gendered and sexual violence, slavery, sexual assault, abuse or rape and societal abuses, or poverty and war. They exemplify marital and sexual violence which are both product of slavery as well as from systemic violence where they have to comply with patriarchal societies' requirements under Islam in pre-colonial Ghana, in the instance of *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* and parental abuse in *Harmattan Rain* in pre-independence Ghana, and, present day Ghana in *Saturday's Shadows*.

Attah highlights those facts of Ghana's history which influence the lives of her characters. Angela Thompsell summarizes Ghana's history after independence**.** Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah, was ousted nine years after independence, and for the next twenty-five years, Ghana was typically governed by military rulers, with varying economic impacts. In 1964, Nkrumah pushed a constitutional amendment that made Ghana a one-party state, and himself the life president. On 24 February 1966, a group of officers led a coup, overthrowing Nkrumah. The military-police National Liberation Council drafted constitution for the Second Republic. Elections were held in 1969 and the Progress Party, headed by Kofi Abrefa Busia,

won. Busia became the Prime Minister, and Chief Justice, Edward Akufo-Addo became the President. Busia implemented austerity measures which were deeply unpopular. On 13 January 1972, Lieutenant Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong successfully overthrew the government after a period of unrest and the agreement to have a civilian and military government. As the country prepared for elections in 1979, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings and several other junior officers launched a coup. They weren't successful at first, but another group of officers broke them out of jail. Rawlings made a second, successful coup attempt and overthrew the government. They executed several members of the military government, including the former leader, General Acheampong. They also purged the higher ranks of the military. After the elections, the new president, Dr. Hilla Limann, forced Rawlings and his co-officers into retirement, but when the government was unable to fix the economy and corruption continued, Rawlings launched a second coup. On December 31, 1981, he, several other officers, and some civilians seized power again. Rawlings remained Ghana's head of state for the next twenty years (1981-2001). In the late 1980s, the Popular National Defence Council, facing international and internal pressures, began exploring a shift toward democracy. In 1992, a referendum for returning to democracy passed, and political parties were permitted again in Ghana. In late 1992, elections were held. Rawlings ran for the National Democratic Congress party and won the elections. He was thus the first President of Ghana's Fourth Republic. The 1996 elections that followed were won by Rawlings as well. In the 1990s, a housecleaning exercise was conducted in Ghana whose aim we will explain in the fourth chapter.

Within this political situation, it is worth mentioning the important role played by women assemblies, among them market women, in Ghana. According to Usman, "women's political and voluntary groups and associations sprang up in post independent Ghana, such as the Ghana Women's League and the 31st of December movement" (154-5), this last one being

a branch of the party in the government led by the first lady, Madam Rawlings. However those women were victims of military attacks in the 1970s and 80s. There was an economic recession and market women were accused of it. They were punished in their trade. Emmanuel Akyeampong also addresses the violence inflicted by junior officers on market women. Under Rawlings military rule, he contends, some major markets were destroyed in Accra, Sekondi, Koforidua and Kumasi in 1979. He explains that soldiers even caned nude women in public (222). Similarly, Abena Ampofoa Asare based on the documents which keep the testimonies of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) in Ghana, which started work in September 2002, examines the position of market women in the country. Since colonial times, market women were seen as a menace to the country's economy. Despite the fact that they fought in anti-colonial movements, they were under government scrutiny for corruption. Accused of violating price control, they were beaten, their goods seized and some were even imprisoned. Some of the testimonies in the NRC report the situations described by Ayesha Attah in her both *HR* and *S's S* as for instance the testimony of a woman "[who] was three months pregnant and one of the soldiers pressed down her swelling midsection" (Asare 77).

3.2. Private and public subalternity.

In *Saturday's Shadows*, Attah deals with gender violence as market women were victims of military attacks in the 1970s and 80s. With Rawling's second coming under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), measures were even harsher with the consecuent fear and panic in the population, mainly among women. Attah in *Saturday's Shadows* makes Nasar, Atsu's boyfriend explain what his job was:

> I used to be a Saturday Boy . . . I did a lot of things. But the one I still get nightmares from is …I beat up a pregnant woman . . . We'd been trained to punish greed, and it didn't matter if you were man, woman, or child. The woman

> had stockpiled boxes of provisions, selling them at four times the normal price. Women like her, we believed, were the root of the country's inflation and economic problems. (*S's S*, 275-7)

Due to the general election in 2000, and bill on Domestic violence, women in Ghana gathered to oppose the creation of a Ministry for Women's affairs, triggered by the new political situation and the women's murders which took place in Accra, Ghana's capital city. Ayesha Attah explains the situation in Atsu's words: "The serial killer has murdered six women so far. . . One more woman killed in the ritual killings plaguing the nation's capital; opposition says they've found evidence that killings[65] are being orchestrated by President of the Republic, Dr. Karamoh Saturday" (*S's S* 24-5).

Gender violence acts both in the private and public arena. Slavoj Žižek defines systemic violence as "the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth running of our economic and political systems. It might be invisible but it has to be taken into account if one is going to make sense of what otherwise seem to be irrational explosions of subjective violence" (2). These irrational explosions of subjective violence are those quoted above from *Saturday's Shadows*. Within this frame we bring back Butler's words on the question of the human:

> Whose lives count as lives? What makes for a grievable life? …. women and minorities… are, as a community, subjected to violence, exposed to its possibility, if not its realization…. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure*."* (*Precarious Life* 20)

[65] We can read the newspaper headline which, once more, proves Attah's concern for history in her novels: "Fear grips Ghana as ritual killer claims 34th victim" Anthony Browne, Accra*. The Guardian*. Sun 26 Nov 2000.

When talking about torture, Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain* declares that

> [torture] consists of a primary physical act, the infliction of pain, and a primary verbal act, the interrogation……The connection between the physical act, between body and voice, is often misstated or misunderstood. Real pain, agonizing pain, is inflicted on a person; but torture, which contains specific acts of inflicting pain, is also itself a demonstration and magnification of the felt experience of pain. It then goes on to deny, falsifying the reality of the very thing it has itself objectified by a perceptual shift which converts the vision of suffering into the wholly illusory but, to the torturers and the regime they represent, wholly convincing spectacle of power… (Scarry 26-27)

Theo becomes involved in a coup plot against Saturday. When he is caught, he is imprisoned and tortured

> "I'm going to ask you some questions and if you cooperate, we'll both be happy." …I chose not to answer…. when five minutes of silence had passed, he lunged at my left side with his boot…. A barrage of questions. Silence. Another kick…. The next day three huge men came to my cell… Blindfolded me and sped off somewhere…. I'm convinced that the room was in the Doctor's house on the hill. … I held my resolve, not saying a thing. I lost track of time. (*S's S* 294-5)

Likewise, the political situation described by Attah in pre-colonial Ghana in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* indicates the level of violence at the time. When the writer is asked about violence in her last novel, she states that "the novel doesn't really let up with the violence. Even Wurche who is protected by her royal class is subject to it. Ayesha Attah has declared that

"writing Wurche's character was one way to tone down the intensity of the violence and the feeling of suffocation I felt, even though, she is not exempt from it." (electricliterature.com par.1)

Although we will be dealing with the process of storytelling as healing in chapter four, at this point, we consider it relevant to mention Nancy J. Peterson's recollection of Fredric Jameson's assertion that "history is what hurts" (102), as she addresses the engagement of women writers in history and the way past painful events continue to put pressure on the present. According to Peterson, as unofficial history, literary texts can deal with issues and events that are marginalized or ignored in official historical accounts (3). And so, of necessity, Jefferson concludes, wounded histories are written as literature or fiction and not as history. She mentions Toni Morrison's historical fiction as an example of the way wounded histories are written, out of necessity, as literature or fiction as "for only literature in our culture is allowed the narrative flexibility and the willing suspension of disbelief that are crucial to the telling of these stories" (7). Ayesha Attah in an interview to Africa Book Club, declares Morrison's influence on her work "I discovered Ms. Toni Morrison … I wanted to write a world full of strong female characters, just like Ms. Morrison had done." (par. 2) These authors, Peterson contends, strive to draw the past into the present moment of the reader's consciousness so that they 'seize hold' of historical memories (7).

Cathy Caruth states in *Unclaimed Experience,* that *trauma* occurs when the wound cries out belatedly, after the fact of the original wounding. Trauma is simultaneously a displacement of that experience and an undeniable connection to it (13). In this way, this history of violence inflicted on people's bodies as we are about to exemplify is what wounds. Violence carried out alike by military regimes, wars for power led by both Europeans and natives alike, and internal

slave trade. In chapter four we will be dealing with different ways to heal trauma whereas in this chapter we will be dealing with the effects of colonial and postcolonial trauma.

We are also wondering in this chapter if Ayesha Attah's contention is the creation of vulnerable subaltern women, or subaltern characters, at all. In "The Subject and Power", Michel Foucault clearly states what the concept 'subject' implies, subject to someone else by control and dependence, and, tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.

Besides, Spivak states that within the deleted itinerary of the subaltern subject, there is no track of sexual difference. The male is dominant in the ideological construction of gender, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of rebellion. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even dimmer ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 287). For Spivak the question of "woman" seems more problematic in this context.

The position societal abuses push women into is one of vulnerable subalternity, as in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, Aminah is caught up as a slave, and Wurche is used by her father to win over the Kpembewura[66]. However, male characters are also depicted in a position of subalternity. Moro, the slave raider in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, was a slave himself, and although he is able to inflict pain on slaves, we interpret him as a subaltern subject in Foucault's terms, subject to someone else by control and dependence, and, tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. He does what he is expected to and his hope is in destiny. Therefore, the only reason he behaves the way he does is that he bends flexibly to destiny

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[66] Paramount Chief of Kpembe.

without a moral position on what he does, at all, be it holding captives or beating them in public; buying a slave himself or falling in love with a slave he had bought.

In an interview that we had the opportunity to conduct via email with Ayesha Attah, she answered a few questions in relation to violence and vulnerability in her characters.

> MDR: To what extent are you worried about politics in Ghana and Africa nowadays? You portray politically committed characters in *Harmattan Rain*, characters frightened because of politics in *Saturday's Shadows*. In your novels, politics and the public transverse the private life of every character. Would you say it is biopolitics, as Foucault described it?
>
> AHA: I tried to run away from politics, coming from a very political family in Ghana, but I guess it's not avoidable, and yes, the public does affect the private. I embraced this theme even more in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, in showing how the scramble for Africa affected two women's lives.
>
> MDR: Related to the previous question, I would like to ask you about violence. When you deal with the assassinations of women in *Saturday's Shadows*, the way you describe their bodies, the way Atsu sees and feels about it, the way Nasar describes the brutality exerted on women, even pregnant women (violence on women, vulnerable bodies, and gendered bodies). Do you understand or do you want the reader to understand that violence on gendered vulnerable bodies as a means of power/control by government on those bodies? What does it mean to you nowadays thinking about violence towards women?
>
> AHA: In *Saturday's Shadows*, I was reflecting a frightening period in Ghana's history when women were being murdered for ritual purposes. There was a collective outcry about the killings, but there was also a lot of fascination with the case, without a deeper search for who was behind the murders. I think the society would have reacted strongly had men been involved.

We will establish certain parallelism among the lives of Wurche and Aminah although they belong to different social classes. In the end, when confronted woman to woman they have many more things in common than those Wurche will ever accept.

Aminah lives in Botu, a quiet village whose earnings come from the caravans' trade. With those caravans we face the spread of Islam in West Africa. With Islam, new gods and beliefs were brought which made the native people's beliefs to merge. Aminah's grandmother prays to Otienu, as she will do throughout the novel. Wurche learned the teachings of the Quran at Jaji's and she also teaches other women to become good wives. According to Tamara Anse Gray, teams of jajis or teachers were recruited by Nana Asma'u, the daughter of Usman dan Fodio the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria, while she delivered her poems to the rural areas. The team included one advanced learner past the years of child rearing and one advanced learner still in her pre-marriage age (over 40 and under 14). Together they would sit with Nana Asma'u learning the curriculum for that season, and then together they would trek to their assigned village, where they would stay and teach the women (pars. 3, 16). In *HWS*, we are witness to a period of merging. Apart from Christianism brought along with the Europeans, Islam which allowed polygamy and patriarchy enjoyed a prosperous moment.

Aminah is afraid of the men riding horses who are pillaging villages and taking people away as slaves. Those slave raiders are like mercenaries to the masters of war, different gates or families fighting for power. This is the very beginning of Wurche's story. Her father, Etuto, is vying for the Kpembewura. Wurche has got two brothers, Sulemana and Dramani and their grandmother, Mma Suma looks after them. She gets married as an agreement among clans to gain power over the Asante, the most powerful people in the area. We have already mentioned the importance of this ethnic group in chapter one. However, we will briefly recall its power at the time described by Ayesha Attah, following María Quintana. The Ashanti or Asante

were an ethnic subgroup of the Akan-speaking people, and were composed of small chiefdoms. The Empire grew out of the wars and dislocations caused by Europeans who sought the famous gold deposits in this region. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Asantehene unified the independent chiefdoms into the most powerful political and military state in the coastal region. By the early 1800s the Ashanti Empire had become a major exporter of enslaved people. The consequence of this trade for the Ashanti and their neighbors was horrendous. From 1790 until 1896, the Ashanti Empire was in a perpetual state of war involving expansion or defense of its domain. Most of these wars afforded the opportunity to acquire more slaves for trade. The constant warfare also weakened the Empire against the British who eventually became their main adversary (pars. 5-6).

Aminah lives with her father and her father's wives. Her father is a shoemaker who joins the caravan up North. Her father trusts on her to look after the family and if she has to get married for her family well-being, she will do it. Her grandmother, Eeyah, is also an important figure for her. She has got a brother, Issa-Na and twin sisters, Husseina and Hassana. In a tumultuous time in the history of pre-colonial Ghana, both girls see their life truncated by politics and wars and slave raids.

In *HWS*, the story takes place at a crucial point in African time in the area of West Africa when European colonial powers are signing alliances with the native people to get hold of both territories and people. Attah is quite critical with internal slave trade[67] as she shows all along *HWS.* We are faced with the violent and sudden attacks by slave raiders. Families and villages alike are destroyed. Once people turn into goods, like kola nuts, unable to feel, and, deprived

[67] We will be dealing in deep with this issue in chapter five.

of their humanness, some choose to die from hunger; some others kill themselves; only those strong enough with an unknown reason to live survive.

Attah pays little attention to transatlantic slave trade, although she mentions it, and she does not refer to the Middle passage. There is indeed an Inner passage where hundreds of corpses are left for the vultures to be destroyed, as Issa-Na's, Aminah's brother. With Aminah, who at the time of the raid was 15, we learn about the fate of slaves in West Africa. Attah does not blame the Europeans but her own people who, unable to keep to their way of life, sold their country fellows to get power and money. Wurche is interested in politics and in the running of her father's chieftaincy. She has always been suspicious of the white men and she has always advocated for peace among her people. She was born to a concubine who died in childbirth, so her grandmother, raised her. Etuto was always complacent with her until he needed her to sign alliances with the Dagbon people to have strong army in his fight for the Kpembewura. "'You're doing … our entire Kayanese line, a favour" (*HWS* 47). Therefore, she is married to a stranger in order that her father becomes the new chief of the clan.

> 'Wurche,'... 'You're not happy, I know.' . . . 'I'm sorry I haven't had time to sit with you, to explain what is going on,' Etuto said. `It's this nasty business of who inherits the skin to become chief of Kpembe and Salaga. Our family has been left out for far too long… The other times you had suitors we didn't need the alliance … we have to deal with hard realities. War is coming… (*HWS* 47)

Wurche and Adnan were married to sign an alliance between the Gonja and the Dagbon with the only purpose that Etuto, Wurche's father became Kpembewura. From these words, Attah seems to show that both men and women were equally exposed to patriarchy even when their position in society was that of power. Both Aminah and Adnan are royals who have to obey the rules their position imposes on them. They are both subaltern subjects as Moro the

slave raider is[68]. Nevertheless, once they marry, Adnan reproduces the patriarchal model which led him to this suffocating marriage. Despite the fact that her father had told her "that Gonja princesses were the luckiest women in the world: they got to choose their partners, even if the men were already married, now, she was being denied this privilege" (*HWS* 47).

As a consequence of patriarchy, Wurche will suffer from marital violence. Before getting married, her father allowed her to do as she pleased. Once she is married, her freedom is eventually more restricted. After Wurche gives birth to Wumpini, her first son, Adnan is desperate to be with Wurche who does not want to be with him. From then on, he will exercise full control over her and marital violence starts. In the first encounter,

> "She kicked, and her heel made contact with something hard but organic. He staggered back, holding his forehead, and regarded her for a second. Then before she could stop him, he smacked her across the face. For the first seconds, the slap silenced the world. Then the pain rang in her ear. He slapped her again. 'It's normal for a man to want his wife after being away from her, said Adnan. 'It's normal for a husband and wife to have relations. What is not normal is for a wife to hit her husband. You pushed me, Wurche. You've never considered what I sacrificed to be here. That I also didn't want this. That I might have also been forced to marry you. You haven't even tried to know me." (*HWS* 144)

Three of Attah's heroines do share the same lack of freedom when their parents (or the eldest of the clan) decide to marry them against their will. One is princess Wurche, the second one is peasant Aminah. Her father had joined in the Sokoto caravan to sell his shoes, but he had not come back yet. For this reason, the eldest in the family decided for the women. To Aminah's surprise, they decide that she has to get married to a man who ensures the household's economy. It is her time to sacrifice for the whole family.

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[68] A subaltern subject in Foucault's terms, subject to someone else by control and dependence, and, tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.

> "The house of women," said Obado … "see how respectful she is," … [our] community [is] like a flock of birds. "And we need to work in groups, otherwise we are vulnerable. … This house needs a man; the way plants need water. Issa-Na's uncle would like to ask for Aminah's hand in marriage. Issa-Na said her husband and *your* husband, Aminah-Na, had been talking about marrying Aminah for a while and would have arranged a marriage on his return." (*HWS* 52-3)

Aminah's mother did not know anything about that, so she told Aminah not to worry about her family if she did not you want to do it. However, the slave raid truncates the arrangement.

Both girls, Aminah and Wurche, are instruments in patriarchy hands, as is Lizzie in *Harmattan Rain.* Lizzie, "a convinced young woman" (*HR* Kindle position 43) lives at Adukrom No.2, her father's compound with her mother and younger sister. Her eldest sister, Owusua, has just died and they are experiencing hard times since her father's cocoa farm has been infected with a disease. As Wurche was an exchange coin to provide her father with more power making alliances with her marriage, Lizzie is also the one who would save her father's farm by marrying someone. Lizzie does not agree with her father's plans at all and she refuses every suitor she has, "she was convinced life would get better and she didn't have to marry someone she didn't love" (*HR* Kindle position 43).

Lizzie's plans for her life are different from her father's. She has fallen in love with Bador Samed, a young man from the North who helps the medicine man. He wants to become a doctor. They talk about getting married and leaving the village.

> 'You always talk about what I'll do, but what do you want to do with your life?' She was taken aback by this question. She was lucky her father had sent her off to school-the only girl in the village to finish secondary school … she wanted to

> find answers …. To meet people who weren't afraid of limits. … I want to look after [sick] people… To be your wife… a big family, but you can't have any other wives." (*HR* Kindle position 91)

The very same day that decide they will run away to Accra, Bador Samed disappears. Nobody knows where he's gone; Lizzie looks for him everywhere unsuccessfully. "No one had seen him. He hadn't written to her. Nothing! He was the only man she wanted to be with and now that he had disappeared, she wasn't in the mood to be married to just anybody. Besides, now that she'd been tainted, would anyone want her?" (*HR* Kindle position 141). It is noteworthy the way Attah's female characters, Aminah, Lizzie and Wurche worry about their virginity.[69]

Her father was furious this time as she had rejected another suitor. Papa Yaw, Lizzie's father, out of a situation of poverty does not look for alternatives to get his family out of such poverty but to marry off her daughter. As we have already mentioned, violence also takes place in private domains, as we have already exemplified with Adnan's marital abuse on Wurche. So, it is not a matter of poverty only, but of power, as well. So, we have to go back to Žižek's systemic violence. Abuses are exerted in private; these outbursts of subjective violence are the consequence of this social unrest. Under the same constrictions, and patriarchal rules, women are the ones to lose whether royal or peasant.

> "You useless, good for nothing," he spat out, hitting her shins with the branch. He reeked of stale palm wine. … Papa Yaw was always abusive. She'd found it strange when he hadn't reacted to her refusal of the men he'd brought over. Both times, he'd served her a dish of silent treatment and hadn't resorted to violence. Now he was behaving just like she'd expected him to…. Her father clutched her shirt, dragging her away from the door. … He hit her shin in rapid strokes with

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[69] Wurche has to show the 'badge of honour' the night she gets married. Aminah feels lucky because Wofa Sarpong's sexual assaults have not spoiled her possibility to marry.

> the branch… "You think of no one … but yourself. Today … you think I'll let you go scot-free?" Lizzie tried to break into a run…Papa Yaw yanked her shirt. She lost control of her legs and landed on the ground, grazing her buttocks. Her father struck her head with the branch. He swiped at her neck, slapped her back. Lizzie tried to get up, but her father kept beating her… "You little witch," Papa Yaw went on. "Do you want us all to die from hunger?" … Before his last stroke hit her, Lizzie grabbed and held on to the branch with her right hand…. "Leave it!" he spat out. Lizzie clutched the branch firmly. … Lizzie felt her tears drying on her face. She wasn't letting go off the branch. … As Papa Yaw tried to save the falling cloth [slipping off his shoulders], Lizzie heaved the branch with all the energy she could muster, pulling it out of his fingers (*HR* Kindle position 153 to 184)

In the long passage quoted we would like to highlight some common features of Attah's heroines. Their parents put the blame on them (except for Aminah, whose father had disappeared and it is the eldest man in the family who took his role) as well as the responsibility of the family's, or even, the clan's wellbeing. They have to refuse any personal aim in life, as they are asked to marry a man they do not love for the sake of the kingdom, of the family or the community. These men in charge accuse them of being selfish while they are greedy, self-centered and possessed by the lust for power and wealth.

After Wurche and Adnan's fight, he has forbidden her to go to Salaga. In her last visit to Jaji, she tells her how suffocating her marriage is and that Adnan beats her. She tells her a verse in the Quran which says "that a woman can divorce her husband because he beats her or forces her to do forbidden acts? … ? I prefer he divorces me…I married him to strengthen our alliance with Dagbon" (*HWS* 146). In this instance, we find Wurche as a true subaltern deprived of all possibility to escape from this situation. Things get worse for Wurche as Adnan becomes more aggressive.

> His face now had all the marks of a violent man. …Instead of fighting back when Adnan hit her, Wurche would wrap Wumpini on her back, pick up an item she valued and move it into Aminah's room. …a morning after Adnan had struck her so badly that big blobs of blood bubbled from her nose, she picked Wumpini and walked out…She shook her head, refusing to swallow her feelings. Before she could even say the words, Adnan's hand was on her face. *(HWS* 166)

The abuses these heroines suffer from in the privacy of their households, is parallel to the abuse suffered by society from constant wars in Salaga and social unrest in pre- and post-independence Ghana. There is another outburst of war to destroy Salaga and Etuto is sending a delegation to the Gold Coast to talk to the governor. He asks Wurche to go as "having a woman in the delegation might soften the governor's heart" (*HWS* 169). However, Adnan does not allow her to go. It is then that she admits having an affair with a man after they married. For this reason, Adnan calls her 'sheitan, whore'. Wurche had everything ready for an escape and so she leaves with Wumpini and Aminah "Wurche felt her pulse even in her ears. She and Aminah and Baki ran. Wurche looked back and was relieved but slightly disappointed when she found no one in pursuit" (*HWS* 172). It is heartbreaking for her to realize that after everything she has done for her family and what family means for her, that she is left to run away.

Before Aminah was bought by Wurche, she had been held in a slave raid back in Botu. One of the most striking instances of colonial abuse in the novel is the narration of the slave raid which tears apart Aminah's family. After Attah introduces the peaceful lifestyle of Botu inhabitants and having posed Aminah's fears on the horsemen, the brutality of the episode confirms the terrible wound inflicted on those people whose definite trauma led them to different ways of coping:

> Then unfamiliar sounds grew louder. Horses neighed. People screeched. There was wailing, crackling… Houses next to theirs erupted in flame... … a horse burst through the entrance with a raider [who] knocked Eeyah down with a barrel, pointed the muzzle at the children and commanded them towards the entrance… 'No one else is here,' Aminah shouted…if she could save anyone, she wanted it to be Na and the baby. … [The horsemen] rounded up everyone and roped them, one to the other, at the waist, mixing up men, women, girls, boys. It didn't matter. Families were torn apart, tied up with other families. (*HWS* 55-6)

They leave the village towards the unknown. "The village was burning up. …She couldn't see where her feet landed. Had Na and the baby and Eeyah survived? She retched when she thought of them burning to death. People sniveled and sobbed and whimpered" (*HWS* 57).

Aminah and her brother and sister walked non-stop as the group of captives. Tied to each other and treated as cattle, they followed the route of the raider one village after another: "Children and women were tied neck to neck, their hands free. The wrists of the men-there weren't many of them- were bound with cord, and the strongest were restrained with wooden chokeholds" (*HWS* 71).

Eventually, Aminah and her sister Hassana were sold to Wofa Sarpong. The episode which talks about Aminah and Hassana's experience at Wofa Sarpong's farm had been published separately by the writer under the title "Aminah" in *Slush Pile Magazine.* It is noteworthy the attention that Ayesha Attah pays to the smooth running of slave girls' everyday life and the way they were beaten and sexually abused at a time when slavery had been abolished. These sexual abuses narrated in literature undergone by people in a position of power, make subaltern subjects visible and voiced, those who by virtue of having been bought become one more property to satisfy whatever their owner's need. The slaves have to work and comply with everything so as to keep on living. One of the most shocking parts in Aminah's side of the story is Wofa Sarpong's nightly encounters with Aminah. Since she had been

brutally separated from her mother, her grandmother and her newborn brother; these sexual assaults are a disgraceful experience for Aminah:

> A list of quiet things…Wofa Sarpong entering Aminah and Hassana's room at night …He kept Aminah's virginity intact. She wondered why, but to ask may have invited him to go beyond forcing himself into her mouth. She wanted to hide Hassana from that shameful thing he was doing to her. The thing they were doing. She considered herself involved[70], because deep inside she knew that by sinking in her teeth, she could change her life and Hassana's… And yet, she couldn't bring herself to do anything but lie still as he clutched at her face and throat until he got excited. When he'd got up to leave … she was always too ashamed to move. She would lie there, a part of her, of all things, grateful. That he didn't take his act beyond her mouth meant if she ever got back to Botu, she wouldn't be a ruined woman. (*HWS* 92-3)

Despite the abuse, it could be worse for her as a woman. In fact, this is what makes Lizzie's father in *HR* the angriest, to know that her daughter had been ruined.

Although Aminah is in a subaltern position as slave, she does not think of herself as such but as a captive. "She couldn't bring herself to use the word 'slave' because it would apply to her, too. She didn't think of herself as a slave." (*HWS* 133)

As example of sexual abuse, we are also dealing with those characters to which all clothing has been taken off, that is, nakedness. In Aminah's instance, as an example to what happened to every person slaved, Attah shows us a young girl at her most vulnerable deprived of all humanness; her naked body is exposed to be sold at Salaga slave market as if she were salt, cocoa or kola nuts. It is the first time she is completely aware of her body:

> "Girls were washing themselves while men with long-barrelled guns stood guard. … Aminah peeled off her wrapper and lowered herself into the water. …

[70] This situation in which Aminah feels complicit will repeat several times through the novel. She is paralyzed when her sisters were separated, and when Hassana is being beaten. Eventually, she finds the anger to change things.

> [She] got out and an unsmiling woman gave her a dollop of shea butter, which she spread on her arms and belly and down her legs…. Before Aminah could pick up her wrapper, Maigida grabbed her wrist and they went back in the direction from which they'd come. Aminah pictured her discarded cloth, bunched carelessly on the grass, and wished she could go back and get it. … They stopped at the open market. He took Aminah to a tree, shackled her ankles, and pointed to a large stone. … 'Please, Aminah begged. *Please clothe me. Please not this.* … She bent her head and saw her breasts, her black bushy triangle. This was the most exposed she'd felt since her exile from Botu…What would her nakedness bring? … She slunk to the ground, wrapped her hands around her legs and buried her head in the pocket between her knees. *When will this end*, she wanted to scream. Instead, she rocked back and forth, trying to ignore the sun's rays roasting her back. (*HWS* 137-8)

Similar vulnerability is experienced by Wurche when her affair with Moro comes to an end: "She felt stripped naked and exposed to all like a slave in the Salaga market" (*HWS* 121). Being deprived of one's clothes becomes one of the most traumatic experiences that Ayesha Attah depicts in her novels. Contrary to other sites of resistance that we will be dealing with in the next chapter, Aminah's naked body is not a site of resistance as she feels it is the most public exposition of her vulnerability and shame. This brings back Foucault's analysis of the concrete ways in which power penetrates subjects' very bodies and forms of life. In the same way, Giorgio Agambem when addressing the issue of the homo sacer (the sacred man) who can be killed but not sacrificed, states that "the realm of bare life -which is originally situated at the margins of the political order - gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, bios and zoē, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction" (8-9).

As we have said before, in Attah's novels it is not just women who suffer from patriarchal violence. In *Harmattan Rain*, Lizzie's lover, Bador Samed sees his naked body exposed, as if he were a woman under patriarchal eyes. We have already quoted descriptions

of extreme brutality at the hands of Lizzie's father, and his rages against his daughter, for her decision not marry those her father had wanted but her own choice. She was determined not to be exchanged for cocoa seeds because she wanted to do something in her life. She wanted to help cure people. Both Bador Samed and Lizzie had a price to pay their whole lives from then onwards. By the end of the novel, Lizzie's sudden death makes Papa Yaw confess to Akua Afriyie and Sugri. Once he discovered Lizzie and Bador Samed kissing, he asked for help from men in the village to give him an ultimatum:

> "One of the men tied a cloth around his mouth…I lunged at him with a hook… We held him against a tree, took off his smock and pulled down the skimpy shorts he was wearing. He stood there ashamed. Naked to the whole world. We had to. He was too wild, that was the only way we could tame him. … I held the cutlass in his face, to make him know I wasn't joking…. [Bador Samed tells him about their plans] I threw the cutlass down…I punched him with a series of uppercuts. … I told him Lizzie was the one who had sent me… that she was the one who wanted him sent off…. He spat in my face and said Lizzie would never do that … because he had just made Lizzie his woman … I thrust my knee into his groin! He squealed like a woman. I conked him. He bowled over. I jabbed his head with my knee. I really got him. … When he was rolling on the floor …I grabbed my machete and pressed it against his cheek till it drew a little blood…We pushed him out of the village. The fight had gone out of him as he got up, picked his clothes up and walked naked into the forest. (*HR* Kindle position 7158 to 7193)

This feeling of vulnerability is felt by most of Attah's characters both male and female. Bador Samed is naked, beaten, deprived of his manhood because of a selfish father who wants to trade with his daughter's marriage. Both, Bador Samed's assault and Aminah's family dispossession by the slave raiders are the most traumatic experiences narrated by Ayesha Attah.

Nasar is also traumatized for having beaten a pregnant woman, like we described at the beginning of the chapter[71].

As it has been stated in chapter one, postcolonial literature is a major contributor to the socio-cultural construction of trauma. What constitutes the trauma process as defined by Alexander is "the process that gives narrative shape and meaning to "harmful or overwhelming phenomena which are believed to have deeply harmed collective identity" (Visser 258). Postcolonial fiction characteristically dramatizes the notion that the trauma of colonialism can and must be addressed. Visser contends that narrativization of trauma allows insight into specifics of the colonial past as a pathway to integration of the traumatic memory. This process of integration may also involve addressing the sensitive issue of complicity. As Attah states in the last section of the printed edition, "Questions and Answers for *The Hundred Wells of Salaga,"* many people benefited from this protracted struggle to abolish slavery, the royals included, as we will see in Wurche's family. Attah explains that a lot of African royal families were complicit in the slave trade. Families *were* torn apart and people's lives were discarded if they were not considered profitable enough.[72] She names bondage by its name and it is her contention that African people talk about their past and deal with it. In 2017, people from Senegal, The Gambia and Nigeria were being auctioned in Lybia by people from Ghana and Nigeria. Attah claims that it is time for Africa to recognize the role they have played in slavery, internal, trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic to "stitch together the threads we need to heal and achieve true progress" ("Questions and Answers" unnumbered).

[71] We opened this chapter with Nasar's confession of the brutality of attacks on women commanded by the president of the Republic.
[72] Many examples will be seen through the analysis of the novel.

During decolonization, Mbembe states, what needs to be confronted is not only oppression but its mystery of loss in the complex entanglement of desire, seduction and subjugation which may include the realization that the colonized people let themselves be deceived. Attah describes such seduction on the native people since the very beginning:

> "Her father was sitting on his ceremonial leopard skins, as one of the three lesser chiefs of Kpembe…and every week now, some new white man came to see Etuto and the other chiefs offering friendship. Salaga, her father explained was strategic. … Guns, bottles of brown alcohol and bags of salt had been placed at Etuto's feet. Next to the white man and his entourage were four trussed-up sheep, a pile of yams and two large elephant tusks. 'Your people helped us shed the cruel yoke of the Asante…and for that we are forever grateful, but Salaga has not been the same since. 'And we recognize the importance of Salaga…which is why we want to find ways to help you… We need kola nuts back in our markets in Salaga. … If you want Salaga to prosper, bring kola.' (*HWS* 26)

In pointing out this complexity, Mbembe contends that it is necessary to be attentive to complicity, as a new approach toward postcolonial trauma in a decolonized trauma theory (Visser 262). Openness to indigenous beliefs systems and their rituals will give access to explorations of specific ways in which postcolonial fiction expresses new avenues towards the perception of trauma, its aftermath, and possible resolution. Attah shows broadly the connivance between the Europeans and the native people in relation to the traumatic slave trade. Trade was the means of survival for many villages in the caravan routes. She makes her characters aware of the situation at the time. However, "there was talk of horsemen getting closer… who razed everything to the ground…. who scared off the caravansary… who stole people" (*HWS* 7). Aminah listens to a few merchants who she is serving food to:

> 'I disagree. Babatu's men are indiscriminate,' bellowed one. `There are people who become slaves and there are people who should be left alone. Those men go for anyone. No one – high-born or low-born – is safe from their raids. And

> they are giving people who ride horses a bad name.' … 'Babatu and his men need us. If he and his slave raiders start attacking traders, where will they get their supplies? We're the link to the Europeans and their goods. Also, how many people are buying their slaves now that the Europeans say they have outlawed slavery? (*HWS* 15)

People live in terror. Baba, Aminah's own father, advises her not to be afraid of these men, as there is always some kind of danger waiting for us, no matter the name. "Nowhere is safe. But we cannot live in fear" (*HWS* 18). Attah depicts such social unrest in her novels since the very beginning, as it is shown in both *HR* and *S's S*. In the kingdom of Salaga-Kpembe, Kpembe is where the royals live whereas Salaga, a slave market city, is full of life. The market is crowded while the royals are celebrating horse races. The main commodity sold at Salaga market are slaves, so its hundred wells serve to have the slaves bathed before they are being sold. Salaga enjoys the position of a neutral city because of this flourishing market. This is a period of instability, as the fights for power among the different clans is constant and latent. They have just ended a war with the Asante, the most powerful tribe in the area. The Europeans are signing treaties and alliances with smaller tribes in exchange of protection, the win territory. Slave trade has been abolished, but nobody seems to matter much. Inspectors are easily bribed as we can see at Wofa Sarpong'.

This cycle of violence, wounding, and suffering could be broken and healed by forgiveness. Although forgiveness is not a recognized concept in trauma theory, it can be a very powerful psychological force reconciling differences and healing the wounding of the past. As Irene Visser contends, the place and function of forgiveness is a key factor in the engagement with trauma (263).

One of the female characters who embody such assertion is Aminah, whose recovery after trauma is her capacity of forgiveness. She is a survivor, someone who has recovered from

the trauma of having lost her family and been sexually assaulted. By the end of the novel, when Wurche grants Aminah freedom, she declares: "'I've already forgiven Moro,'… And I don't think you're a whore. You've loved several people and that's not a crime" (*HWS* 223).
Although Ayesha Harruna Attah depicts violence and trauma on both men and women in *Harmattan Rain* and *Saturday's Shadows*, *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* describes the most violent scenes of them all. Since the very beginning, people live in fear both in the villages and in royal cities. The poor are terrified of the horsemen and their raids, the rich are terrified of losing power and so they do not have a doubt in becoming complicit in indigenous slave trade. Everything is for sale including power and richness, both natives and Europeans alike fight for both. At the same time, and covetously, Islam and Christianism spread with both Europeans s and the people in the caravans. Many people wanted to escape from Islam and its patriarchal rules and polygamy and travel in an opposite direction. Bodies are exposed to violence, regardless of age or sex. It is all about power and control and the Europeans with their powerful arms are making those inner fights more dangerous.

At the beginning, Wurche thought she could barter with her father after accepting to his will. Lizzie, on the contrary, decided to run away, what Wurche eventually did. They both think they can do more than bringing up children and becoming good wives. Both think they have a role to play in society; Lizzie wants to help ill people whereas Wurche wants to unite her people avoiding useless wars. Wurche's and Aminah's lives take place at relevant times in the history of their people. Two years after Lizzie had arrived in Accra, the Gold Coast became Ghana, the first African country to get independence from the British. As we have already mentioned, Attah is interested in historical novels and in history alike, as she is convinced that we have to learn from the past to build a better future. She trusts in people, both men and women alike to achieve this. We have said that a way to heal from trauma is by forgiving. Wurche and Aminah do

forgive in the end, whereas Lizzie and Bador Samed have not had the opportunity to get over the trauma caused by Bador Samed's disappearance. However, destiny made it possible for her to meet him in the city. It was him who recognized her although he was mentally broken. She never gave him the chance to explain what had happened. However, Lizzie told her daughter and grand-daughter her story. They could not share their life but they departed from life together with their story. Unfortunately, they both died in a petrol station, run over by a lorry.

> Bador Samed turned to look at her. "Lizzie," he said quietly. How he still remembered her in his madness surprised her. "Not now, Bador," … She started turning out of the station … when she saw him standing on the road to her left, … She looked at him, his red skin blackened by the sun and guilt rose in her chest. She'd once loved him. For not trying to find out what happened to him, for not looking for him, she had failed him. Yet, it was a sure thing that her life would have been completely different with him and she'd enjoyed every bit of the life she'd lived. In the distance, she saw two bright lights approaching. She wanted to scream at him to get off the road. After avoiding him for all these years, the least she could do was save his life. She felt paralyzed. She needed to move herself. … She heard the booming drone of a large truck's horn. It grew louder. She felt a thud and a split a second later, her body slammed against the door. As the sound of the truck's horn rang in her ears and blackness invaded her consciousness she smiled. He had always been closer to the spirit world than anyone else she knew. There was no one else she'd go on this journey with. (*HR* Kindle position 6821)

In this chapter we have dealt with vulnerable characters in Attah's novels. We have shown the way she depicts as subaltern subjects those submitted to power either from patriarchy or the state as in *S's S* and *HR.* In *HWS* those captives held in the slave raids are also considered subaltern subjects. Nevertheless, Attah stresses the importance of women in society "What I found redemptive was the role women have always played in keeping the peace or picking up the pieces and ensuring life goes on" (electricliterature par. 2). Wurche tries her best to start

Salaga's reconstruction after the wars; Aminah is able to live with loss; Zahra gives herself an opportunity to carry on.

Chapter 4

Attah's characters' strategies to overcome power abuse and violence

4.1. Vulnerability as a deliberate exposure to power.

Following the definitions of the concepts of resistance and resilience dealt with in the first chapter of our dissertation, we will exemplify these strategies to overcome power abuse and violence in Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels. There we will find characters as in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, who resist by means of showing control over their bodies. Aminah's brother, Issa chooses to die while her sister Hassana exposes herself to be beaten. They have full control over their bodies even though this could lead them to death. Besides, Zahra, in *Saturday's Shadows* is a vulnerable character, since her resistance is by attacking her own body, her self-destruction drags down her marriage and family, too. Aminah in *HWS* and Akua Afriyie in *Harmattan Rain* persevere in order to adapt themselves and learn to look out for their own future, as well. Akua turns to art, her original vocation whereas Aminah turns to a new life where she can also be creative and do things with her hands for a living. In a way, it is art which heals them and positions them in a better future. So, the way the characters face their destiny

either by resisting or being resilient in the present, will condition the way they heal from the past, what we will be dealing with in this chapter.

In chapter two, we addressed Veena Das' assertion in her discussion on subaltern studies when she agrees with Gayatri C. Spivak that writers whose consciousness has been formed as colonial subjects, deny their own history if they do not admit that fact. However, Das claims that their consciousness as colonial subjects is itself modified by their own experience and by the relation they establish to their intellectual traditions. We agree with Das in the case of contemporary African writers in the twentieth and twenty first century and the heroines they portray. We will see that Ayesha Harruna Attah's characters' consciousness is not that of a colonial subject but a subject of subaltern resilience.

In our second chapter we have been dealing with the concepts of resilience and resistance in connection to Foucault's biopower and biopolitics. Saba Mahmood distinguishes between agency and resistance, as she does not think of agency as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination but as a capacity for action created and enabled by historical relations of subordination. Mahmood questions the tendency of poststructuralist feminist scholarship "to conceptualize agency in terms of subversion or resignification of social norms, to locate agency within those operations that resist the dominating and subjectivating form of power" (42). For Mahmood, the capacity of agency is designated in both, acts that resist norms and, in the multiple ways in which norms are located**.** In the same way, we revisit Neocleous' statement that "resilience undermines the capacity to resist and therefore should be resisted and rejected" (Bracke 70), a capacity which is numbed if there is no agency.

As we have just said, we will study Attah's characters' reactions to both power abuse and violence in her novels. We will do so in the light of the aforementioned concepts of resistance and resilience following Judith Butler and Susan Bracke. Bracke explores the notion

of resilience in relation to vulnerability and resistance and also in relation to social relations of gender wondering what a gendered understanding of resilience might tell us in relation to vulnerability and resistance. She also raises the question of what a politics of resistance might look like (53). According to Bracke, 'resilience' became a keyword in the 1980s and she cites the Oxford English Dictionary definition of resilience as "rebounding; recoiling; returning to the original position" and "tending to recover quickly or easily from misfortune, shock illness, or the like; buoyant, irrepressible; adaptable, robust, hardly" (54).

In ecological thought, she states, resilience joins the concept's original emphasis on persistence. These are Attah's characters determined to fight and recover; they are not resilient in the way of adapting without being agents. They are not objects of power as they persevere against patriarchal domination and violence.

According to Butler, vulnerability as a deliberate exposure to power is part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment. In "Precarious Life", Butler quotes Foucault in his account for governmentality which is "broadly understood as a mode of power concerned with the maintenance and control of bodies and persons, the production and regulation of persons and populations, and the circulation of goods insofar as they maintain and restrict the life of the population"(52). Foucault adressed this governmentality to societies and people in eighteenth century Europe, so we can see how colonial powers also brought with them this control of bodies and persons, to a much broader extent, as in the case of slave trade, the circulation of goods was the circulation of persons as well.

4.2. The body as political site of resistance.

In Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels, both male and female characters can become agents of their own destiny and the situations of both resistance to power and resilience have a positive

connotation as they enable characters to be agents of their own destiny no matter what it is. For Attah, as she herself said in an interview to Literandra, she is interested in places and the people who inhabit them. As we will see in her novels, the place where the story develops is one more character which has got an influence on the lives of the characters. In *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, it is Salaga precisely the city whose evolution runs alongside both its inhabitants and its visitors. It is not in vain that Attah opens the novel with a description of Salaga:

> "To prevent the bustle of Salaga from encroaching on them, the royalty of the twin towns of Salaga-Kpembe restricted Kpembe to royals. Everybody else was welcome to stay in Salaga. But to Wurche, Salaga was like the soups her grandmother often cooked, bubbling with meat and fish of all types.…. It was home to Mossis, Yorubas, Hausas, Dioulas, Dagombas ... Everything was for sale in Salaga. (*HWS* 18)

In contrast with this lively cosmopolitan atmosphere, Attah contrasts it immediately with a less elegant scenery:

> There were women selling masa and sour milk; men carrying smocks for sale; slaves fetching wood for their masters, their necks ringed with brass. The smell of rot wafted over. It was the one thing she didn't like about Salaga: waste everywhere, with vultures left to do the work of cleaning up. (*HWS*, 21-2)

Her grandmother's vision of the city is more realistic as she remembers its splendour: "'Salaga is ruined,' said Mma. … It seems to be in worse shape than before. When I was a girl, you could drink water from the wells. Now, I'm sure even slaves don't want that water touching them" (*HWS* 24). While Mma Suma ponders positively the slave trade as a means to create wealth, Wurche does not even pay attention to the slaves in the market. In fact, the thing she does not like about Salaga is "waste everywhere" but not the "slaves' necks ringed with brass": "Moro, [the slave raider] Mma said, keeps Salaga alive. He brought in what must have been

hundreds of slaves into Salaga, just the other day. With time, his reputation could reach the likes of Babatu and Samory Toure" (*HWS* 22).

In her novels, the lives of the characters evolve within the story of the nation. Attah wants her readers to understand the way the characters' lives are influenced by the running of the country. Wurche realizes people's resiliency, in an atmosphere of destruction, dirtiness and desperation. The same happens in both *HR* and *S's S*. Influenced by her mentor, the Ghanaian Ayi Kwei Armah's novels[73], set in Ghana after independence both authors infuse their novels with the disenchantment which followed independence on the one hand, and holding power in precolonial times, on the other. In *Harmattan Rain*, for instance, Lizzie says at Adukrom No.2 "It won't get dry. It never gets dry…Green, orange and brown craters streaked the mattress surface-urine and blood stains from over the years…. she saw her mother's hut on which a big crack in the sandy wall crept up to the thatch roof…" (*HR* Kindle position 214). When Lizzie travels to Kumasi with the nuns of the convent where she is living after she escaped from her village, Attah provides another example of dirtiness: "Sister Sarah grabbed Lizzie's right hand and they walked by a large open gutter, filled with plastic bags, orange peels, chicken bones and brown water. The filth didn't seem to bother the market women who were setting up their stalls" (*HR* Kindle position 505). Once she leaves the convent in her bus journey to Accra where Lizzie is going to attend nursing school. She travels on Independence Day, and all the passengers talk about the arrangements for such a big day. "A fat mother rat scuttled along the roadside, its five baby rats in tow" (*HR* Kindle position 574). Akua Afriyie, Lizzie's daughter describes the street in Accra 1991, "jumping over the gutter filled with black polyhtene bags, groundnut shells, newspapers and banana peels" (*HR* position 4068). In *Saturday's Shadows,*

[73] *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), *Fragments* (1970) and *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), to name but a few.

Zahra's mother is visiting her and makes comments about the city: "Your city is getting uglier by the minute,' Mma said. 'Dirtier than before the transition?' I asked. 'Soldiers keep things neat" (*S's S* 55).

Wondering about the reason why Attah portrays this dark side of life, we asked her about illness, madness, and other non agreeable aspects, such as corruption, lies or dirtiness present in her novels. She said that she was hoping to show society as completely as she could, as some of it was agreeable, other aspects were harder to swallow, but still formed a part of life.

In *HWS,* as the novel progresses, Wurche realizes her role in the destruction of the city and she admires people's resilience. People are used to war, so they are determined to carry on with their lives. She is complicit with the damage caused in Salaga and to people in Salaga. In fact, as she is witness to it, she portrays the city as a foreigner:

> The air still stank of smoke; the narrow streets were filled with rubble and rubbish. 'What did we do here?' she whispered. By marrying Adnan, she was complicit in this damage. … The smell of rotten eggs wafted from the wells, odorous from sitting too long. The stench shot bile up Wurche's throat. She paused till the nausea passed. A lone drum was being beaten, non-committal. The market square only held a handful of people, slowly rebuilding, picking up their lives, continuing where they left off. It was reassuring, the resilience of people". (*HWS* 89)

At this stage in the story, Wurche is not really conscious of this destruction as if she were a stranger. The first time she saw Moro, the slave raider, beat a slave woman, she does not even realise that. On the contrary, Wurche awakens to the experience of slavery once she has a love affair with Moro and she can see what slave girls have to go through.

> Just then, a loud, throaty cry punctured the excited chatter. It was the kind of scream that raised hairs on the backs of necks. Everyone looked about, confused.

> A woman emerged, barely clothed, heavy metal ringed around her neck, and charged towards them. Moro ended her rampage, suddenly appearing behind her and whacking her on the shoulder. As her body crumpled, he bent over and helped her sit up, then lifted her off the ground and slung her over his shoulder. The woman, her brown skin blushed with red soil, writhed in pain; from her throat came a low rumbling. Who was this man? He cooed at her like a father admonishing a difficult child and patted her back. (*HWS* 24)

Further on, Wurche will see slaves and the slave trade from a different point of view. From the scene that we have just quoted to the one we are about to quote, we can follow Wurche's evolution as a mature woman. At the very beginning she is a free and independent princess who faces what her position really is when her father orders her to marry a man she does not know in order to forge alliances with a neighbouring clan. It is a matter of who is able to have and keep more power in the area at the time. She is not aware of life around her. She is very self-centered until her affair with Moro, the slave raider, takes place.

While she is with Moro at Maigida's tent, or they meet, slaves are always in the background: "Once, riding down to Jaji's, she crossed path with him [Moro] as he led a sluggish queue of men and women chained to each other, followed by two others on horseback" (*HWS*, 105). Apart from this relationship, she longed for Moro's company as he was the one who got her well informed about local politics, internal wars, as well as the signature of treaties and bonds with the Europeans. Adnan, her husband only allowed her to leave their home to go and teach with Jaji. It was then, when she met Moro at Maigida's tent, a slave trader.

> Before spending time in Maigida's back room … she hadn't seen this side of the slave raids. In the dank room, they weren't like the slaves who worked on Etuto's farm and went back to their own houses; in the dank room, they were caged. (*HWS* 106)

After Moro tells her about his life, she goes back to the slave trade,

> "Would Salaga be worse off if we simply stopped the trade?' 'Yes. We would have to replace the slaves with some other trade.' 'My father thinks is the kola nut…Tell me more. You do the raids; bring these people to Salaga to landlords like Maigida; then, what happens?' 'Maigida hosts the people who come in to buy the slaves.' 'And the buyers take them where?' 'Some to Asante, but we don't get many Asante buyers anymore. Now they are taken to the Gold Coast or down the Adirri [river]. Some stay in Salaga and end up working with families like yours.' Of all the options, a slave was probably best off with her family, she thought. 'And after that?' 'I've heard about a big sea'…what right did she have to question Moro's morality when her own family insisted on the trade. (*HWS* 107-8)

Moro has to end this relationship with Wurche because he is moving to Kete-Krachi where business is improving. Later on, she sees herself buying a girl: "'I'll take her,' Wurche said, nauseous. From spending time with Moro, the whole idea of slavery had grown questionable to her, and yet, in a heartbeat, without pausing, she'd offered to buy someone" (*HWS*, 149). In this last visit to Salaga, Wurche is again astonished by people's resilience. From her position of royal, of someone with power, she looks down on commoners: "They walked to the market. Laughter, loud conversations, drumbeats, dogs barking, singing, butchers hacking at meat, bells ringing. Everywhere Wurche turned, there was a flurry of activity. It amazed her how resilient human beings were. Things were broken but life went on" (*HWS* 148). Those are vulnerable resilient human beings, people determined to live, to seize hold of their destiny.

Sarah Bracke addresses such a figure of a resilient subject, "the resilience of the wretched of the earth, who make it through the day in conditions of often unbearable symbolic and material violence. People have survived under conditions of such extreme poverty that one lacks the means to provide for oneself" (60). Bracke, as we have mentioned in the previous chapter and we will show in the examples which follow, states that people cope differently with

stress, shock and trauma. Bracke introduces "a third figure of the resilient subject, the female subject who continues to survive patriarchy and who is considered individually responsible for her survival" (65). This assertion can timely apply to both pre-colonial and contemporary subjects in Ghana, as we can see in the analysis of Attah's novels. Her characters Lizzie, Wurche and Aminah tell so. In agreement with Mahmood, women can be agents within and not just against patriarchy. Let's take Wurche, for instance. "As a Gonja princess, she could do whatever she wanted, but as a wife of Dagbon, she couldn't. It was better to avoid angering Dagbon, on whose support Etuto still depended" (*HWS* 90). At the same time, her father Etuto, tells her about what power is:

> "It's all about control, Wurche" Whoever has control of Salaga is more powerful. My goal is to have the Europeans come here to trade directly. No Asante middlemen. The Europeans want the same thing…. But we have to stay in charge. … 'Honestly, those treaties do not sound beneficial to us.' 'They are. …Those days when we had to send over thousands of slaves [to the Asante] in tribute were terrible. Your neighbour could sell you out just like that.' Wurche wanted to tell her father that he was still enabling the trade that he was never in danger of ending up as a slave. She wanted to describe the people in Maigida's room. But what solution could she offer to replace the lucrative trade? She hadn't thought that far. (*HWS* 141)

We have mentioned Wurche's description of Salaga. On the contrary, when Aminah arrived in Salaga for the second time, her perspective on the city was different from Wurche's:

> While the rest of Salaga had fallen apart, [Maigida's back room] was a room conserved in time. It was whole and had kept its mouldy fermented smell. How many lives had been exchanged in there? Where were they now? … On the narrow streets of Salaga, people bent over piles of smocking rubble, their clothes torn and filthy, and gathered the charred remains of their lives. One man lowered a pot into a well and rinsed the soot off his face. … 'Why are there so many wells

> here?' asked Aminah. 'They were built to wash slaves after long journeys,' said Wurche. *A town created to sell human beings*, thought Aminah. A town like that could not prosper. It was probably why Salaga had suffered so many wars. (*HWS* 218)

Judith Butler in "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance" connects the concept of resistance to the concept of vulnerability and precarity, as well. For Butler vulnerability can be overcome through acts of resistance. For acts of resistance, we understand those of Lizzie in *HR*, and Hassana's in *HWS.* They have suffered from being beaten because they were determined to choose the life they wanted. In the same novel Issa has chosen his own death as an act of resistance. As agents of their own life within patriarchy and with their own body as an instrument of resistance, they are the ones who have control over their lives. We agree with Butler that

> There is plural and performative bodily resistance at work that shows how bodies are being acted on by social and economic policies that are decimating livelihoods. But these bodies, in showing this precarity, are also resisting these very powers; they enact a form of resistance that presupposes vulnerability of a specific kind, and opposes precarity. What is the conception of the body here, and how do we understand this form of resistance? We cannot understand bodily vulnerability outside this conception of social and material relations. (15)

Butler also addresses linguistic vulnerability, since who we are; even our ability to survive depends on the language that sustains us. We are exposed to name-calling. Attah also refers to this issue in relation to slavery. Many people benefited from this protracted struggle to abolish slavery, the royals included, as we will see in Wurche's family. Attah explains that a lot of African royal families were complicit in the slave trade. In indigenous slavery in Ghana,

slaves *were*[74] given names that have marked them to this day. Families *were* torn apart and people's lives were discarded if they were not considered profitable enough.[75]

Achille Mbembe in an interview to newspaper *El Diario* talks about the politics of viscerality, understanding the body as a visceral territory of resistance. When asked about the possibility to describe power without describing resistances to power, he answers that there are different ways of resistance which are correlative to any power. Mbembe contends that resistance to power and its limits are varied and depend on local situations and contexts. In reaction to this, new forms of resistance emerge, those related to the rehabilitation of affects, emotions and passions which converge in politics of viscerality, Mbembe concludes.

As we said at the beginning of the chapter, dealing with agency and resistance in accordance to Mahmood, Butler also understands vulnerability as a deliberate exposure to power, which is part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment (22). Since Aminah and her brother and sisters have been held captives Issa has refused food.

> Issa didn't eat the tiny morsel of meat Aminah gave him … Aminah cupped her hand to scoop the scalding gruel, blew on it, and led it to Issa's lips. He shook his head and pinched his lips shut tight. No matter how much she begged him, he wouldn't eat. The sight of the skin puckering above his lips began to annoy her. (*HWS 73,* 75**)**

They kept on walking and a bit later,

> Issa fell. He didn't trip or stumble. His body was sucked down as if called by the earth. His skeletal form staked itself against the grey metallic sheen of the rock. Aminah stared at the way his long bony legs had crisscrossed, as if someone had delicately arranged him into a neat pile. It was Hassana who got down and tried to revive him… [A horseman] peeled Hassana off Issa and picks him up as if he

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[74] Emphasized in the original.
[75] We will see many examples through the analysis of the novel.

> were a bird. They carried him, then flung him over the rock. Above the rock, the encircling vultures. Vultures were attracted to death[76].. … `Maybe this is better for him,' [Aminah] said. 'He was so weak.' … When they left the rocky place, dying began to seem an attractive option. 'Was dying better than living as they were? This was not a life. Not a destiny.' (*HWS* 79)

We are compelled to agree with Butler in that vulnerability can be a way of being exposed and agentic at the same time (24). Issa, Hassana and even Aminah could be examples of collective forms of resistance as subjects who establish their agency within power structures. Such forms of nonviolent resistance, as we will see in Hassana's instance, assert people's existence and the right to choose under such oppressive circumstances. As Butler asserts, "under certain conditions, continuing to exist, to move, and to breathe are forms of resistance" (26). So, we contend that the way people react to situations depends on every individual, as we will see in *HWS*: "The captives tried to function as one. They urinated and emptied their bowels at the same time, under watchful eyes. When they were given food, they made sure everyone got at least a small peace. But it was impossible to stay united in such conditions. Some of them were in more pain than others" (*HWS* 73).

Hassana is an example of agentic resistance. When the sisters were at Wofa Sarpong's farm, they learned that they were in a place near the Gold Coast where it was forbidden to keep slaves. People who had slaves pretended that they were their children. The day the British inspector came, Hassana refused to say that she was Wofa Sarpong's daughter, so he was fined by the inspector. Once the inspector had left, Hassana was beaten.

> When Wofa Sarpong beat his children, he *beat* them . . . He didn't stop until all the anger had drained out of him. Aminah and Hassana had been lucky so far . . .Wofa Sarpong was coming back . . . Hassana didn't look up at him, which must

[76] As Wurche's description of Salaga market.

> have angered him even more. He grabbed her ear and used that to lift her up from the ground. Hassana was screaming . . . Aminah watched motionless as Wofa Sarpong continued to whack Hassana. When he stopped…. Aminah dashed to Hassana, coiled on the ground, blood soaking through her wrapper… 'She needs to go'… 'Put her in here [the donkey cart] … Hassana had been traded for bales of cloth, a bag of salt, farm tools and two chickens… 'She get good buyer in Kintampo'… 'He'll take her to the big water.' (*HWS* 100)

Vulnerability appears as a socially induced condition which accounts for the disproportionate exposure to suffering, as we have shown with the slave raids. As Butler concludes, it is necessary to destroy resistance to vulnerability in order to resist (27). Hassana takes action. She wanted to leave in search of her twin sister Husseina separated from their family right after they had been taken in the raid. The twin sisters had a special connection. Hassana dreams about her sister been taken to the 'big water', therefore, in order to meet her, she wants Wofa Sarpong to sell her. This one together with Wurche's question to Moro about a big sea, are the only references to transatlantic slave trade in the novel.

In *Saturday's Shadows*, Attah's characters are examples of resistance to unjust and violent political regimes. They are subject to systemic violence in the way that we developed Žižek's classification of the concept in chapter two. Zahra's mother and Auntie Adisa, on the other hand, embody agentic resilience. In an interview for Africa Book Club, Attah summarizes the novel as "the story of a family in a fictional country in West Africa, trying to heal after a military dictatorship. It is written from the points of view of a father, a mother, a son and their house help… Sometimes the line between their internal stories and the external story of the country blurs in heart-breaking ways" (3). This is the case for Theo Avoka and his father, Linus Avoka, a minister to Doctor Saturday for whom he was framed. "My father was accused of embezzling funds meant for the building of a network of railroads, and of a conspiracy to destabilize the country… Eventually, he was placed under house arrest and executed by firing

squad a year later" (*S's S* 62). Theo's ambition to become president of the Students Representative Council at University was thwarted. "My father retreated into himself, developing all sorts of ailments – he grew grey overnight, his blood pressure shot up, and he suffered loud nightmares that sent my [4] younger siblings … scurrying into my room, where I tried to calm them…" (*S's S* 63).

Theo Avoka decided to take part in a plot to overthrow the dictatorship. Theo Avoka was writing the memoirs of Ghana's President, Doctor Karamoh Saturday a former dictator who killed people and spread terror among citizens. Theo joins a secret commission trying to find proof of killings. In fact, women were being killed in the capital apparently by the Saturday boys, as it was explained in chapter three. Ghana held general elections in 1996 with the currently holding office Jerry John Rawlings' National Democratic Congress victory. He had undergone two coup d'états previously and before 1996 he had been a dictator. There was a time of political and social unrest in Ghana in the 1980s and 1990s. Some similarities might be presumed with Attah's Doctor Saturday as Zahra Avoka explains that "Doctor Karamoh Saturday had given up his military regime and was now president of our fledging democratic country, but everyone knows a zebra never changes its stripes" (*S's S* 9). In the 1990s, a housecleaning exercise was conducted in Ghana. Its aim was, according to the editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, to purge Ghanaian society of all the corruption and social injustices that they perceived to be at the root of their coup d'état. Besides the killings of the Supreme Court justices, military officers and the killings and disappearance of over 300 other Ghanaians occurred. These killings were also relevant in Attah's first novel, *Harmattan Rain*. In a conversation about politics between Lizzie and her daughter Akua Afriyie whereas Lizzie is in favour of Rawlings' actions, her daughter accuses him of being a murderer:

> “He kidnapped and killed those High Court judges.” “Don’t say that! Those people deserved to die. They spent all Ghana’s money!” Akua Afriyie shuddered as she recalled that one of those judges was Dede’s aunt. A year ago, the charred bodies of three kidnapped judges were discovered outside Accra. The man behind the murder was a member of Rawlings’s government. (Kindle position 3635)

This is one more example to support Attah’s interest in the effects of history in her characters. The quotation below in Edward Brenya et al. addresses the violence exerted by the military government at the time.

> In the midst of this confrontation between populist forces and the legal establishment, the country was shocked by the news of the kidnap and murder of three high court judges and a retired army officer. On the night of June 30, 1982, gunmen abducted Mrs. Justice Cecilia Koranteng-Addow, Mr. Justice Sarkodee, Mr. Justice Agyepong, and Major Sam Acquah from their Accra homes. While no clear cut evidence linked the murders to the PNDC, it could be seen by Gyimah-Boadi and Rothchild as a result of the general lawlessness that has come to prevail in Ghana since the December 1982 coup and the patent antagonism that supporters of the Rawlings regime have directed toward the professional and managerial classes, and in particular toward the legal profession. Semblance of this anarchy is rife among the lower ranks of Rawlings’. (5)

They also deal with the violence that people suffered at the hands of soldiers.[77] “NDC in contemporary times as the so-called ‘foot soldiers’ of the party resort to violence and sometimes destructive behaviour in matters for which consensus becomes difficult to reach”. (5) At a time when violence was sadly common and a series of women’s murders attributed to

[77] In *Saturday’s Shadows*, Ayesha Attah introduces Nasar, one of those soldiers, a ‘Saturday boy’ to recount what their actions were.

the military state were taking place, there was social unrest which permeated the existence of the citizens.

The Avokas have not been insensitive to terror. This family is still vulnerable because, despite the fact that they had once enjoyed the privilege of belonging to the elite, within years they were touched by the government greed and madness and their situation changed for the worst. Theo is writing Doctor Saturday's memories although he knows Saturday killed his father and plotted to destroy his position. It is time for Theo to react. Theo Avoka is called to a meeting at Courtney Steele's house; she was there from the US …monitoring elections and the transfer of power from military to civilian rule (*S's S* 155)

> … [Courtney] wasted no time in letting me know why I was there. She and her friends wanted to get the International Criminal court to try Doctor Karamoh Saturday for crimes against humanity. My role: to find evidence. Letters, faxes, books he was reading. Anything that could create enough of a paper trail to open up an investigation. (*S's S 177*)

Theo is not sure about helping them; however, this could be a way to redress both his father's assassination and his own ruined career. This kind of activism implies, as Athena Athanasiou suggests "not only resistance through vulnerability, as a means of mobilizing solidarity against the normalization of violence, but also resistance to the normalizing violences that sustain the connections of vulnerability to gendered, [and] nationalized, … subjection" (261).

> I left the place totally confused. Should I report them to the Doctor, even though I actually believed he had to account for the atrocities he committed in the eighties? … This was my big chance to do something: to prove my dead father that I could be great, too; that I could make the wrongdoers pay; to show Zahra

> that I could be more than the man she wanted me to be. For the first time in my life, a proper door was being opened for me." (*S's S* 178-9)

Theo and Zahra hold important jobs although the atmosphere described of social and political anxiety of their country affects their wellbeing. Zahra's family had also suffered from doctor Saturday's greed. Zahra's vulnerability shows in her poor health, and due to her migraines, she bumps into a car when heading for her Christmas shopping. People witnessing the accident think she is a wealthy woman and demand action from her; the owner of the car wants to take advantage of the situation; first, she is a woman, next she looks well-off. She feels ill, so she begs the man to accept her money, meaning her Christmas celebrations will suffer as a consequence.

> "A crowd grow fast. Sellers, other drivers, gathered by my car. 'Lady, are you drunk?' … I wasn't given time to process what was going on. … I walked closer to the man's car and the crowd followed me … and it felt as if their bodies were pressing into me…. He looked at the crowd, and I followed his gaze. Lustful for their approval, he waited. … Their voices were rising, chanting, thrumming along with my headache: don't-take it-don't-take it-don't. … They grew into one giant monster and marched forward, ready to chew me up…. My pride was fuel for their anger…. Jaundiced or alcohol-reddened eyes swivelled from the departing man to me. They wouldn't stop staring, and I fixed my gaze on the girl carrying a pyramid of oranges. I couldn't tell if she pitied or envied me. (*S's S* 10-12-13)

In her diary she writes: "Either the madness seeped in from the outside, or it was a latent virus lurking in each of us …I know exactly when it hit me" (9). In the crash, the crowd gathers to know what will happen. "I thought that rage was good, even though I didn't want it directed at me … The person they should harass was up on the hill in the distance, the one who had made us poorer with oppression. Not me" (*S's S* 10, 12). The people in the street demand her to repair the damage. They are angry; however, they do not ask the same of the leader of the

country, therefore, these vulnerable resilient citizens are not able to destroy resistance to vulnerability in order to resist. Later on, in the novel, after a three-day blackout Zahra went to the electric company to ask for a solution. There she is faced with people's passive acceptance of this precarious situation, "How misguided we were. People were willing to suffer a lack of basic amenities in silence, but if your national football team had lost a game, they could be calling for blood" (*S's S* 98).

It is noteworthy, the significance that Attah gives to the crowd which gathers to know what will happen. She chooses to give the crowd a role, be they neighbours at Adukrom nº 2 or anonymous people in the street leading to the Bakoy Market. We find these similarities significant with witnesses in Ama Ata Aidoo's plays. These people witness others' vulnerability, standing there doing nothing to help. As in the Greek tragedy, and also in African drama, the choir has got a role to play. The choir is affected by the actions of the main characters and the way the action develops although they cannot act in order to change it. They can just be happy or worried by the running of events. These people are not determined to change the situation they are living in. This kind of non-agentic resilience is more like bouncing back[78]. Likewise, in *Harmattan Rain*, when Lizzie's father is beating her

> "'Papa Yaw is beating someone!" A shrill voice shouted inviting all in the village to come over and witness the spectacle. This was one of the things Lizzie hated most about the village. Everyone was in everyone's business. She picked herself up close to the exit, noticing the people lined the periphery of the compound and had completely enclosed her and Papa Yaw. …As she tried to escape, the crowd wouldn't part. Obviously, they wanted a good show at her expense. 'Go back to your houses. I beg you,' the Aduhene pleaded with the

[78] The ability of something to return to its original shape after it has been pulled, stretched, pressed, bent, etc. (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

> gathered crowd. His voice was too soft. Nobody seemed to hear him." (Kindle position 162,164,174)

Zahra Avoka works for Duell and Company and she is suspended under accusation of having falsified a signature in order to get a contract. Although this is not true, she has to charge with the responsibility. She is used to drinking in excess, most of the time to stop her migraines which are getting worse. She is also having an affair with someone whom she was in love upon finishing school. Although she is aware of the damage both the relationship and alcohol are causing on her, she is not able to stop. Therefore, there are similarities between Zahra's resistance when she consciously starts her own destruction and Aminah's brother and sister's in *HWS;* Issa's and Hassana's decision, to either die or to be beaten in order to end up with their oppressive pain. Zahra's body is a site of resistance as that of Hassana's and Issa's. In the end, she has destroyed her resistance to her vulnerability, caused by her illness, so that she can resist. When she is suspended, she decides to go to Obi's house, her lover. "My next stop was Auntie Rokia's wine shop, I don't know why I was spending money when I needed to save, but it was as if my auto-destruct button had been turned on, making me do each thing clinically, as if my life depended on it" (*S's S* 218).

> "'I've been going and going non-stop. And all of a sudden stuff is out of control. What's happened to my life?' … [Then, Obi told her that he was going back to England] … I thought age could alleviate the blow of a break up. … As an adult I just got crazy … I was so used to pretending to be perfect, to be above it all, that I couldn't understand my feelings, which seemed so base, so low, so common . . . Then the madness really took over . . . I received a call from a women's collective I'd been trying to woo for a while … I needed to do something or I'd go insane. (*S's S* 222-4)

Zahra visits Auntie Adisa and her collective of women. The struggles that Zahra undergoes in a violent run down city throughout the novel contrasts with "paradise", as Zahra

describes Auntie Adisa's farm, a cooperative of literate women who have chosen to work the soil being respectful to nature.

> We're a cooperative of women that started in 1980 . . . We're from different walks of life. I was once a school teacher. Some of us are nurses, housewives. We even have a bus driver. She explained how each of them focused on one crop to cultivate, how they were learning to process their raw materials, but wanted me to know that they weren't isolating themselves. Some women held other jobs in the cities or went to trade there, some were married and lived with their husbands and children, and others lived on their own and it was fine. We're just trying to live peacefully and productively. (*S's S* 261)

Ayesha Harruna Attah has been working on a project translating ancient African documents "whose aim is to give Africans access to the ways in which our ancestors lived so that we can find African solutions to African problems" (Africa Book Club par. 2). In *Saturday's Shadows*, for instance, we can see in Auntie Adisa's communitarian work, the proper African old model as a solution to Zahra's problems, although the author does not mean that this is the solution. In the end, she recovers from her illness in a village. We asked Ayesha Attah if this was a kind of "African solution", to which she replied that she was not proposing the village as a solution. "Africa has in its past had both the city and the village as places in which people reside. It's more of a looking back to see what was useful. In the village model, there was more cooperation and less competition, and that could be a value that Africans can use to solve everyday problems" (qtd. from our interview).

By the end of the novel and once she has been fired from work, dismissed by her lover and hardly dejected by her illness, Zahra becomes a new woman, she remembers her father and everything she learnt from him, the way her parents loved, and her connection with the land. She realizes the sacrifices older women had made for younger generations to live a better life.

She has also learnt how important the personal and spiritual connection is among women to build a project for the betterment of society, the importance of community. Zahra, her mother and Auntie Adisa are talking about regrets. Zahra experiences an evolution similar to that of Wurche in *HWS*. If we trace her progress she departed from a state of negation. She rebelled against her marriage, her motherhood and her work. The more she rebelled, the more vulnerable she felt. Then she underwent a stage where she was able to accept her illness and her own chosen way of destruction. Right before her operation and soon afterwards she is in a state of assertion. It is when she is truly connected with the land that she is able to find her balance. She has to negotiate in her own terms the way she wants to live her life. These stages in Zahra's evolution recall echoes of both ecofeminism and feminism of negotiation, as well. In our first chapter, we talked about Nnaemeka's nego-feminism. These women's thoughts connect with it since "in the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are principles of give and take, of compromise and balance" (377). For Nnaemeka the past and the present together give our life continuity and coherence.

Finally, in her recovery, Zahra is able to value her mother:

> "…the woman whom I'd avoided becoming because I thought her too dogmatic, too behind the times, too servile. And yet she was a woman who'd borne it all with resignation: a headstrong daughter; a husband who barely showed her he appreciated her; her thwarted desire to be surrounded by lots and lots of children she could take care of. . . .[her mother said] 'I wished I had gone to school. I should have begged to go to school. No, not begged. I should just have done it. Run away'. [Zahra] 'I wish I'd learned to be a better wife and mother … less selfish. . . My generation has always been about itself and its pleasure. We weren't so much into making sacrifices, which is what made you both such strong women'…. 'It was for our survival... Maybe this generation will figure

> out the secret formula" I said. "It's their turn to figure out how to get it right." (*S's S* 332–4)

It is necessary to look into the past to envision our future that is to imagine or expect that something is a likely or desirable possibility in the future. Likewise, Charmaine Pereira addresses the determination, perseverance that Attah's characters possess in order to face those challenges ahead "in order to dismantle existing relations of oppression and domination … creating more liberatory possibilities for African women and societies" (29).

In *Harmattan Rain* along the life of the three generations of women we can see the way Attah creates these "liberatory possibilities" that Pereira mentions. We asked the novelist about them as we find that Lizzie develops herself as the just-born independent Ghana whereas Akua Afriyie is more concerned about motherhood being so young and with a bright future ahead. To what Ayesha Attah answered:

> With *Harmattan Rain*, I wanted to explore different paths women take to finding themselves. Such an exploration called for women in different kinds of relationships with themselves and with their families. So, Lizzie was a woman who on paper had it all: a loving husband, several children; while Akua-Afriyie had one child and was on her own. It was also a mirroring of Ghana; just after independence we supposedly had it all, and then we were soon wracked with coup d'états. Both generations had their share of challenges and vulnerabilities although they manifested in different ways.

When Sugri gets Columbia University admission's letter, she is so excited that she is leaving home to a whole new country. It is then that Akua Afriyie becomes aware of what it means: "In all her excitement, the implications of Sugri getting into university hadn't sunk in, Till now. She'd been living for Sugri all these years. ... What was she going to do now? Her excitement waned. Her daughter was really going to be independent now. What-who was she going to live

for now?” (*HR* Kindle position 5190). She finds her way out through art, as we will see in the next chapter.

In connection with Pereira’s liberatory possibilities, stories also create a new world with new possibilities ahead. In “Storied Memories”, Sarah Foust Vinson states that “by telling new stories of the past, they [women writers] reframe their histories and validate their memories. In the process, they are able to construct new identities-identities that embrace possibilities previously denied and that resist a history of oppression-while also creating new ways of conceiving of the world and women’s past and possible futures within it” (12). This creation of new possible futures is clear as well in *HWS* when Aminah is freed and she starts a new life with a man whose past she wants to reconcile with and start writing a new history for herself and for her country. When Wurche frees Aminah, she decides that she will go to Moro. Before she left Wurche,

> “She stopped to contemplate what would have happened if someone else would have bought her. If it had been Moro or if she hadn’t met him at all. Where would she be? Her life had been treated as if she were no different from cattle or kola nuts. Stripped of control she continued past more huts, the two markets, now dead except for scavenging dogs. The Germans had killed the town. Even in her short stay in Salaga, she’d been intrigued by how much was sold there... This was a new start. She started dreaming of a shoe workroom, one that she and Moro would build, that she would decorate to remind herself of Botu. She would make shoes to sell, while Moro worked the earth, and their children would grow up learning to create and live with the land. And then, one day, her father would come by on his albino donkey and say he lost his way home. (*HWS* 231)

Foust Vinson asserts that “recognizing the ability of the past to affect the future and voicing silenced versions of the past to benefit the future, then, is a means of resistance available to those whose histories have been ignored” (13). She contends that to resist a debilitating

present dominated by grief, turning instead to a more positive future is only available through a new and different engagement with the past. This fact connects with the way the characters engage in a different way with their past. We have already mentioned Aminah's decision in *HWS*. In *S's S*, Zahra, after recovering from surgery, which has been a cathartic experience, starts a new life. Kojo Avoka's words by the end of the novel contain the gist of it: "'I am beginning to think, that life is about trying to find something better, whether you want to or not. But if you find something that works for the most part, you have to fight to keep it, otherwise life will force you to look for better, and a lot of the time it doesn't end up being so.' Atsu thinks about his words. He speaks truth" (*S's S* 338-9). Akua Afriyie in *HR* finds a more positive future, a different engagement with her past through art[79] when her daughter, Sugri visits her exhibition in New York. Aminah and Moro resist a debilitating present, they accept things happen by licabili or destiny, they engage with the past through forgiveness, which takes us back to it as a way to overcome trauma, analysed in the previous chapter.

In connection to the engagement to overcome the past, Sartre's introduction to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* that "we only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us," perfectly summarizes Aminah and Moro's development. Moro felt in love with Aminah from the moment he saw her and Aminah felt something similar. She fights against her feelings because he is a slave raider and what happened to her family due to the raids. However, she learnt to forgive, accepting loss in order to start a new life.

> "Later, she [Aminah] realized she wasn't thinking clearly. …She had to keep reminding herself who he was" (*HWS*, 180). "' I wish you didn't kidnap and sell

[79] We will be dealing with this aspect in chapter five as we agree with Attah that arts is a way both to reconcile with the past and to heal its wounds.

> people,' said Aminah …He then said, 'I'm sorry for everything you have suffered.' (*HWS*, 190) She didn't want to encourage the thought that something larger was pitting their paths in collision…her conflicted emotions. Her attraction to him. The repulsion she felt for who he was. The fact that she had to forgive him. She thought of Eeyah on the floor of their compound, of Issa, of the twins, of Na and the baby roasting to death. She was not yet ready. (*HWS*, 208) She hadn't decided how she wanted him to fit in her life. …the problem was that men like Moro had broken up her family, had broken her. It seemed foolish to love a person like that. What was the line between forgiveness and foolishness? (*HWS* 209-10)

A new life is a new start, a new story full of possibilities to be written. With Wurche's daughter's birth we witness a new path in life. She is Helmut's daughter, the German soldier. She calls her Bayaba after her mother in a way to reconcile with this part of her past. Wurche's mother was a concubine who died after giving her birth. Wurche asked Etuto for his blessing for the baby, but he refused.

> Life was funny. She, who had mistrusted the white man, now had a baby whose father was white. Her father, who went to the white man with open arms, refused to accept one of their children. 'Well, as they say, the child of a whore will be a whore too.' He went back into his inner room… All her life [Wurche]'d been afraid of this unsaid fact of her mother's identity. It didn't bother her as much as she'd expected, but it angered her that her father thought he could use it to insult her. (*HWS* 225)

Leticia Sabsay "On Vulnerability and Affect" states that Foucauldian understandings of subjectivation in general, and regulative power point to the fact that power dynamics may well require the subjective affective investment of individuals to effectively operate, and even produce these investments. According to this view, resistance is never opposed to power, but rather is one of its forms and possible effects. Resistance, she contends, can seek to transform

some of the effects of a power field, but by no means will resistance ever put an end to it. We cannot think of freedom or justice outside of power, nor can we aspire, through resistance, to achieve radical autonomy, self-transparency, or total social harmony (289). Resistance for Foucault is a never-ending struggle. As we have seen in Wurche, she will go on. This is Wurche's resistance whereas Aminah decided to forgive and carry on. Before Bayaba was born, Wurche wanted to go back to her family although not empty handed.

> She missed having a horse and the space to ride it. She missed her family. She missed the politics of Kpembe. In order to go back to Kpembe and truly thrive there, she needed to stay independent. It meant having money. Now that she had a new business, she would start saving. When she made enough money from the chickens, she would start buying horses. It was more lucrative. Money also meant power. Staying independent meant having information. She taught the women of Kete-Krachi with Jaji during the day and spent evenings studying Jaji's manuscripts when Shaibu, Moro and Helmut weren't around. When they showed up, she pressed them for political developments in Kete-Krachi and beyond. (*HWS* 192)

After Bayaba is born, things get worse. Wurche's brother is killed, and Etuto, her father commits suicide right afterwards. Therefore, Wurche decides to take action:

> "Power had shifted in Salaga-Kpembe and Kete-Krachi. 'There's a vacuum here,' said Wurche to Mma…. The infighting among our people, this struggle between us and the Europeans. It's all about finding power, exercising power, holding on to it to all costs. The Europeans are a force bigger than our tiny lines. The only way we will mean anything is if we unite. I've been talking to the women of Salaga. We'll rebuild together. Tell the elders. They'll listen to you. Enough people have died. It's time to work together.' (*HWS* 227-8)

In a way, this is exemplified by Wurche in her struggle to be heard; resistance to power within power. Earlier in the novel, she had insisted in the necessity of working together, as one

people, the Gonja people. "Yes, that is it. It's because everyone wants to be king. Even me. The moment Namba split away, it caused division. When Namba died, he left behind several lines. We don't think ourselves as one people. … If we don't stop, we're going to keep being fractured" (*HWS* 65).

As we have shown, those strategies used by Attah's character to resist to the circumstaces imposed on them acquiesce within power. If they are not subjected to power, they cannot resist. Therefore, women can be agents within and not just against those structures of power which push them away.

Chapter 5

Healing through storytelling: memory and reparation

5.1. Countermemory as a performative force which enables critical agency

Once we have analysed the effects of gender violence and trauma over subaltern subjects and the way they react to such exertion of power, either by resisting or being resilient, in this chapter we will be dealing with the different ways to recover from such trauma. As we have mentioned before, and Ayesha Attah herself agrees, art is a way to repair the wounds of the past as we will see in the character of Akua Afriyie in *Harmattan Rain*. We will also deal with the telling of stories of the past through literature which makes collective cultural memory a way to heal from those painful experiences in the past. Theo Avoka is writing Doctor Saturday's memoirs, but at the same time he is also writing his own. Ayesha Harruna Attah has declared that she wrote *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* when she learned that her great great-grandmother had been a slave at Salaga market in order to give her voice. So, by means of art, Attah's characters get to heal those wounds from the past despite having been strong people who resisted to the impositions of power as subjects of their own destiny.

In 1925, Maurice Halbwachs coined the term, 'collective memory' when dealing with memory in more general terms in his book *Le cadres socieaux de la mémoire.* Later, in 1950 he also wrote on collective memory. According to Halbwachs, the individual remembers when he comes to terms with the group's point of view and the group memory shows and is performed in every individual memory (Halbwachs, 2004 [1925] 7-11). "It is in this sense that exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection" (2011 [1950] 38). Halbwachs states that when we evoke a memory and we locate it; such memory is believed to be attached to everything that is around it (2004 [1925] 55).

Halbwachs analyses those social frames of memory which are created around the family, the religious group and the social classes. Such an analysis has proved very useful for the existence of identities, cultures, interests, social classes and institutions within a certain society, since to this multiplicity of social categories, there would correspond a plurality of collective memories within the same society (2004 [1925] 206-309). Other more general frames for Halbwachs are language, social representations of time and social representations of space which will make possible the proper process of remembrance itself (2004 [1925] 89). For this scholar, our thoughts have to pay attention to space in order that such and such category of memories appears (2011 [1950] 200).

Sarah K. Foust Vinson in *Storied Memories: Memory as Resistance in Contemporary Women's Literature* focuses on the promising importance of memory to resist oppression. Healing, she contends, can sometimes only occur through telling the stories of the past. "In fact, once multiple versions of history have been voiced and considered, and we have overcome the myth of historical objectivity based on singular accounts of history, historical narrative can

legitimate multiple constituencies while producing a more accurate version of the past comprised of multiple and divergent perspectives" (13).

As memory theorists explain, the way we conceive our identities and ourselves is also based on our relationships with others. The voicing of memory can be an act of resistance, for it allows for a different future of new possibilities for those who have been oppressed. Women writers employ memory to examine, resist, and thus overcome oppression in their narratives, in their personal and collective memories and in their lives. This is what Ayesha Attah means by giving voice to her great great-grandmother in *HWS*. We wanted to ask her about it. In the interview Ayesha Attah kindly accepted, we had the opportunity to ask her about both trauma and history:

> MDR: In *Anowa* Ama Ata Aidoo gives voice to a woman who is against slavery. Are you in a way giving voice to all those unheard suffering from slavery? You mentioned you found it difficult for people to speak about slavery in Salaga. Also, that "writing historical fiction is a way of fighting rootlessness and searching for what we lost when we suffered invasions on every front: physical, religious, cultural and so on." You said that in relation to *The Hundred Wells* and how "the effects of trauma could be passed through blood". I read Aminah as the resilient woman who is able to overcome trauma through love. Do you feel that you have healed your great-great grandmother's trauma? Do you think your generation of African women writers in Africa, and African people in general still have a relation to traumatized civilization(s) and society (ies)?
>
> AHA: I hope by telling my great great-grandmother's story, I have given her a voice. To be remembered as nameless is a travesty, and I've tried to fix that. In terms of her trauma, I don't know if I've healed it, but I think beginning to shed light on it, is the start. And whatever those residual effects of trauma have been on our family, I hope this book helps illuminate them. I think all people, not just African writers have a relation to trauma. America as a place was built on a lot

> of violence; a writer from that world can't escape that. It seeps in even in innocuous places.

Voicing those whose memory has been unheard, it is an act of resistance in the way writers in the anthology *African women writing resistance*, agree: "There is more than one type of resistance as it comes in a diversity of spaces and forms and uses different tools" (de Hernández et al.307). These writers are aware of the role their foremothers, their vision, but also their sweat, work, struggle, resistance and subversion; it didn't just happen. For this reason, they conclude, "each one of us does whatever we feel we can do to make this thread continue" (312).

Likewise, Achille Mbembe about its politics of viscerality mentions the way that resistance acts in countries such as South Africa fighting to transform the content of knowledge and the ways knowledge is produced to reactivate memory and resist forgetting. He contends that a rehabilitation of the voice is necessary, through artistic and symbolic expressions, which challenge the temptation of power to reduce to silence those voices that power does not want to listen to. These are the politics of viscerality, as a response to the brutalization of the nervous system typical of capitalism[80]. Such an artistic expression gives Akua Afriyie in *HR* the opportunity to voice, through her paintings, what she feels about maternity and love which truncated her adolescence dreams. Therefore, Attah in *S's S*, for instance, reactivate memory and resist forgetting writing the novel as a diary. Peter Hallward in *Absolutely Postcolonial* writes: "Writing itself is a response to disorientation, a counter-measure. To write here is to find a way through the apparent obscurity of things, to see what is "really going on" (300).

[80] From the article "Cuando el poder brutaliza el cuerpo, la resistencia asume una forma visceral".

5.2. Writing as narration of resistance to experience self-knowledge and self-healing.

Theo Avoka is writing Doctor Saturday's memoirs within the frame of a monthly column in a newspaper "Saturday's People by Theo Avoka", to see what is really going on:

> Some have branded me a coward. Others have called me brave. I have to agree with the first group. These essays would never have seen the light of day if Dr. Karamoh Saturday were still alive. *Saturday's People* is partly a memoir of my life and partly a biography of the doctor. (*S's S* 29)

That is what after so many years of obscurity, Theo Avoka decided to do:

> My father was killed in 1974, [he was placed under house arrest and executed by firing squad a year later] a year before I started working as a civil servant when the Doctor overthrew President Adama Longman in a coup. My father would have called me foolish for joining the government, but I felt I owed it to him. It was my turn to make things right. In some small way. How? I wasn't exactly sure yet. (*S's S* 63)

We could say, then, that Theo Avoka's diaries are his country's countermemory. In "Society Must Be Defended", Foucault established the notions of 'counter-history' and 'counter-memory':

> The history of some is not the history of others . . . It will be learned that one man's victory is another man's defeat…. This counter-history … also breaks the continuity of glory … It reveals that the light – the famous dazzling effect of power – is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into darkness. (69-70).

A counter-history is a history that speaks “from within the shadows”, “the discourse of those who have no glory, or of those who have lost it and who now find themselves, perhaps for a time - but probably for a long time - in darkness and silence” (70).

Athena Athanasiou in “Nonsovereign agonism (or Beyond Affirmation versus Vulnerability)” addresses countermemory which “becomes a performative force that registers what not everyone can emerge into the space of emergence, but also that not all ‘appear’ -as being seen and becoming worthy of attention-according to the dominant frames of visibility, recognizability, and representability”(263). She defines the “space of appearance” as “an agonal space implying the horrors of subjection and yet not devoid of agonistic action; a space emerging both as a power effect and as a possibility for critical agency” (263).

By the end of the novel, Zahra can read Theo’s diary:

> Doctor Karamoh Saturday died in 1995, before the end of his term, of what we were told were natural causes. … After the doctor was buried and gone, Theo told me he would be publishing the articles about his life as the Doctor’s ghostwriter and warned me that I featured in a few of them. Each month I bought copies of the newspaper but couldn’t bring myself to read them … But then one evening… [I] devoured them all, reliving moments I’d forgotten. While some facts were distorted, and I’d been stripped naked in front of fifteen million people, I wasn’t devastated. If this was his way of healing-just like my surgery and then my time at Auntie Adisa’s had purged me of my virus-then so be it.” (*S’s S* 346)

Anh Hua in “Gathering Our Sages, Mentors, and Healers: Postcolonial Women Writers and Narratives of Healing”, is concerned “with how writing and the creative arts can help women make sense of individual and collective pain by offering profound relief for the writer, the reader, and the larger community” (54). Quoting Judith Harris, Hua contends that writing

about painful experiences is "one way of repairing the self by reconstructing personal traumas in order to comprehend them" (67). The act of writing can facilitate a careful process of self-construction and renewal. Anh Hua cites some women writers who recognize the writer's social role as a healer. Bell hooks, for instance,

> …notes that writing is a healing place for women where our souls can speak and unfold, and it has been crucial to women's development of a counter-hegemonic experience of creativity within patriarchal culture. Writing can enhance our 'struggle to be self-defining', for it can emerge as a 'narrative of resistance', as a place to experience both 'self-discovery and self-recovery'. Words have the power to heal wounds. (68)

The question is that Ayesha Attah also makes a man heal the wounds of his country through his diaries as he also cures his own wounds. Theo Avoka's counter-history has made him stronger. He tells us about the period of transition to democracy while he aims to make justice to his father but also to those who ran his same destiny. Furthermore, he questions his individual and collective responsibility as he experiences feeling of guilt. Besides, he even thinks about reporting Doctor Saturday the plot in which he is involved[81]. All of these are the evils faced by who those who have undergone trauma. As we have stated previously, Ayesha Attah, as a womanist, believes in the wholeness and equal role of men and women for the well-being of all of humanity. It is not strange, then, that Theo Avoka acts as the healer even for Zahra's wounds.

In an interview for the newspaper *El diario* about Mbembe's politics of viscerality, he concludes that there is no proper memory, as in the memory of colonized peoples there are

[81] As we have already mentioned when dealing with trauma, Theo Avoka was asked to take part in a plot to accuse Doctor Saturday of the crimes he had committed during his dictatorship because the plotters thought that Theo could gather information as his official biographer.

fragments which cannot be recomposed into their initial unity. For him, the key to memory which works for emancipation is to be able to know how to live with what has been lost, which level of loss we can live with. Sometimes we cannot recover from anything but life goes on, we should be able to find those mechanisms to make that loss present. We have to live with that loss. Mbembe concludes that the collective memory of colonized people looks for ways to point out and live with that which was lost forever.[82]

The writers in the collection *African women writing resistance* agree on the necessity of looking into the past to envision the future:

> Oppression ruptures our experience of time by invalidating and erasing memory, turning the present into chaos, and blocking our ability to envision the future. The tearing apart of time interrupts the processes by which we construct coherent and continuous-seeming selves in the world: it interferes with our capacity to see ourselves as coming from somewhere, standing somewhere, and heading somewhere. For African women to be able to envision the future, therefore, we have a lot of work to do on the past and the present, to figure out their meaning and try to put together the broken pieces in a way that gives our lives some continuity and coherence."(303)

With *Harmattan Rain*, Ayesha Attah achieves this. Through three generations of women who fight their everyday, the reader witnesses this continuity. Lizzie runs away from Adukrom No.2 in search of her lover. Her first stop is a convent where the nuns advise her to study in a nursing school in Accra, also run by nuns. Once in Accra and after an unfruitful search, she stops looking for Bador Samed. She passes her exams and she becomes a nurse. She meets Ernest Mensah and they get married. He works in the import of luxury products from Germany, so he travels to Europe regularly. They have three children; Akua Afriyie is the eldest and the

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[82] In chapter 3 we talked about that loss for Aminah who was able to live after having lost her whole family.

character that Attah focuses on in the second part of the novel. Lizzie enjoys a comfortable and glamorous life. She has become the head of nurses at hospital. Everything seemed to go according to Lizzie's plans until; suddenly, she learns that Ernest had a daughter in Germany which he had kept secret. She tells him about it but they do not break up. Asantewa, Lizzie's youngest sister comes to Accra where she settles down and starts selling products in the market. When Akua Afriyie reveals that she is pregnant by a married man, Lizzie expels her from their home. She goes to her aunt Asantewa in whose house she will stay until her daughter Sugri is born and she is able to find a job. Akua Afriyie's dreams were snatched to become a mother. Eventually she reconciles with Lizzie who gets involved in Sugri's life. Sugri is a very clever girl who is admitted to Columbia University. They get to know Bador Samed, so called Babasam, who is insane and lives off people's charity.

When Akua Afriyie knew she was pregnant, she decided to go ahead. For this reason, she told Rashid Adams, her lover, who gave her money to get rid of the baby, " 'April 1979' Obviously you've made up your mind about what you want to do, so I'll let you be and deal with things my way," she said" (*HR* Kindle position 3156). After that she went to her house where her mother accused her "You don't know who got you pregnant?... or are you such a … such a prostitute that you don't even know…Pack a bag, Lizzie said, you're going to your auntie Asantewa' till this cools down" "I'm going back to school", Akua Afriyie, "To do what? You're having a baby. School is nowhere for you to be. Besides, that art you're studying is not going anywhere…" (*HR* Kindle Position 3207).

Akua Afriyie obeys her mother and she goes to live with her aunt. Some time later Akua gives birth to Sugri, she starts looking for a job and she moves into a flat on her own. When Sugri goes to New York, Akua Afriyie decides to start drawing lessons. She comes across an ad in the newspaper advertising Farida's studio where she makes a fresh start. From now

onwards and in parallel to the growing of her art, we attend to Akua's development as a woman once she is able to let her art heal her wounds from the past.

> "I'd like to take lessons." "Do you have the artistic bone?" Farida asked. "I guess…That's what I studied in school. But I haven't drawn in years. I'm so rusty." "Well, we're very serious her," Farida said… "Courses are twice a week for the first three months. Once you've proven yourself worthy of my time, the studio is open to you." … "Thanks," Akua Afriyie said…She loved it! And that Farida! Who better than a liberated woman to teach her art? (*HR* Kindle position 5225-5241)

As the lessons go on, Akua feels more confident with herself through her art and Farida notices it:

> "I know my students' traits from their work. Like you…you have all this suppressed energy in you. I felt it the first day you walked into my studio." "Life has a way of suppressing energy, doesn't it?" "In art, you need to let the suppressed energy erupt. You've started doing that. Letting go. You've been producing amazing work." (*HR* Kindle position 5296)

This artistic evolution stands for the act of healing Akua's wounds. She had to leave school once she chose to go ahead with her pregnancy. She fell in love with a man who rejected her for being a single mother. Farida interprets her past experiences through Akua's paintings: "You seem to be reaching into a sore of experiences you buried a long time ago that you are allowing to come to the surface. I'm sure your abstract work will be orgasmic. Why did you say life suppressed energy? It shouldn't." "Having children", Akua Afriyie said. "That burns inspiration" (*HR* Kindle position 5310).

Akua Afriyie has put all her passion in healing which has produced fine works of art which have captivated an American art curator: "Some American woman came by the studio today and was enthralled by your work," Farida said. … "A lot of people came in and can't stop

raving about your work. I think you've outgrown me. You need to find your own space" (*HR* Kindle position 5510).

Apart from the painful experience of her early maternity, she has not recovered yet from Pastor Edem's rejection, a failed relationship which also shows through in her paintings. "This American woman … says she's a curator in a Manhattan gallery…If I were you, I'd be on the phone calling her now." Akua Afriyie laughed…She had begun a religious series when Farida had let them work on abstract pieces. They were bloody and way too morbid" (*HR* Kindle position 5523).

Eventually, she phoned Karen Sanders, the curator. "Akua Afriyie, your work is really amazing. Your pieces had me staring at them over and over again. I love how your work expresses spirituality and motherhood at the same time. I bought one from Farida". … I'm gonna show your work to the other curators and the gallery owners. …I'll be calling you, hopefully with good news" (*HR* Kindle position 5537).

A year later, Karen Sanders asks Akua Afriyie for twenty pieces for an exhibition in New York in December the following year. She resigns from work because she wants to develop her art professionally.

> "Lots of work to be done so little time," Akua Afriyie said as she stood behind a large canvas she'd painted blood red. …She penciled in wings to the blood red heart in the center of the canvas. She painted them light pink. In the background was the faint image of a mask. [She] had conjured up the oval shape of Edem's face and eyes. She was finding him useful, after all. With a thinner brush, she drew a network of veins and arteries in grey and blue around the heart and used the same colors to make the wings come alive…. For the first time in years, she felt that her own life had direction. (*HR* Kindle position 5565)

Akua Afriyie becomes aware of herself, of what she wants to do with her life rather than being dragged by the events. Akua's worries since she became pregnant were those shared by the characters portrayed by African women writers after independence. They had to choose between motherhood and school. Her choice was more in keeping with her mother's generation than with hers. In fact, her lover, a married man older than her, something also commonplace in former novels, offers her money to have an abortion. Akua Afriyie turned her vulnerability into action when she was a teenager.

We asked Ayesha Attah about the relevance of art as a helper in the healing process to what she answered with a resounding yes. In the end, Akua Afriyie cannot make it for the exhibition in New York. Lizzie had just died in an accident. So, she asked Sugri to go in her place. Once in the gallery, Sugri was astonished as she hadn't seen any of her mother's last work

> …except for the one on the invitation. On it, a black hand held a heart that was covered with eyes on a blood red background…. Each piece Akua Afriyie had produced was different, but the room screams of blood. Every canvas had the colour red in it … She walked to one. It was titled, ABORTION…. A black baby was suspended in a sea of red by an umbilical cord. …The baby was smiling. She couldn't tell if the painting was for or against abortion. She lingered t at that painting for a while then made her way around the room, taking in all the moroseness of her mother's art. The last one was called MOTHERHOOD. Akua Afriyie had drawn the backs of three women. In the background a faint map of Ghana hovered and had been painted pink. A halo crowded the northern part of Ghana. The image was strangely biblical. (*HR* Kindle position 6827)

With this last painting, Akua Afriyie collects her past, her present and her future, being represented by Lizzie, herself and Sugri. She also purges herself of the decisions that have

haunted her, that is, abortion, motherhood, religion. We can also conclude in agreement with Attah that as well as art,

> writing, storytelling and oral histories have been very important in the great reckoning that is taking place between the past, the present and the future of African women. It is in the telling of our own experiences, our mothers'struggles, and our foremothers'visions that it becomes possible to piece together the lives that have been shredded across time and across generations. (de Hernández et al.307)

Such personal questions about who we are, why we are here and what lies beyond us can find answer in the telling of stories. Anh Hua suggests that we need to collectively tell, witness, share, and exchange our stories to pass them on through generations as a way of maintaining courage in our efforts to mobilize radical change for the greater global good. Postcolonial women writers, such as Ayesha Harruna Attah, trace and work through the painful memories of a wounded history, namely the history of slavery, colonization, and gendered and sexual violence, in order to heal and transcend them (59). Therefore, although we would not ascribe Attah's work to what Barbara Harlow described as resistance literature, it shares some traits of it as she portrays the political, ideological, and cultural parameters of the struggle for independence (xii).

Hua states that some postcolonial women writers do write from the "experiential and communal knowledge that 'history is what hurts[83]'" (59) since the painful effects of the past keep on affecting the present moment. We will show that hurt with Sugri's discovery of real history. As Hua asserts, postcolonial women's writing can help us to witness and heal from individual and collective events like sexual assault, spousal abuse, racial violence, slavery and

[83] After Fredric Jameson's assertion in *The Political Unconscious*, (pp.102), also mentioned earlier.

colonization. Hua quotes Cassie Premo Steele's suggestion that, "healing from memory means re-membering the split aspects of our existence, re-claiming the goodness of our bodies and our spirits, and re-storing to us the ability to use creativity as power: the power to create and not to destroy, the power to empower and not to oppress, the power to envision and not to blind" (60). There is an underlying thread in Attah's novels which proves the ability of most of her characters to use creativity as a power to improve.

"Healing," Aurora Levins Morales tells us, "takes place in community, in the telling and bearing witness, in the naming of trauma and in the grief and rage and defiance that follow" (qtd. in Hua 66). The connection between the "local manifestation of oppression", such as sexual assault, abuse or rape, and "societal abuses" like racism, poverty, homophobia or war is important for Morales. As Hua contends, "one way to collectively recover from societal abuses is to actively oppose the culture of domination both as an individual and as a collective" (66). Levins Morales agrees with Attah's necessity of passing on these stories as ways to inspire, mobilize and ensure the well-being of future generations.

Anh Hua concludes that

> we as women writers must write, at the least for these critical reasons: to heal our mind/body/spirit selves and communities; to find our voices in a mainstream culture that is determined to keep us silent; to connect the knowledge of our elders or the past generations with the learning of younger generations; to celebrate life, … in an environment of multiple oppressions and obstacles; to learn, build, and teach relations of trust, forgiveness, empathy and compassion; to learn and teach the ethics of rightful living…; and, in essence, to learn what it really means to be a 'new human' again.(69)

We believe, by the analysis of Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels and her opinions in the interviews collated, that she succeeds in fulfilling those critical reasons that Anh Hua urges women to write for.

Athena Vrettos in "Curative domains" explains that "the connection between physical pain and spiritual oppression is homologous to the linking of curative processes that partake of both physical and spiritual dimensions" (460). She states that there is a process of abandonment; things have to be left behind. She agrees with Alice Walker in that healing embodies both a return into the past and a means of uniting community as one heals one's wounds by healing the wounds of others (469). We have been able to prove this with Theo Avoka's diaries as well as the curative potential of language since narration itself acts as a means of recreating history and healing the past. What Attah, as a writer conveys is what Walker does, black women writers realize that pain "is not the end of the story, for all the young women-our mothers and grandmothers, *ourselves*-have not perished in the wilderness" (Walker 235). Furthermore, as it has previously been stated, this is also what the contributors to *African Women Writing Resistance* agree on.

Attah's novels infuse the importance of relationship among generations to her as a writer. In the interview for *Africadialogue*, she said that as an African, she agrees that "we are extensions of those who came before us". We wanted to know her opinion about the statement "We [young women] are our grandmother's dreams?"[84], bearing in mind the relationships between Aminah and Wurche in *HWS* and their grandmothers, and Sugri and Lizzie Achiia in *HR*. She said: "That's beautiful. I think we are. It fascinates me what we pass on in our genes,

[84] *African Women Writing Resistance* (295).

through our stories, and also through our dreams. We are here because they lived and dreamed and strived, so it seems obvious that we are their dreams, right?" (From our interview).

As we have already explained in previous chapters, Ayesha Attah writes historical fiction to connect the life of the people with the history of the country since she is interested in places and people and in the place people occupy. She gives her novels the vibrancy of being alive. Her characters go along with the rhythm of the city within the place they inhabit. Everything they do is determined by the times they are living in while the public sphere is totally conditioning the private lives of men and women alike. By writing historical fiction, the author is, in a way, trying to bring to the fore aspects which were veiled on purpose, so leaving wounds open which she means to heal. In chapter four of *The Collective Memory*, Halbwachs addresses space and the collective memory. For him, our habitual images of the external world are inseparable from our self as things are part of society and the forms of surroundings objects possess such significance. He refers to the permanence and interior appearance of a home which imposes on the group a comforting image of its own continuity. In *HWS,* Attah highlights the importance of space. Let's think about the description of Etuto's room after he has committed suicide or Aminah's father workshop in his absence. As Halbwachs states, "years of routine have flowed through a framework so uniform as to make it difficult to distinguish one year after another" (1). The reader in *HWS* witnesses how the slaves have been torn apart from their routine and their space so that, they do not want to familiarize with the new spaces they are staying at until they finally, if they have not died earlier, get to the slave's market. Aminah, her sister Hassana, and the other slave girls at Wofa Sarpong's farm, for instance, do not want to get close to each other, they do not want to share anything, even when they get to pick up the language, they pretend not to understand; they want to be detached from this new space and everything within it.

> Quietness had seeped and settled into Hassana when arrived on the farm … It spread within her like the mould that grew on their clothes, on their sheets, on everything. Whether it was because she realised there was no hope of returning to their old life, to her twin … she didn't say… In some ways, life wasn't that different from Aminah's routine in Botu. Some people had begun to remind her of people from home. Only now, she didn't laugh much… [The slave girls] whispered stories of home about themselves… (*HWS* 94-5)

Halbwachs contends that

> …the group's image of its external milieu and its stable relationship with its environment becomes paramount in the idea it forms of itself, permeating every element of its consciousness, moderating and governing its evolution. … the reason members of a group remain united, even after scattering and finding nothing in their new physical surroundings to recall the home they have left, is that they think of the old home and its layout. (*Collective Memory* 2)

Unfortunately, Aminah also keeps memories of her home burning with her grandmother, mother and younger brother there after they had been plucked from their village at night. As Halbwachs explains, urban changes, the demolition of a home, for example, inevitably affect the habits of a few people, perplexing and troubling them because any inhabitant from whom these old walls, rundown homes, and obscure passageway has created a little universe[85] "… who has many remembrances fastened to these images now obliterated forever, feels a whole part of himself dying with these things and regrets they could not last at least for his lifetime….. These groups adapt slowly, and in many circumstances, demonstrate an extraordinary capacity not to adapt[86]. They long ago designed their boundaries and defined their reactions in relation to a specific configuration of the physical environment" (*Collective Memory* 4).

[85] Even the zongo in *HWS* where every individual occupies his/her place.
[86] This has been Hassana's decision.

Thus, we understand, Halbwachs states, why spatial images play so important a role in collective memory. Place and group have each received the imprint of the other. Each aspect, he explains, each detail of this place has a meaning intelligent only to members of the group, for each portion of its space corresponds to various and different aspects of the structure and life of their society, at least of what is most stable in it. As the physical surroundings change, neither the group nor the collective memory remains the same. Ayesha Attah highlights the meaning of space and how it changes, be them buildings, Adukrom nº 2, Salaga, Accra, Kete-Krachi, Botu, or nature, the khaya tree, and the river Insu, to name but a few. Besides, as we have exemplified in former chapters, Wurche in *HWS* is astonished by people's resilience, the way they overcome from disaster. As Halbwachs states, "That is why great upheavals may severely shake society without altering the appearance of the city. Their effects are blunted as they filter down to those people who are closer to the stones than to the men[87]" (2).

It is not only homes and walls that persist or disappear through the centuries, but also that whole portion of the group in continuous contact with them, its life merged with things (3). That might be the reason why when slaves are deprived of everything, even humanity, they get rootless, and lose their identity and feeling of belonging, they have to start building everything again, and they have to build up a new home, a new life and a new collective memory, as well. Halbwachs asserts that

> Under the shock of such troubles we walk the streets and we are surprised to find life going on about us as if nothing had happened … Whereas the group evolves, the external appearance of the city changes more slowly. Habits related to a specific physical setting resist the forces tending to change them. This resistance

[87] The shoemaker in his shop, the merchant in his store, the people in the market, the children, the beggar.

> best indicates to what extent the collective memory of these groups is based on spatial images. (3)

Attah's recreation with place can be considered a symbolic manifestation of individual and collective memory, as both the city: "A hot harmattan afternoon, the sky was shaded with grey dust, and congestion was relentless. The traffic lights weren't working, not a single policeman stood in sight, and taxis and minivans cut in and out of tiny impossible spaces" (*S's S* 9), and the village

> Yes, she [Lizzie] thought, it was now or never. Run or be stuck… she ran… barefoot, she trampled over weeds, stones storm-tossed over wet laterite and dried twigs that pierced her sole…. She stopped running and studied the river… Her eyes fell on the tree under which she'd fallen in love with Bador Samed. I stood there like a beautiful colossus. Its trunk, unmoving, solid, firmly planted, pushed up to the sky. (*HR* Kindle position 242)

help build up the atmosphere where the lives of the characters develop. In a way, landscape moulds their coping with life's chores. The countryside,

> As they entered the town, Wurche heard the sound of water lapping against a shore: a slap followed by a receding whisper, at once violent and soothing. She wondered how long it would take her to grow used to this place's secrets, its night-time smell, the sound of its dawn. The grass was dry and patchy, but the air was damp and her skin didn't feel as taut as it did in Salaga. (*HWS* 172)

small villages, the zongo[88]

> Aminah dragged the twins out of the compound…. They set up their stools close to the zongo. In the evening light, the tents of the zongo were already standing tall and comfortable, as if they'd always belonged on Aminah's people's lands. Others were still taking shape as men of the caravan and men from Botu slice at

[88] A settlement of Hausa speaking traders.

> patches of tall grass. People carried sand from the waterhole and used it to shape blocks; some women were snapping off branches while others braided grass to form walls. The zongo had turned into a fair. Fires crackled; drums beat. The air smelled of smoke, meat and alcohol. (*HWS*11-2)

Hence, we agree with Neumann in that space serves to symbolically mediate past events, underlying the constant, physical presence of the multi-layered cultural past, which is even inscribed in the landscape and in the architecture (340). Salaga with its hundred wells is the best example of this assertion. In previous chapters we have detailed what the city means for the different characters, Aminah's point of view is that of a captive whereas Wurche and Mma Suma's point of view is as royals. Examples of destruction, dirtiness, violence and other distasteful descriptions have been mentioned in earlier chapters. What spoils the peaceful atmosphere of the villages and the desert and the bush is the slave trade; what spoils the city is war, and terror. When people become goods for trade, nature follows afterwards. The fact that space is so important both for collective and individual memory, takes us back to Nnaemeka's Nego-feminism, who addresses the indigenous as whatever the people consider important to their lives, whatever they regard as an authentic expression of themselves:

> Building on the indigenous by making it determine the form and content of development strategy, by ensuring that developmental change accommodates itself to these things, be they values, interest, aspirations and social institutions which are important in the life of the people. Traditional is not indigenous. It is a dynamic, evolving hybrid of different histories and geographies. (376-7)

Attah is more concerned with those different histories and geographies. In the interview published in *Literandra*, Ayesha Attah when asked about inspiration answered that "It was from reading writers who wrote deeply about place and the people who occupied those spaces" (par. 1). Kelly Baker also states the relation about people and space in relation to Lefebvre's work. In her essay on "Identity, Memory and Place", she states that "[Lefebvre]'s work engenders the

notion of place, which, representing a distinctive type of space is defined by the lived experiences and identifications of people" (24).

As an example, we quote Wurche's conversations with a German soldier:

> "What are your people doing here?" [Wurche] asked . . . She said when she was young, they never saw people like Helmut . . . Then suddenly it seemed as if, day after day, more pale people with unusual straight hair and multicolored eyes were showing up. "We were told that you would protect us. But from what?" "From people like the Asante . . . [who] dominated you for decades . . . Your own father told me this." "We can fight our own wars," said Wurche. "And you say you are helping us, but how are we to know it's not to take over our land and drive us away?"
>
> "This is the whole world [Helmut spread a map]," Various places had been marked in ink... if he'd travelled that distance in a ship; it had to be for a good reason. "My people moved, too," said Wurche. "And it was to conquer other people." "It's all about friendship," said Helmut. Wurche wasn't convinced, but she was tired. (194-5)

As it has been stated before, when Attah was asked about inspiration to write the novel[89], she affirmed she had written the book as a chance for her great-great grandmother, who had been slaved, to speak through her. Attah's great-great grandmother had ended up in the Salaga slave market in a period when, apart from different families or gates, competing to rule the area, Europeans wanted to control Salaga[90] as the connection to the interior of West Africa. She found it difficult to get information from the people, "attempts to find out about her lend to obstacles. People either simply didn't know much about her or they didn't want to talk" (*HWS*,

[89] The last section of this edition called "Q & A for the Hundred Wells of Salaga" is not numbered.

[90] After the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, British, French and German were making their way into the zone. There were different families vying for the throne of Salaga. Despite of the fact the area had been declared a neutral zone; European powers did not observe their own agreement and started signing treaties with the local chiefs.

in “Questions and Answers”). We will explain further on, silence is a strategy employed by Africans to forget their complicity in the slave trade.

Salaga was a Muslim trading town designated by Asante in the eighteenth century. Professor Akyeampong in “Northern factors in Asante History” mentions Salaga as the most prominent market in precolonial Ghana for kola and slaves. In *Salaga*: *The Struggle for Power*, Braimah and Goody go back to different written resources about the relevance of the city at the time Ayesha Attah sets her novel. This evidence shows Salaga’s strategic relevance in the commerce both of goods and people at the time depicted in the novel. One of them is Heinrich Klose’s description of the people at Salaga. “Because of the many slaves who converge upon Salaga from many different parts of the continent, a mixing of races has taken place…. It is only thanks to the slave trade that Salaga became so famous. Its geographical position is even better than that of Kete” (170). Later, he explains the provenance of the slaves, “It was mostly the Dagomba who kidnapped people from Grunshi and other neighbouring districts and sold them as slaves. …. Some Muslim colonies, situated on the borders of the pagan areas, also took part in the slave raids… there is another kind of slavery which originates in native law and which is nothing but a lawful punishment for a criminal” (171).

Professor Emmanuel Akyeampong in an Interview with Salagawura, Chief of Salaga, Alhaji Kanyiti Osman Fusheini, also collects the key role of Salaga at the time as a slave market: “(Chief): Salaga has been established for a long time. As our grandfathers told us, here started as a market. People started coming and it expanded. … Salaga was strategically placed and it was spreading and where we have a market that is where people came” (1). In another interview with Kpembewura, Chief of Kpembe, Alhaji Ibrahim Haruna, they explain the origin of slavery in the area:

> "P.A: Can you tell me how the whole slave trade was organized? The whole set up. Is it the same Hausa traders who bring them?
>
> K.P.W It was not only the Hausas; we have the Zambarama and the Mossi they also came in and they all brought slaves. Some Gonjas also raided, they went further north.
>
> P.A: So, when Gonjas raided did they do that to pay tribute to Asante or to sell or both?
>
> KPW: No, they raided because within ourselves we also pay tribute. Others pay tribute to us so all the three gates (or families) also had the areas that they raided. … So, these gates paid tributes to the Kpembewura. (2)

Having read those testimonies, we can understand how one of the issues at stake in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, is Africans' complicities with slave trade. Henry Louis Gates Jr addresses the issue:

> While we are all familiar with the role played by the United States and the European colonial powers…, there is very little discussion of the role Africans themselves played. And that role, it turns out, was a considerable one, especially for the slave-trading kingdoms of western and central Africa. The historians John Thornton and Linda Heywood of Boston University estimate that 90 percent of those shipped to the New World were enslaved by Africans and then sold to European traders…. the conquest and capture of Africans and their sale to Europeans was one of the main sources of foreign exchange for several African kingdoms for a very long time. (1)

Similarly, Ferdinand de Jong contends that public debates on the history of the slave trade and the continuity of domestic slaves remain absent in Ghana. Historians have privileged the implication of Europeans in the trade and even government textbooks highlight the glorious times of independence. They have chosen to forget their past, as silencing can be a strategy employed to overcome oppressive conditions.

Ayesha Harruna Attah, in one of the novel's appendix' questions tells about how a lot of African royal families were complicit in the slave trade,

> We haven't dealt with how a lot of African royal families were complicit in the slave trade… Bondage is bondage and I want us to talk about the past and deal with it. Not dealing with this past means it rears its ugly head every so often. In 2017, when the world heard that people from countries such as Senegal . . . were being auctioned off in Libya… everyone was outraged…But in addition … for me there was shame . . . We have to acknowledge the role we've played in slavery . . . Only then can we begin to stitch together the threads we need to heal and achieve true progress. (*Questions and Answers* Unnumbered)

In *HWS* it is the author who wants to heal her great- great grandmother's trauma by means of this story. She had found out that she had been a slave in Salaga and she wrote about her. In an interview to Electricliterature held in February 2019, she speaks about her reaction when she knew about her "… my initial reaction was a combination of shame and shock. … Writing this book was a … chance to purge myself of the fascination with royalty, and an exploration of the texture of slavery on the African continent" (par. 3). In the same interview, she speaks about slavery "I think that's what indigenous slavery is to most West Africans. We know of its existence, but we push so far back into the reaches of our minds and don't acknowledge it…. Internal slavery was supposedly not as dehumanizing as the trans-Atlantic slave trade had been, but this reasoning didn't sit well with me" (par.4). Ayesha Harruna Attah has promoted her novel in the US, so she is asked about reception on the part of African American readers, "This [novel] is one African girl's way of saying, "Sisters and brothers, I'm sorry we did this to you, I'm sorry we did this to ourselves. Can we talk? Can we build bridges?" I'm leaving myself open to discussion. I know some of this is going to be difficult, painful, even, but I hope it can be cathartic" (par. 6). This is not the first novel Attah deals with the issue of African slavery both internal and trans-Atlantic. In *HR,* Sugri's disappointment is revealing,

since it is not until she is in the US that she learns about Ghana's role in internal slavery. It is by means of a monologue released by an Afro-American artist:

> "Kunta Kinte sold me for fifty cents! They sold us for some shells and cloth, they're still doing it and they'd do it again. …. Sugri looked around self-consciously. She looked at Ellis who seemed amused. She had never thought of slavery as Africans selling off their people. To her it had always been Europeans who were responsible for pillaging Africa dry. Europeans were the only ones to blame. At least that was what she'd been taught in school. Hearing James Turner say Africans had sold "them" into slavery had shaken her awake. She hardly listened to any of the acts that came on after. (*HR* Kindle position 5923-5928)

What Sugri learnt in her History lessons are the official history of slavery whereas in the United States, she is confronted with Ghana's counter-history[91] . Unfortunately, as we have read in de Jong's analysis, this is what still happens today. Despite the fact that Ghana's government declared 2019 the Year of Return, marked with symbolic acts embodied by Ghanaian celebrities in the diaspora, the truth is that there is missing still recognition de facto in the complicit of African families in slavery. We have already documented such facts by Ayesha Attah's thoughts and the testimonies recorded by professor Akyeampong.

The monologue quoted before, made Sugri angry. In fact, Attah states in the interview "Ayesha Harruna Attah reimagines the fate of her enslaved ancestor", that when she started doing her research for *HWS*, "a word kept being bandied about- 'benign'. Internal slavery was supposedly not as dehumanizing as the trans-Atlantic slave trade had been, but this reasoning didn't sit well with me. Slave raids were violent affairs where the very young and old had no chance of surviving" (4).

[91] According to Foucault's theory.

By bringing together multiple, even incompatible versions of the past, fictions of memory can keep alive conflict about what exactly the collective past stands for and how it should be remembered. Moreover, as Neumann states, "to the extent that many fictions of memory link the hegemonic discourse to the unrealized and inexpressible possibilities of the past, they can become a force of continual innovation and cultural self-renewal." (341)

In the interview mentioned above, Attah is asked about *HWS*'s reception in the U.S.to which she answers that this novel is a way to apologize and ask build bridges and initiate dialogue. She is also asked about the way slavery is taught in Ghana and how slavery features in national consciousness. "For a long time", she says, "slavery in schools has focussed on the trans-Atlantic trade…The President of Ghana[92] has declared 2019, the year of return of the African Diaspora…What I've heard less of is: we were part of this horrible system and we are sorry, let's get to the root of this"(6). In Washington, D.C., in September 2018, Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo declared and formally launched the "Year of Return, Ghana 2019" for Africans in the Diaspora, giving fresh impetus to the quest to unite Africans on the continent with their brothers and sisters in the diaspora.

At that event, President Akufo-Addo declared: "We know of the extraordinary achievements and contributions they [Africans in the diaspora] made to the lives of the Americans, and it is important that this symbolic year—400 years later—we commemorate their existence and their sacrifices." In making the announcement President Akufo-Addo said: "Together on both sides of the Atlantic, we'll work to make sure that never again will we allow a handful of people with superior technology to walk into Africa, seize their people and sell

[92] visitghana.com/events/year-of-return-ghana-2019/ The "*Year of Return*, *Ghana 2019*" is a major landmark marketing campaign targeting the African – American and Diaspora Market to mark 400 *years* of the first enslaved African arriving in Jamestown Virginia.

them into slavery. That must be our resolution, that never again, never again!” [93] (“2019: Year of Return of the African Diaspora”) In this speech no African family is to blame, which is not the whole truth.

After having listened to the whole monologue, Sugri has an argument with Ellis about the position of African descendants in the United States

> “Aren’t Africans and African-Americans … aren’t we the same people? I mean, we all come from Africa, so why is there a big separation?” “Yes, we are …” Ellis started. “I just find it strange that you have all these people in there calling themselves afro-centric, wearing clothes from Africa but sit there agreeing that basically Africans sold them into slavery. Then why not reject Africa altogether?” “What did you want them to do? Start jeering?” Sugri glared at him. “I’m sorry. There are lots of people who don’t call themselves African-American. My parents, for instance, consider themselves Black-American. They said they’ve never been to Africa, and don’t feel a connection with the continent. I see it as really flawed, but I can’t quite disagree with a system of thinking that’s helping people who’ve been lost for so long form an identity.” (*HR* Kindle position 5930-5937)

Sugri is not convinced by Ellis’ arguments:

> “But people like James Turner will give others the wrong perception of Africa,” Sugri cut him off. “It was true, though, Sugri. African middlemen and Europeans worked together to get the slave trade rolling. Europeans couldn’t have done that all on their own. But let’s not let Turner ruin our two-month anniversary,” Ellis said … but her mind was far away. She was thinking of the role some great-great grandparent of hers could have played—snatching an innocent person and selling them off to get rum and guns (*HR* Kindle position 5938-5943).

[93] www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2018-march-2019/2019-year-return-african-diaspora Benjamin Tetteh.

Sugri has just experienced that 'history is what wounds': "Turner's words and the faces of the people in the bar resurfaced in Sugri's mind. Somehow the night had shaken her peaceful knowledge of the way things were. She felt weak. This was the first time something someone had said had taken a physical toll on her" *(HR* Kindle position 5945-5947).

Among Attah's three novels, *S's S* is the one which seeks by means of her characters to heal from storytelling. *Saturday's Shadows* is written as the compilation of the diaries written or thought (since Atsu is illiterate) by the main characters while the readers are driven by the lives, chores and deeds of these unsophisticated heroes and heroines. The characters' lives are really delimited by the running history of the country, a country in West Africa. Although Ghana is not mentioned, by the events depicted, one may presume it is. As we have already said, Theo Avoka is writing President Saturday's memoirs. At the same time, his own memoirs and those of her family are being written. As we said in chapter three, Ayesha Attah has written sections of her books as short stories. "Khaya Tree" is the beginning of *HR*, published in *Storytime Magazine*; "An incident in the way to Bakoy Market" is the beginning of *S's S*, published in *Asymptote*, and "Losing Hassana" was published in *Slush Pile Magazine*. *HR* is divided into 3 sections, one devoted to each generation and within it there are 33 chapters. Each chapter begins with the month and the year when the action takes place.

As Ayesha Attah states in *HWS,* "Questions and Answers", there are biographical aspects in her novels that we can also find in both her blog "Ugly Duckling Diaries", and in the interview to Circumspectre, she talks about inspiration for *Harmattan Rain,* "What if I write a story about what my mother's experience was and her mother's experience as well and I tie them in with a narrative about my own experience of life" (3) as for choosing the title, "I looked at the plot where there's a single and sudden violent happening. I thought about an event in

nature that would reflect that, and in West Africa there is the harmattan season where it's dry, so rain is a rare thing and is sometimes violent" (4).

We have already mentioned how important history is for Attah. In fact, one of the projects she was involved in has to do with translation of ancient African documents "[whose] aim is to give Africans access to the ways in which our ancestors lived- their philosophies, values, and worldviews- so that we can find African solutions to African problems" (qtd. from my interview). In an interview held by James Murua, she declares her love of historical fiction. "I gravitate towards the historical also because a part of me is searching for who we are as Africans, for what our essence was before outside influences of religion, philosophy, and ways of living became so rooted in us. Writing historical fiction is a way of chipping away at the question of who we are" (2).

Doctor Lizzie Attree in "Reclaiming Africa's Stolen Histories through Fiction" quotes Fiammeta Rocco in her review of Kenyan writer Peter Kimani's *Dance of the Jakaranda* for the New York Times, in which she noted the explosion of African writers exploring historical fiction. Kimani states that "writers are attempting to resolve or reflect on history," (2) which is not surprising since much of African history has been written by outsiders, as the subaltern Studies group had posited. Using the novel as a means of expressing alternative history, Doctor Attree contends, has long been at the center of postcolonial literary theory. Nowadays, there is a weightier movement toward the past that refocuses African fiction on the complexities of the continent's history. The time appears to have come for in-depth retellings and reclamations of what had previously been controlled by white European writers. Kimani affirms that "historical fiction serves to reclaim a people's history, or at least inject fresh perspectives to counter the dominant colonial views" (2). African historical fiction, Doctor Attree concludes is turning an increasingly uncomfortable lens on aspects of the past that have yet to be fully addressed. By

writing detailed personal stories, these authors reclaim ownership of a stolen history and lay the foundation for a future they will write for them. (2)

In her *Guardian* review to Ayesha Harruna Attah's *HWS*, Nadifa Mohamed suggests that, "One of the strengths of the novel is that it complicates the idea of what "African history" is, since Attah emphasizes often overlooked distinctions of religion, language and status" (1). We agree with this critic and we introduce Attah's own words about religion from our interview. "I am not a religious person, but I am intrigued by religion and the way it shapes culture and people. Some of my characters are very religious, while others, like Zahra, aren't. Sometimes, I have characters who are in the middle of questioning what they believe in, and they mirror my journey the most, because I don't think I will stop having questions about who we are, why we are here, what lies beyond us."

Sarah Foust Vinson analyses the power of narratives of memory or counter-memory in contemporary women writers. For her, women's literature is important to study the role of memory and resistance as women have been silenced for centuries by patriarchal domination. Those narratives present new ways to understand history, memory and women's identity. Storied accounts of memory, as she called them, are vital records of personal and collective memory which otherwise would have never been voiced or known. These narratives are so powerful because they provide a counter history to the official version as they check limited conceptions of culture and identity (9).

Nicola King claims that *"*personal identity is rehearsed again and again in a narrative which attempts to recover the self that existed before" (qtd.in Foust 7). Here lies the importance of storytelling. Among Attah's characters trying to recover their previous self are Theo Avoka who is doing so by means of his diaries, Atsu, the Avoka's house help, is determined to be a

literate woman and chooses her path in life as well as Aminah in *HWS* does. Even Zahra in her confused being tries eventually to recover herself.

Achille Mbembe in *Critique of the Black Reason*, addresses the denial of the racial signifier which "is still in many ways the inescapable language for the stories people tell about themselves, about their relationships with the Other, about memory and about power" (55). Wurche can identify this signifier when Helmut tells her about some precise documents:

> [Helmut] hesitated, and then said, "I read a dossier with information on the region, in which the Fulani were reported to be lazy. The report said they would rather lord it over others and own slaves, mostly because they were some of the first converts to Islam . . . And perhaps yours being a higher civilization because you're Muslims... A hint of triumph passed over Wurche, quickly replaced by annoyance. What was this big dossier? And why lump a whole people as lazy or hardworking or drunkards? (*HWS* 198)

For Mbembe, memory, remembrance and forgetting are powerful systems of representation which have meaning in relation to a secret which is not a secret but one does not want to admit it. He is especially interested in "those aspects of Black memory of the colony that transforms memory in a site of loss, on the one hand, and into the place where debts are settled, on the other" (104). Female characters try to reconcile with the history and memory of their people. Aminah, for instance is in conflict when she falls in love with Moro, a slave raider: "Her thoughts drifted back to Moro. If he was as kind as he seemed to be – constantly offering to help - why did he raid villages, split up families, sell people? These questions scratched at her insides and prevented her from even trying to be friends with him." (*HWS*, 188) In this instance, Mbembe refers to Fabien Eboussi Boulaga's vigilant memory which seeks liberation from the repetition of the alienation of slavery and colonization" (93).

Ayesha Attah does research of her past and such an exercise of collective memory reparation helps her characters to heal their wounds and to keep on living. These women either break the rules or adapt flexibly to the situation, whereas most of them are determined to change the way things are. Recognizing and accepting historical memory through storytelling allow Attah to show the world who these people are to walk a new path with this cultural and family burden in an act of reconciliation with the place they inhabit. In this context, in relation to Hannah Arendt, Mariela Cecilia Ávila explains that "the notion of history presented by Arendt is especially relevant, as when we glimpse it as a crystallization of aleatory events, it grants a relevant place to both luck and human freedom at the same time"[94] (56).

Aleida Assman in response to Peter Novick's comments to her lecture "A Community of Memory?" states the necessity to agree on a series of standards to help memory construction, and to reach them, " what is needed is not the adoption of eternal values, but rather a deeper knowledge, recognition, and internalization of the perspective of the respective other"(35). She contends that collective memory constructs remain meaningful and necessary, provided that they fit within a framework of shared knowledge and values. This means that there is an obvious need to identify and abolish problematic and pernicious memory strategies that still persist or have been revived in recent years. For her, the memory of shared suffering can provide a powerful link, although every memory of suffering comes with a memory of perpetrated violence (37). Despite the fact that she is talking about Europe and the Holocaust, we agree that it is necessary to turn *entangled* memories into shared *memories:* "a shared "historical consciousness" of events and their casual connections" (36). According to Arendt, one of the

[94] My translation from "la noción de historia que presenta Arendt cobra particular relevancia, pues al vislumbrarla como una cristalización de sucesos aleatorios, otorga un importante lugar al azar y a la libertad humana."

reasons why memories are so complex is that they are differently constructed on the levels of individual, family, society, and nation which may exist in mutual indifference, but they may also produce dissent and friction, and collide in counter-constructions. She does not suggest "neither a master narrative nor a common history textbook for all member states, but a generally agreed-upon frame of reference that is needed to communicate and negotiate conflicting memories in order to diminish the destructive differences of national memories by making them compatible with each other" (38).

Tzvetan Todorov stresses that there is nothing intrinsically good about recalling the past. In order to eliminate possible misuses of memory that can occur in working with traumas, such as memory generated out of self-interest, practices of memory need to be subordinated to an impersonal maxim of justice (*Hope and Memory*, 168-176). As well as Paul Ricoeur, he argued for the necessity to remember or to forget to avoid repetition or to cure the wounds of the past. The relation between identity and memory has been part of the reflections of Paul Ricoeur as he considers that it is through the acts of narrating and remembering that we can experience a sense of continuity of our self (8).

Birgit Neumann in "The Literary Representation of Memory" states that memory and processes of remembering, how individuals and groups remember their past and how they construct identities on the basis of their recollected memories, have always being a preeminent topic in literature. She contends that our memories are highly selective, and then the rendering of memories potentially tells us more about the rememberer's present, his or her desire and denial, than about the actual past events. Literature both thematically and formally, is closely

interwoven with the thematic complex of memory and identity. Only recently[95] have scholars begun investigating literary representations of collective memory (333).

Neumann goes on to explain the term “fictions of memory”, which alludes to the double meaning of fiction. First, it refers to literary, non-referential narratives that depict the workings of memory. Second, it addresses the stories that individuals or cultures tell about their past to answer the question “who am I?” or collectively “who are we?” Besides, they usually turn out to be an imaginative (re)construction of the past in response to current needs. “In fictions of memory, the process of remembering is evoked by what literary critics have called “mimesis of memory”: the ensemble of narrative forms and aesthetic techniques through which literary texts stage and reflect the workings of memory” (334). Thus, literature contributes to the negotiation of cultural memory. A study of fictional representations of memory yields insight into culturally prevalent concepts of memory, into stereotypical ideas of self and other, and into both sanctioned and unsanctioned memories.

According to Neumann, in novels in which the appropriation of the collective past is represented, perspective structure is a fundamental device that allows for the negotiation of collective memories, identities and value hierarchies. Texts with a multi-perspectival narration or focalization provide insight into the memories of several narrative instances or figures and in this way, they can reveal the functioning and problems of collective memory-creation (338). Ayesha Attah employs this perspective structure in her novels. In *Harmattan Rain*, she opens each section with the date it took place as the connection to real history because the current

[95] Sociologists, anthropologists and historians have investigated about individual and collective memory in the context of totalitarianisms in Europe and its fatal consequences. Cf. Maurice Halbwachs, Tzvetan Todorov, Michel Foucault, Pierre Nora, Paul Ricoeur, and Hannah Arendt.

time is crucial to the private lives of her characters. In this novel, she tells about the life of three generations of women in the same family alongside the history of Ghana from 1957 up to 1990s. The lives of these women run parallel to Ghana's history. Lizzie's enthusiastic point of view about Ghana's independence, together with the role played by Nkrumah and his praise to the work done by women to achieve independence from British rule is the spirit which underlies the novel. Attah highlights those facts of Ghana's history which influence the lives of the characters.

The Hundred Wells of Salaga's sections also maintain this perspective structure as the reader can learn about slavery at the time from every single one of its different angles. In this novel, Attah places the story in pre-colonial Ghana, where in spite of the legal abolition of slavery, slave commerce was still a thriving business. The story focuses on the period right before the war in Salaga in 1892 until the downfall of Salaga to German forces in 1897. The lives of the characters are affected by the scramble for Africa which took place between 1881 and 1914. Attah deals with internal fights for power within African chieftaincies as well as European intervention to take away native power. She also deals with internal slave trade, the role of women in Muslim societies and the encounter of native religions and those brought by the caravan trades from the North, together with the European influence. Voicing those silenced fictions of memory, they constitute an imaginative counter-memory, challenging the hegemonic memory culture and questioning the socially established boundary between remembering and forgetting. Neumann claims that there is a prevailing, unifying and binding memory (339).

By means of her novels, Attah is getting to the ingrain, though. In *HWS*, the reader witnesses the scramble for Africa and the necessary collaboration of local chiefs; in *HR*, Lizzie, Akua Afriyie and Sugri takes us through pre-independence to twentieth century Ghana politics and nation building, whereas Theo and Zahra Avoka in *S's S* show us the terror which underlies

a pretended fully fletched democracy. This is one of the reasons why, in *Cultural Memories of Non-Violent Struggles: Powerful Time*, editors advocate for the term 'cultural memory' rather than collective memory because it may draw on cultural history, on memories, on literary memory, on media memory, as well as on physical sites of memory. Once Attah's novels analysis has been completed, we very much agree with that assertion.

We would like to conclude with Aminah's father's words: "Nowhere is safe," he said, after a while. "But we can't live in fear. People keep talking of the horsemen as if it is a new thing. If it's not the horsemen, it'll be some disease, or a drought. There'll always be an unknown thing coming for us" (*HWS*, 18). We cannot but to recall the short story "Nowhere Cool" by the Ghanaian writer, Ama Ata Aidoo although with a little more of hope; we cannot live in fear:

> Nowhere cool, sister, ain't nowhere cool.
>
> Therefore, let me
> hide here among
> the thorns while
> I dine on wild desert grain
> And if they should ask
> you of me
> tell them
> the name of the game was
> Life, and
> I never learnt the rules.

Aminah, Wurche, Hassana, Zahra, Lizzie, and Akua Afriyie have decided to live in hope, as they have envisioned a different future. They accept who they are; what they are like, where they want to be; they forgive, and, most importantly, they have done that despite the horror of memory.

Conclusions

This dissertation has tried to contribute to the development of postcolonial criticism in African women's literature as it has been written as a comprehensive analysis of the development of postcolonial literature in Africa from writers in the 1960s who have influenced the literature of younger generations to contemporary writers. In those days, women writers did not think of themselves as feminists as the term was associated to White Western feminism. However, those writers were committed women who dealt with issues that worried women at a time when African countries were being granted independence from colonial powers. In 1988, Chandra Talpade Mohanty wrote against Western feminists' monolithic vision of Third World Women. She spoke of the issues intersecting within the category of woman in formerly colonized women in Africa, Asia, India, the Caribbean and white settlers' colonies, too. From then onwards, different feminisms were taking shape in Africa, triggered by grassroots women's movements.

Younger generations of African women, and Ghanaian in particular, are vocal about their feminism both in literature and social networking sites. In our dissertation, a broad analysis of the situation of women in Ghana, which has also set the current literary scene as far as women writers are concerned, has been incorporated. Thus, we have contributed to bring to the fore the literary production of the Ghanaian writer Ayesha Harruna Attah, whose novels *Harmattan Rain* (2009), *Saturday's Shadows* (2015) and *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* (2018) have been the focus of our analysis.

Our initial hypothesis, namely, a reformulation of the perspectives from which Western feminist criticism has interpreted African women's literature, has been proved. Furthermore, this dissertation has updated contemporary Ghanaian women's literature situation. Both, the impact of memory in Attah's novels as well as the conceptual implications of agency and resistance, together with the power that resilience exerts on subjects, have been thought relevant. It has also been shown the way vulnerability is an enabling condition and in which ways the corpus details an individual and collective answer to trauma, which is healing through art.

Key elements from Post-colonial Studies have been taken into account in relation to the subaltern, that is, the construction of identity which is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society. This scenario connects with a twenty first century milieu of fear as identity, be it national or religious, which is being cast doubt on. When dealing with post-colonial critical theory, it is necessary to conceptualize the category of history from this perspective. The central problem when shaping a modern Eurocentric world is, for Robert Young, the construction of history and historiography. As it has been stated in this dissertation, other theorists turn away from Eurocentric historicism such as the 'subaltern studies' collective who apart from trying to identify the modes of domination that make subalterns subordinate to power, also look for an understanding of subaltern peoples as subjects to their own histories. Another way to challenge Eurocentric historicism has been the 'colonial discourse analysis,' which advocates for discourse as a concept that considers social subjects, social consciousness to be formed through a form of power that circulates in and around the social fabric, framing social subjects through strategies of regulation and exclusion that also control what can be said. In the twenty first century, for Peter Hallward what is at risk is the global and contemporary

discrimination of fundamental approaches to our general conceptions of agency and context, self and other, politics and particularity.

To connect European postcolonial theory to postcolonial criticism from former colonized countries, we have explained how post-colonial literary theory emerged from the inability of European theory to adequately deal with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing. European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of 'the universal'. As Brydon states, marginality became an unprecedented source of creative energy.

In chapter one, different African literary theories have been analyzed. Starting from Black criticism, which overlooks the very great cultural differences between literatures produced by a Black minority in a rich and powerful white country and those produced by the Black majority population of an independent nation, especially since the latter nations are often still experiencing the residual effects of foreign domination in the political and economic spheres. On the one hand, the concept of Négritude (1920s and 1930s) has been approached as the most pronounced assertion of the distinctive qualities of Black culture and identity. Even though in making this assertion it adopted stereotypes which curiously reflected European prejudice, it was one of the decisive concepts in the development of Black consciousness. By these means, Négritudinist thought asserts its dependence on the categories and features of the colonizing culture. On the other hand, Anglophone social and functional theory insisted on the social role of the African artist and the denial of the European preoccupation with individual experience, which has been one of the most distinctive features in the assertion of a unique African aesthetic. This urge to resist the cultural incorporation of African writing in the 60s and early 70s continued in projects aimed at the "decolonization" of African culture, and in the desire to return to pre-colonial languages and cultural modes involving a much more radical

movement away from European values and systems, including the language as a bearer of culture. In Africa, the dominant critical concern has been an emphasis on literature social commitment and a broader socio-political perspective.

In order to contextualise our Ghanaian writer, we have included an overview of Postcolonial Feminism as a critical approach to theory that takes aim at the legacies of colonialism and their ongoing effects on women and gender, from the Third Wave of North American Feminism to Afro-American feminisms. As Western feminism produces knowledge as well as subjects and identities and speaks for the Other dominating and /or silencing those other voices, refusing then to accept other realities, it places itself in the centre as one more manifestation of neocolonialism. In this light and among many scholars, Chandra T. Mohanty argued that, just as men reduced women to the other, so the white women had constructed the Third World women as the other to herself.

In their engagement with the issue of representation, postcolonial feminist critics, together with other US women of colour, have insisted upon the specificities of race, class, nationality, religion, and sexualities that intersect with gender, and the hierarchies, epistemic as well as political, social, and economic that exists among women. The term 'double colonization' has been called back in relation to Third World women who experienced oppression, first as a colonized subject and second as a woman. It is necessary then, as Cherríe Moraga has claimed, that feminist theory addresses how individual people can acknowledge racist presumptions, practices, and prejudices within their own lives and try to stop their perpetuation through this awareness.

Within this general frame, the study of African Feminisms has been approached in our dissertation. The different manifestations of feminism in Africa, and its connection with Black feminism have been discussed, paying attention to the fluid character of these movements,

keeping in mind a common concern to African feminisms, in order to seek female agency and autonomy. Therefore**,** the specificity of African feminisms has been highlighted since they do not spring from feminisms in the West but from the fight for independence side by side with their male counterparts. This fight for freedom saw that once in power, men forgot about equality in rights and representation. As it has been developed in this dissertation, African feminisms are diverse but at the same time, they share some common features, namely, intersectional analysis, the need to name themselves and to define their own agenda and the vindication of equality within the community. African feminisms have been dealt with both as an activist movement and as a body of ideas that underline the need for a positive transformation of society such qs the idea that women should not be marginalized but treated as full citizens in all spheres of life.

The beginning of feminist Afro-American criticism has been traced back to the printing of Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens.* Its main repercussions were on the one hand, to check the literary tradition including a greater amount of work by black women, and on the other hand, to investigate and eradicate myths and stereotypes about the role of coloured women. Walker upholds the term *womanist* as a woman who appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility, and women's strength and who is committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Walker as well as many other women writers and feminist critics in general, agree that literature is not only a personal affirmation, it is also innately political and philosophical, the reason why its purpose is to bring changes on people.

As it has been discussed in our dissertation, African women, despite the difficulties, have made their voices heard both within and outside the continent, as they write about resistance and commitment. By the end of the twentieth century, Florence Stratton in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* criticised the lack of critical

studies about women's literature in Africa. Although she does not totally agree with the term African feminism, Filomena Chioma Steady states that there is a specifically African feminism as she does not understand it as a Western import but rather as a strategy developed and adopted by women writers to survive ~~to~~ racial, sexual and class oppression. She analysed socio-literary relationships as they are determined by the categories of race or gender and also because of the heterogeneous constitution of the subject.

Most African women writers believe that they should be committed as writer, women and Third World people, as womanhood is implicated in all three aspects of identity. Furthermore, the importance that African critics grant to male cooperation in their demands is big. Steady also considered paramount the involvement of men which underlies every African theorization of feminism: the need for cooperation. As Steady does, Carole Boyce-Davies and Ann Graves in *Ngambika* recognized the common struggle of African men and women, challenging men to be aware of those aspects of women subjugation which are not common to the generalized oppression of all African people, something unique to African feminisms.

Therefore, the terms coined in Africa to adopt Walker's 'Womanism' have been reviewed. Chikwenge Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole evolved in the direction of African Womanism. 'Womanism/woman palavering' is a term described by Chikwenye Okongo Ogunyemi, which applies especially in West Africa (Nigerian Womanist literary criticism). She states that a black woman writer, be she African or American, has to incorporate in her writings, along with her consciousness of sexual issues, racial, social, national, economic and political considerations into her philosophy. "Africana Womanism" was a term coined by Clenora Hudson-Weems by means of which she names Africanans to Continental Africans and Africans in the ones in the diaspora to support her concern with men and women working together. In the same vein, Mary Modupe Kolawole defines the ideology of 'womanism' as the

totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural ways to conclude that African women writers are not voiceless. Furthermore, 'Motherism' is an Afrocentric alternative to feminism by Catherine Acholonu who supports the traditional role of the African woman was essentially that of a matriarch and a social nurturer and her status ranged from that of royalty or leadership to that of a goddess, a priestess, a soldier and a quintessential partner to man in the African society. Nigerian Chioma Opara coined the term 'Femalism' by means of which the female body is considered as a site of patriarchal abuse and violence on the African continent as the bearer of European colonialism and exploitation.

Finally, ecofeminism and nego feminism have also been overviewed in our dissertation. Ecofeminism grows from the idea that a woman's ethics are closer to nature than a man's and it revalues feminine traits. It aims to connect politics with spiritualism. The control over and exploitation of nature is linked to the control over and exploitation of human beings. Kenya, with the Green Belt Movement led by Wangari Mathai who advocates for women in rural communities, put forward their genuine voice speaking out for their human, environmental, civil and political rights. Obioma Nnaemeka coined the term 'nego- feminism' as the feminism of negotiation, give and take, compromise and balance. Therefore, African feminisms challenge through negotiation and compromise. For Nnaemeka, it is necessary that for a true global feminism, we go across borders, which entails learning about the "other", as the other teaches community, alliance and connectedness.

In agreement with Amina Mama, it has been stated that feminism in post-colonial contexts presents a praxis that directly opposes the hegemonic interests of multinational corporations, international financial and development agencies and nation-states, as well as the male domination of disparate traditional structures, civil society traditional structures, civil society formations and social movements. Likewise, it has been stated that African feminisms

are shaped by a variety of contexts, movements, and historical moments. The African feminist movement is characterized by an ongoing process of self-definition and re-definition, a broad-based membership and, a resistance to the distortions and misrepresentations by western global feminism. It is a 'feminism of negotiation' which takes into account the efforts to reconcile the power dynamics of the continent, nationally and within the movement. Their commitment to collective action is important, so as to make a difference to the situation of men, women and children and achieve gender equality.

Furthermore, Ghana and its cultural production has been approached, first by contextualizing Ghana's historical and political framework before and after colonization, and then, by unfolding Ghanaian social framework in relation to gender and sexuality. The last section of part one has been an overview of literature in Ghana starting with pioneer writers in vernacular languages to continue with contemporary Ghanaian writers in English. Ayesha Harruna Attah's literary production has been framed within a tradition of women writers in Ghana from the forerunners, Adelaide Casely-Hayford and Mabel Dove-Danquah to post-independence women writers, namely, Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo and Ama Darko going through contemporary Ghanaian women writers.

Ghana's social framework has been analyzed in relation to gender and sexuality to highlight that women also suffered from the effects of decolonization. Neo-colonization had equally affected the area which employed women, and their role in the social structures had changed due to the high number of female population. Data has shown that women constitute 51.2% of Ghana's population and still their participation at levels of decision making is very low. This can be attributed to patriarchy or male dominance, a key aspect of the Ghanaian social system perpetuated by custom, law and even religion. To improve that situation, Ghana has signed and ratified various regional, continental and international frameworks and has pledged

in various forums and platforms its commitment to promoting gender equality and women empowerment. Therefore, we understand Kelleher's cautionary conclusion against the appropriation of women's economic empowerment by wider global agendas due to current international interest in women's economic empowerment. To prevent this, she advises women to become more vocal on the issues across all areas of engagement.

It is believed, as we have seen in Coquery-Vidrovitch's analysis, that the future development of marginal people is in education. If education is important to any social group, for women in Africa it becomes the main propellant for changes in their situation. Besides, it is also important to map African sexualities to understand the link between women's sexualities and their subordinate status in society. For this reason, feminist institutions, networks and scholars in Africa research sexuality in new ways. Following Tamale, relevant aspects have been taken into account when theorizing women's sexualities, such as the machinations of Africa's 'structurally adjusted' economies and the attendant 'feminization of poverty' when analyzing women's involvement in commercial sex work and the heightened prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Besides, there are initiatives to empower young girls to stay in school, apart from stressing that if they express their sexuality, they must maintain control over what happens to their body.

The second chapter of our dissertation focuses on methodology. Within the frame of postcolonial feminism, the conceptual implication of agency and resistance has been revised as well as the power that resilience exerts on the subjects. It has also taken Trauma theory and Subaltern Studies into consideration to approach vulnerable women as subalterns for whom vulnerability is an enabling condition. The chapter begins with Michel Foucault's analysis of the development of the concept of power which leads him to the concepts of biohistory and biopolitics in relation to sovereignty and its implications to the body. Slavoj Žižek's analysis

of violence connects with the concept of power and the way this is exercised by the state on subjects' bodies. Who those subjects are, and how those subjects are constituted will lead us to the question of both, the gendered subaltern body subject to violence and her healing after trauma. Judith Butler's study on precarity, as an induced human condition derived from the exercise of power on vulnerable subjects, has also been taken into account. Furthermore, Sara Bracke concludes that resilience is a direct consequence of state control. As Foucault claimed in *Dits et Écrits*, society's control over its members it is not only exerted by means of consciousness or ideology, but also in the body and with the body. For capitalist societies, the biopolitical is what matters above all, the biological, the somatic, and the corporeal. The way power is exerted in postcolonial societies, is by depriving citizens of their rights in a violent way, which makes these subaltern subjects employ those strategies of resistance in which they become agents of their own stories.

Feminism has proved a crucial part of these networks of solidarity and resistance because feminist critique destabilizes those institutions that depend on the reproduction of inequality and injustice, and it criticizes those institutions and practices that inflict violence on women and gender minorities. Therefore, it is a feminist task to undo this binary, vulnerability as the opposite of agency. In practices of nonviolent resistance, bodily vulnerability has been understood as something that is actually mobilized for the purposes of resistance. As it has been proved that in vulnerability there is agency, where the agent is a subject, so in the corpus analyzed, we have stated that if subaltern women have not the capacity to speak, it is by means of resistance and vulnerability that they speak, that they mobilize and become agents of change. They are not spoken by, they are not acted upon, and they are vocal women who, through strategies of resistance, bring about an amelioration of their lives both private and public.

Moreover, Slavoj Žižek's reflections on violence exercised by states on citizens after Foucault's conclusions have also been taken into consideration to get to systemic violence that is inherent in the social conditions of global capitalism, which involve the 'automatic' creation of excluded and dispensable individuals from the homeless to the unemployed. Those vulnerable subjects have been created by a mechanism of systemic violence which affects primarily women in postcolonial countries. As it has been stated above in relation to Ghana, the appropriation of women's economic empowerment by wider global agendas is a way to increase and maintain women's position of subalternity. Those vulnerable women are necessary to keep the social order agreed by capitalism. For these reasons, violence against women inherent to this normal state of things is invisible.

Part one finishes addressing the concept of resilience in connection to vulnerability and resistance within the frames of power and violence already analyzed, following Bracke, who also explores what a politics of resistance to resilience might look like. Nevertheless, such position of vulnerability can be used to transform subalternity. This is so because vulnerability here brings us the question of social transformation, while resilience effectively undermines the capacity to resist, therefore it should be resisted and rejected. The strategy then is for subaltern subjects to be agents of their own vulnerability. According to Sarah Bracke, under such conditions, a subject of subaltern resilience appears as one who has survived colonization, exploitation and wars and which maintains positions of subalternity. Where a vulnerable collective survives, is in its own transformation that is vulnerability's resilience. Therefore, individuals transform themselves into the willing subjects of a moral discourse through the subject's agency.

Departing from Bracke's subject of subaltern resilience, questions of trauma and vulnerable women as subalterns have also been analyzed. In this section the different theories of trauma

have been approached, including postcolonial trauma. Trauma has been understood as a response to an event outside the range of usual human experience. Therefore, it may provide the very link between cultures within the traumas of contemporary history. This is something which has been proved in the analysis of Attah's novels in the second part of our dissertation. Postcolonial trauma theory has been reviewed since it takes into account historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received. Due to the fact that colonial and postcolonial traumas persist into the present, it is necessary to be attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance which these contexts attract. The aim of the Subaltern Studies group is that the social and historic relations have to be taken into account, and that traumatic histories of subordinate groups should be situated against the histories of socially dominant groups to produce historical analyses in which the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of their own history. Furthermore, it has been explained that postcolonial trauma fiction assigns meaning to themes of recuperation, redress, and resilience. For that reason, narratives of trauma as organized, detailed, verbal accounts, oriented in time and historical content contribute to healing and recovery.

This theoretical framework has been completed with the analysis of the subaltern starting from Gramsci's claim that the history of the subaltern social group is necessarily fragmented and episodic since they are always subject to the activity of ruling groups even when they rebel. Clearly subaltern subjects have less access to the means by which they may control their own representation, and less access to cultural and social institutions. However, as it has already been seen, Gayatri Spivak is critical to the 'subaltern taxonomy' since for the 'true' subaltern group whose identity is difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself. Her point is that no act of dissent or resistance occurs on behalf of an essential subaltern subject entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the

language and the conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks. The existence of post-colonial discourse itself is an example of such speaking, and in most cases the dominant language or mode of representation is appropriated so that the marginal voice can be heard. For Spivak, there is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak. By implication, the silencing of the subaltern woman extends to the whole of the colonial world, and to the silencing and muting of all natives, male and female. However, in the case of contemporary African writers, the heroines they portray characters' consciousness is not that of a colonial subject but of a subject of subaltern resilience.

In part two of our dissertation, through the analyses of Attah's novels, we have discussed the way in which Attah deals with reconciling differences and healing woundings of the past in her female characters. Forgiveness invites serious conceptualization in postcolonial trauma studies as a factor in the engagement with trauma, including attention to resilience, non-western modes of spiritual counselling and reception of trauma. Forgiveness in the works of Ayesha Harruna Attah is considered a key issue when dealing with healing traumas. As well as forgiveness, the relevance of the past to younger generations also concerns Attah in the same vein of Walter Benjamin's thought who appeals to the responsibility of present generations in righting the wrongs of the past.

This way, the second part of this dissertation has analysed Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels under the framework described. Ayesha Attah has stated her passion for the historical novel where the lives of the people are intertwined with the running of their country. She is also in search of their identity as Africans before any external influences had shaped the continent as we know it nowadays. In this search the author and her characters come to face a reality stated by Jameson, that it is history what hurts. Therefore, Attah brings back those memories of the past to the reader's present to hold on to historical memories. However, history's wounds can

also be inflicted on people's bodies. With the creation of vulnerable subaltern characters, Attah analyses the effects of trauma on them and the way they recover from it. She has found memory reparation in art, and in the sharing of personal memories.

The realm of violence in Attah's novels are both private and public and it affects ~~to~~ people of every walk of life. In *Harmattan Rain*, we are witness to the brutal beatings that Lizzie gets from her father who is in a position of power and under patriarchal influences; he is convinced that it is Lizzie's duty to marry an old wealthy man who saves them from their farm's precarious situation. Similarly, Wurche's father in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* uses her to marry another prince for his clan to gain more power. She marries against her will to please her father and she is awarded with marital violence which extends from beatings to the prohibition to leave the house restricting her freedom. Far from accepting the situation of vulnerability imposed on them, these women decide to take action. Their vulnerability empowers them so that they decide to break the rules. Lizzie runs away from the village in search of both her lover and a better life, for as she states at the very beginning of the novel there must be something else for a woman than rearing children. Similarly, Wurche also escapes from that situation revealing that she had cheated on her husband with another man. This self-assertion of who is the owner of her body reaffirms her agentic position. Likewise, men also suffer from physical violence in Attah's novels. Bador Samed in *HR* is brutally beaten by Lizzie's father who also tortures him with his words. Bador is represented as the subaltern subject who cannot speak. In fact, he is ridiculed while he receives the beatings because he is moaning like a woman. He runs away under the threat of being killed if he does not. He runs to Accra where he lives out of people charity. He has become mad, and what is more, he has been deprived of his capacity to speak, not in vain, he is introduced as Babasam further in the novel; he babbles, he cannot speak. Additionally, in *Saturday's Shadows*, Theo Avoka is tortured by a group of former soldiers under the accusation

of having plotted against the dictator. Along with those outbursts of private violence, Attah also leads the reader through episodes of public violence being, the slave raids and its consequences in *HWS* the hardest and crudest. At a time when slavery had been abolished, the smooth running of life at Wofa Sarpong's farm clearly exemplified what was truly taking place at the time. Furthermore, in *HR* we also attend to the abuses suffered by market women when they were accused of destabilizing the economy, as well as the assassinations of judges from the court of justice reported by Akua Afriyie. As it has been explained in chapter three both situations had their parallel in real history which has been proved by the testimonies at the truth commission and the report of the killings by Edward Brenya. Therefore, it has been questioned what makes for a grievable life in such circumstances of terror and abuse of power. At different periods in history, in a newly inaugurated independence from colonial oppression and under colonial rule alike, power is exercised both by patriarchy and by the ruling classes equally. Furthermore, when power is exerted on subjects without restriction, the critical and unstable social, political and economic indicators also feel its effects.

It has also been exposed Attah's utter refusal to consider internal slavery as benign. Both at interviews and in the appendix to *HWS*, she has clearly stated that it is time for Africa to recognize the role they have played in slavery in order to stitch together the threads needed to achieve true progress. In both *HR* and *HWS* equally, she tackles this issue. In her effort to make past history a lesson for the present apart from making people admit their complicity in such a thorny issue, Attah leads Sugri to Africa's counter history in *HR*. Sugri learns from an Afro-American monologist about the involvement of African families in the slave commerce. She remembers her history lessons at school when she was taught that those to blame where the Europeans. Attah does not take sides. All along *HWS* she confronts the reader with both the Europeans and the Africans manoeuvrings in such commerce. As it has been justified in this

dissertation, even after the declaration of 2019 the Year of return by the Ghanaian president, Nana Akufo-Addo, there is still little recognisance of complicity. So far, Africans have chosen to forget their past, as silencing can be a strategy employed to overcome oppressive conditions. Contrary to this will, Attah mentions the situation in 2017 when people from Senegal, The Gambia and Nigeria were being auctioned by people from Ghana and Nigeria as well. In *HWS*, slavery is introduced as a business, if there are not kola nuts to trade with, there are people, a much more fruitful investment.

Furthermore, Postcolonial literature has proved as a major contributor to the sociocultural construction of traumatic collective identity. Although Attah wants to recover her great great-grandmother's past in *HWS*, she is also worried about native complicity in the trade, as Africans have let themselves been deceived what she clearly exemplifies with Etuto, Wurche's father, who is presented with firearms among other items.

It has not been our contention to ascribe Attah's novel to any literary current, however, we find some connection among her characters and the aim of resistance literature after Harlow' s definition, that narrations of resistance go deeply into the analysis of the relations which support the system of domination and exploitation giving a detailed historical analysis of those circumstances of economic, political and cultural domination and repression while they analyze the impact of the past in the present and they use it to find new ways to resist in both the present and the future. Attah's novels mirror the country, its social unrest and political instability which affects the lives of the protagonists as it has already been stated.

This dissertation has also exposed the struggle of some characters with the affirmation of their bodies as the ultimate resort of their freedom, from the deprivation of clothes to death, as the utter expression of body's vulnerability. Attah's characters' reaction to abuses on their bodies is varied. On the one hand, Aminah's and Bador Samed's nakedness makes them more

vulnerable and ashamed. When Aminah is asked to remove her clothes at the slave market to bathe in the wells, she begs to keep her clothes on. Bador Samed is naked, deprived of his manhood and threatened with a cutlass. Both are motionless. On the other hand, Attah provides different examples of resistance through her characters. In *HWS*, Aminah's brother, Issa after that they had been taken as slaves, decided to stop eating. His consciousness of subalternity, as that of Hassana's is not that of the colonial subject, as Das and Spivak contend, for their subalternity comes from their status as slaves, subjects of subaltern resilience whose vulnerability has made them stronger. These subalterns' agency is a capacity for action created and enabled by historical relations of subordination. This capacity of agency is designated both in acts that resist norms, as Wurche a Gonja princess interested in politics, and Lizzie, a working mother who does not obey her mother in law's rules do, and in the multiple ways in which norms are located being them, slavery, patriarchy's or Islam's precepts. Issa is the owner of his body and his life and for this reason, he chooses death. Hassana, his sister, on her side, exposes herself to have her body beaten and to be sold as a slave because she wants to find her twin sister from whom she had been separated in the slave's raid. Therefore, Lizzie's Wurche's, Hassana's and Issa's vulnerability has proved enabling to achieve their will. Resistance is one of the forms and possible effects of power therefore, these characters demonstrate an enormous capacity not to adapt. We have seen with Wurche, for whom resistance is a never-ending struggle, that we cannot think of freedom or justice outside power nor can we aspire through resistance to achieve radical autonomy. Therefore, the body, as a political entity is also the site of resistance, which has been posed to recover from trauma.

The subaltern characters in *S's S* also act to resist norms. On the one hand, the Avoka's, a former affluent family, have become vulnerable as the rest of the citizens in the country under the situation of social and economic unrest brought about by the military dictatorship. On the

other hand, Atsu, their house help, feels the most vulnerable because of young women's killings which are taking place in the city. Attah also portrays collective anger which bursts at the beginning of the novel with Zahra Avoka's bumping into a car. People press her to pay for the damages to the owner of the car. Then she is shown at her most vulnerable as she suffers from a medical condition. Such exposure to collective anger echoes Ama Ata Aidoo's plays in which the Ghanaian writer gave an important role to the chorus, those people witnessing the story by which they are affected but which they cannot change. Those are representative of non-agentic resilience, they keep their position of subalternity, which has been demonstrated when Attah describes neighbours while they watch Lizzie's father beating her in *HR*, or Zahra's kneeling in the street pledging compassion after her incident, or people's inaction at the frequent electric cuts in *S's S*.

This dissertation has explained the way Attah places the female body as the site of political concern. As we are privy to Zahra's self-destruction, the country is also depicted as a political body which is led to destruction by its leader. Zahra's treat her body badly as she finds it culprit for what is taking place. However, Zahra has also demonstrated an enormous capacity not to adapt, although she has suffered from a severe illness as a consequence. She recovers at Auntie Adisa's farm which is a cooperative of women who have also decided to take action, this time against the foreign corporations which are doing well at their expense. Theo, her husband, is also depicted as a vulnerable subject who despite having had his life aspirations truncated when Doctor Saturday killed his father, is now, through the writing of Saturday's memoirs, finding reparation for his father's assassination and for himself. He has decided to take action helping a secret committee of national and international observers to prove Saturday's atrocities under military dictatorship. Although he is caught and tortured and comes across as a coward in the press, he has succeeded in purging from the ills of society. He has found writing the memories

of the dictator redemptive, as they have been intertwined with his family memoirs, as well. Theo's counter-history has thrown light on his country's past, as well as his personal past. Writing Saturday's memoirs, Theo Avoka has enacted that collective memory and has also helped repair the wounds inflicted by the history of the winner. As it has been asserted in this dissertation, we would talk about cultural memory rather than collective memory, because cultural memory may draw on cultural history, on memories, on literary memories, on media memory as well as on physical sites of memory. This is what, in our view, Attah masterly achieves with her novels.

This dissertation has also proved the importance that Ayesha Harruna Attah grants ~~to~~ places. In her descriptions of Salaga and Kete-Krachi where the cities were prosperous, of Adukrom nº 2, Accra and the country in West Africa where *S's S* takes place, she is not mild in her descriptions of dirt and signs of decrepitude. Those hundred wells at Salaga meant for the slaves to drink and bathe, have turned into a pit of dirtiness, not even slaves could drink from them, as Wurche's grandmother says. Dirty gutters and streets in Accra, crumbling houses in the villages are portrayed by Attah following her mentor's, Ayi Kwei Armah, novels. She has declared that she wants to portray society as it is, and both dirt and illness are part of it.

Places also help build memories both individual and collective. In Aminah's instance, she keeps memories of her village burning with her mother and younger sister inside their huts which does not help her to start a new life. Those memories of the different landscapes that she walked through when she was taken as a slave and where she lost her brother do not either. As an act of resistance she reactivates those memories and resists forgetting. In doing so, she is compelled to forgive her captors. She has never thought of herself as a slave but as captive. From this perspective, she has grown from a resilient vulnerable subject who has always obeyed the rules imposed both in Botu and being Wurche's servant, to a subject of subaltern resilience.

Although she is not able to forget her family and the atrocities of the slave trade (even her father, a shoe maker who used to sell his products in the Sokoto caravan had disappeared too), when she meets Moro, the slave raider, she finds strength in her vulnerability. Moro is also depicted as a vulnerable subject who, as Aminah has done, has always behaved as a resilient vulnerable subject. As it has been stated in this dissertation, there is no proper memory in the memory of colonized people (read slaves, as well as beaten and abused people) but fragments which cannot be recomposed into its initial unity. It is necessary, then, to accept loss and to find out the level of loss one can live with. This clearly explains Attah's position in the way both Aminah and Moro have been able to find mechanisms to live with what has been lost forever. They allow themselves a new start when Wurche sets Aminah free.

If Aminah and Moro in *HWS* are able to live with that loss, both storytelling and painting prove healers for Theo Avoka in S'*s S* and Akua Afriyie in *HR*. Akua Afriyie's chaotic life getting pregnant in her teens has blocked her ability to envision her future. Instead of having an abortion, she decides to have her child which took her to a life of hardship, family rupture and inability to find a man to start a new life with. It is when her daughter leaves for university that she retrieves her initial passion, painting. Through art, she is able to find herself leaving behind those worries which had persecuted her all the time. Abortion or motherhood, the decision which marked her life is the one which has set her free. She has found reparation in art, and as Attah declares, art can help heal the wounds of a country. This is the reason why, the author turns to storytelling as well as written and oral histories which have helped to reckon what is taking place between the past, the present and the future of African women. Therefore, Attah has declared that it fascinated her, what we pass on in our genes, through our stories and also through our dreams. She believes that we are extensions of those who came before us. In our interview she said that we are here because they lived and dreamed and strived, so it seems

obvious that we are their dreams. Therefore, this dissertation has proved relevant the fact that Attah finally makes Zahra in *S's S* understand all the sacrifices her mother had made for her.

This dissertation has also addressed the recent explosion of African writers exploring historical fiction, among whom Ayesha Harruna Attah is an exponent of. As much of African history has been written by outsiders who had depicted history as lived by subaltern subjects, historical fiction is a way to redress the imbalance of the dominant colonial view. Therefore, those records of subalterns' memory give voice to events which would have never been voiced or known. As the Akan proverb goes, "Until lions have their own historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter". Female characters try to reconcile with the history and memory of their people. Therefore, in order to achieve such reconciliation in her novels, Attah writes texts with a multi-perspective focalization. *HR* opens each section with a date in order to connect history with the characters' lives. She writes from Lizzie's perspective, then from Akua Afriyie's and finally from Sugri's, that is, three generations of women from the same family parallel to three generations of the history of Ghana from 1957 to 1990s. *S's S* was intended as a diary written from Theo, Zahra, Atsu and Koyo's points of view, and *HWS* tells the story from Wurche's and Aminah's angle.

This dissertation has aimed to exhaustively reformulate those perspectives from which Western feminist criticism has interpreted African women's literature; therefore Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels have been analyzed from a postcolonial feminism focus to achieve this objective. In her attempt to give voice to those collectives forgotten in mainstream discourse, she has given a detailed historical account of those circumstances of economic, political and cultural domination and repression while paying attention to the connection through the use of memory in older generations to influence in the present of younger generations in order for them to envision a better future. To achieve this, Attah's characters turn from a position of vulnerable

resilient subjects into vulnerable agents of personal and social change as they have been enabled by their vulnerability. Resistance has also proved not to be opposed to power, but one of its forms and possible effects. Postcolonial trauma has been understood as the exploration of new ways to be solved whereas those broken pieces of memory help accept loss to enable subjects to start a new life. The necessity for reparation of the wounds of history comes through art. Storytelling and diary writing have become valuable tools to recover from traumas as well as art has. In the end, it is in marginality that vulnerable subjects have found creative energy to create and not to destroy, to empower and not to oppress, to envision and not to blind.

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Appendix

Interview with Ayesha Harruna Attah

Mª Dolores Raigón Hidalgo

Abstract

This is an interview with the Ghanaian writer Ayesha Harruna Attah. It was conducted via email. The author has been promoting her latest novel *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* in Germany, the USA and West Africa since January 2019 and when we contacted her, she kindly agreed. Although she was born in Ghana to Ghanaian parents quite complicit with their country, she has also studied in the USA and she is currently living in Senegal with her husband and her son to whom she devotes as much time as she can, as she herself declared when sending the interview back, she has been "swamped with writing and motherhood and life". We are really grateful to her. We asked her about her most recent project, to which she replied: "I'm still working on the kola nut book, so there's no release date in sight yet."

Introduction

Ayesha Harruna Attah was born in Accra, Ghana's capital city in the 1983 under a military dictatorship. She studied Biochemistry at Columbia University (USA). She wrote and published her first novel, *Harmattan Rain*, with a fellowship from Per Ankh Publishers and

Trust Africa. *Harmattan Rain* was shortlisted for the 2010 Commonwealth Writers' Prize, Africa Region. Ayesha was educated at Mount Holyoke College and Columbia University and received a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from New York University in 2011. *Saturday's Shadows* was published in 2015 and it had been shortlisted for the Kwani Manuscript Project in 2013. It was published in English and Dutch. She won the Miles Morland Scholarship 2016 for her nonfiction proposal, *Kola! From Caravans to Coca Cola* where she would outline the history of the kola nut from its West African origins. Her last novel *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* was published in 2018. Apart from these novels, she has also written non-fiction, articles and essays published in several magazines such as *New York Magazine, Imagine Africa, African Magazine, Asymptote Magazine Accra Daily Mail, 801 Magazine and Yachting Magazine.* She has also written short stories and she has had "Ekow" published in the *Caine Prize Writers' Anthology* 2010 *Work in Progress and Other Stories* also included in the Spanish anthology *Ellas también cuentan.*

After having done research on the life and works of some Ghanaian women writers in our Master thesis, namely, Mabel Dove Danquah, Adelaide Casely-Hayford, Efua Sutherland and Ama Darko, we kept on working on the literary works by Ama Ata Aidoo. It was when we were working on her last collection of short stories, *Diplomatic Pounds and Other Stories,* when we came across the young Ghanaian writer Ayesha Harruna Attah. After reading her first novel, *Harmattan Rain,* we realized it was like a catalyst of the Ghana we have learnt about when working on the precursors, Ghanaian women who had helped build the country that we know nowadays. She showed resilient women who decided not to comply with the rules of their times, with the role assigned, who opposed resistance to parents, customs and rulers who wanted to subjugate them; women who worked together with men to build a country after independence. Women who tell their stories to heal after a trauma caused by the systemic violence in a country

undergoing long periods of social unrest. The way Attah tackled these issues inspired by historical novel and journalism in her two last novels, as well, together with the recovery of lost memory of inner slavery in Africa contend that they are worth reading.

In *Harmattan Rain,* she tells about the life of three generations of women in the same family alongside the history of Ghana since 1957 up to 1990s. The lives of these women run parallel to Ghana's history. Lizzie's enthusiastic point of view about Ghana's independence, together with the role played by Nkrumah and his praise to the work done by women to achieve independence from British rule is the spirit which underlies the novel.

The story begins a few years before Ghana's independence when Lizzie Achiia's lover disappears from her village. Tired of being beaten by her father who wants her to get married to any wealthy old man to save his farm, she runs away in search of him.

Running parallel to Ghana's political history and the succession of violent coup d'états, Akua Afriyie's story develops. It is Lizzie's daughter who in secondary school gets pregnant by a married man who abandons her. She decides to give birth to Sugri who is brought up over protected. It is not until she moves to New York to study at university that she learns to manage her freedom. In the end, most secrets concealed throughout the novel are unveiled, those which have determined their lives and their most important decisions in life.

In *Saturday's Shadows*, a former affluent family is nowadays badly treated by an economic crisis after the political transition from dictatorship to democracy. The Avokas are a middle-class family. Theo Avoka is a civil servant under Doctor Saturday's military dictatorship; he has a university degree, as does Zahra his wife. Zahra Avoka, the main character in *Saturday's Shadows*, works for Duell and Co., a company which provides women farmers with training, capital and equipment and help to find markets with a commission of the earnings. She has been suffering from severe migraines, nauseas and blurred vision for a while but it

worsens when she is doing her Christmas shopping. They have an adolescent son attending a private school whose fees are causing them troubles. Atsu, the housemaid plays a vital role together with Zahra's mother and Auntie Adisa, a farmer whom Zahra ends up working for. The struggles that Zahra and Atsu undergo in a violent run-down city throughout the novel contrasts with "paradise", as Zahra describes Auntie Adisa's farm, a cooperative of literate women who have chosen to work the soil while being respectful to nature.

Saturday's Shadows is written as the compilation of the diaries written or thought (since Atsu is illiterate) by the main characters while the readers are driven by the lives, chores and deeds of these unsophisticated heroes and heroines. The characters' lives are really delimited by the running history of the country, a country in West Africa. Although Ghana is not mentioned, by the events depicted, one may presume it is.

In *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, Attah places the story in pre-colonial Ghana, where in spite of the legal abolition of slavery, slave commerce was still a thriving business. The story focuses on the period right before the war in Salaga in 1892 until the downfall of Salaga to German forces in 1897. The lives of the characters are affected by the scramble for Africa which took place between 1881 and 1914. Attah deals with internal fights for power within African chieftaincies as well as European intervention to take away native power. She also deals with internal slave trade, the role of women in Muslim societies and the encounter of native religions and those brought by the caravan trades from the North, together with the European influence. Wurche is a princess and Aminah is a slave girl and both run different lives until their destinies meet in Salaga. Young Aminah lives peacefully in Botu until she is brutally taken away by a slave's raid. All this experience turns her into a resilient woman. Wurche is the daughter of a chief desperate to take an active part in her father's court. Against her will, she has to get married to please her father lust for power.

Mª DOLORES RAIGÓN: I have read that you said your name "Attah" means "twin". What is the meaning of "Harruna"? I have read something about the influences in naming Ghanaian boys and girls, what is in your name?

AYESHA HARRUNA ATTAH: Harruna is from the Arab Harun and is a Hausa corruption of the name Aaron. The northern part of Ghana, which is where my father's family originally comes from, is Muslim. Ayesha is also an Arabic name, which means alive. Attah is from the Akan people and, yes, it means twin.

MDR: I think about you and your literary work as Ghanaian, am I right? Does the fact of having your residence in Senegal makes any difference?

AHA: Living in Senegal allows me to write more as a West African than a Ghanaian, which is the space I'm trying to situate myself more and more in these days. It also lets me see the threads that connect me to others in other parts of the continent. When I am writing about Ghana, living outside its borders gives me remove and lets me write more honestly.

MDR: What do the words Neocolonialism, Panafricanism and Afropolitanism, mean to you as a writer?

AHA: Neocolonialism hits me when I look at the away Africa is organized today, and how we are still carved up with our colonial borders. Panafricanism is the way I think the continent truly should be operating. Afropolitanism is not a word I use often, if ever, as a writer. I understand its beginnings, but now find that it doesn't embrace most of the African population.

MDR: I am thinking about style in your novels. Are you more influenced in your writing by African and Ghanaian writers or by journalism? You said once that you used to keep diaries. Is

there any connection with the fact that the sections or chapters you divide your novels into look like a diary?

AHA: I think my writing is shaped both by other writers and my own background in journalism. I read other African writer to see what has been done before me and to study what is being done by my contemporaries, and therefore, there is no doubt that by osmosis, my work is also influenced. Interesting that you remark that my chapters are diary-like. I think it's only with Saturday's Shadows that I set out to have diary-like entries.

MDR: You belong to the new generation, twenty first century African/Ghanaian women writers. How much do you think you owe to writers such as Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo and Ama Darko?

AHA: I feel especially indebted to Ama Ata Aidoo for taking risks way before her time. Also, writers like Efua Sutherland and Ama Darko, just for the fact that they wrote and took risks with their writing, has let my work be possible.

MDR: In the blog "Feminist Book Fortnight" you say you think of yourself as womanist, as it is "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female." There was a time in Ghana when feminism was associated to lesbianism and there was "fear" for some women to be open about them being feminists. So, do you think this could be one of the reasons why African "feminists" have not still come to terms with the right name for them; (we've got womanism, Africana womanism, motherism, nego-feminism…)[96]? How do African women writers from your generation define themselves?

[96] See Works cited

AHA: In my experience, my rejection of the word feminist in the past was one that happened when I went to college in the United States. It's actually possible that I thought of myself as a feminist before I left for college, even if I didn't have the word at the tip of my lips. My hesitation came from the fact that feminism has excluded African women in the past, and the face of feminism has often been white. I know many who like me, prefer the term womanist.

MDR: Are you as a woman writer committed in any way? In an interview to African women writers, (*In Their Own Voices*, 1990) Adeola James asks them about Molara Ogundipe Leslie's statement, "the female writer should be committed in three ways: as a writer, as a woman and as a Third World person". What do you think about this statement nowadays?

AHA: I think these are all three aspects of my identity that define my work, even though Third World person, less so. I would replace that with African.

MDR: Is the question of language whether English or vernacular, something which concerns you?

AHA: Ideally, I would be writing in an African language, but most of my education was in English, and while I learned a Ghanaian language in my elementary school years, it's really isn't strong enough for me to write a whole book in.

MDR: In an interview in Africa Book Club, in May 2015 you said you were living in Senegal working on a project translating ancient African documents "whose aim is to give Africans access to the ways in which our ancestors lived so that we can find African solutions to African problems". In *Saturday's Shadows*, for instance, I can see in Auntie Adisa's community work back to the proper African old model as a solution to Zahra's problems. In the end, she recovers from her illness in a village, is this a kind of "African solution"?

AHA: I'm not proposing the village as a solution. Africa has in its past had both the city and the village as places in which people reside. It's more of a looking back to see what was useful. In the village model, there was more cooperation and less competition, and that could be a value that Africans can use to solve everyday problems.

MDR: Lizzie develops herself as the just-born independent Ghana whereas Akua Afriyie is more concerned about motherhood being so young and with a bright future ahead; why having such an "independent" mother? Do you think this generation in between was the most vulnerable?

AHA: With *Harmattan Rain*, I wanted to explore different paths women take to finding themselves. Such an exploration called for women in different kinds of relationships with themselves and with their families. So, Lizzie was a woman who on paper had it all: a loving husband, several children; while Akua-Afriyie had one child and was on her own. It was also a mirroring of Ghana; just after independence we supposedly had it all, and then we were soon wracked with coup d'états. Both generations had their share of challenges and vulnerabilities although they manifested in different ways.

MDR: Where do you find inspiration for your male characters?

AHA: Sometimes I interview or study my friends and male relatives. In *Saturday's Shadows*, for instance, I created Kojo by thinking of my male cousins and some of the boys with whom I went to school with.

MDR: I would also like to ask you about the influence of religion in your novels as religion also affects the second generation in *Harmattan Rain*; also, Zahra's mother is a very religious woman. Are you a religious person yourself? Does religion influence your writing in any sense or is it just one more side of the character you create?

AHA: I am not a religious person, but I am intrigued by religion and the way it shapes culture and people. Some of my characters are very religious, while others, like Zahra, aren't. Sometimes, I have characters who are in the middle of questioning what they believe in, and they mirror my journey the most, because I don't think I will stop having questions about who we are, why we are here, what lies beyond us.

MDR: To what extent are you worried about politics in Ghana and Africa nowadays? You portray politically committed characters in *Harmattan Rain*, characters frightened because of politics in *Saturday's Shadows*. In your novels, politics and the public transverses the private life of every character. Would you say it is biopolitics, as Foucault described it?

AHA: I tried to run away from politics, coming from a very political family in Ghana, but I guess it's not avoidable, and yes, the public does affect the private. I embraced this theme even more in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, in showing how the scramble for Africa affected two women's lives.

MDR: Related to the previous question, I would like to ask you about violence. When you deal with the assassinations of women in *Saturday's Shadows*, the way you describe their bodies, the way Atsu sees and feels about it, the way Nasar describes the brutality exerted on women, even pregnant women (violence on women, vulnerable bodies, gendered bodies, do you understand, do you want the reader to understand that violence on gendered vulnerable bodies is a means of power/control by government on those bodies? What does it mean to you nowadays violence against women?

AHA: In *Saturday's Shadows*, I was reflecting a frightening period in Ghana's history when women were being murdered for ritual purposes. There was a collective outcry about the

killings, but there was also a lot of fascination with the case, without a deeper search for who was behind the murders. I think the society would have reacted strongly had men been involved.

MDR: We have Zahra to whom illness is making her vulnerable. You also deal with madness in the character of Bador Samed. You do not hide these non-agreeable aspects, neither corruption, nor lies or dirtiness in your novels. Why so?

AHA: I'm hoping to show society as completely as I can. Some of it is agreeable, other aspects are harder to swallow, but still form a part of life. At the time I wrote *Harmattan Rain*, mental illness was not being given as much attention as it's getting now, and at the time, I wanted to highlight that we were all impacted by it in one way or form, whether it was in our families or just through people we knew.

MDR: In *Anowa* Ama Ata Aidoo gives voice to a woman who is against slavery. Are you in a way giving voice to all those unheard suffering from slavery? You mentioned you found it difficult for people to speak about slavery in Salaga. Also, that "writing historical fiction is a way of fighting rootlessness and searching for what we lost when we suffered invasions on every front: physical, religious, cultural and so on." You said that in relation to *The Hundred Wells* and how "the effects of trauma could be passed through blood". I read Aminah as the resilient woman who is able to overcome trauma through love. Do you feel that you have healed your great-great grandmother's trauma? Do you think your generation of African women writers in Africa, and African people in general have still have a relation to traumatized civilization(s) and society(ies)?

AHA: I hope by telling my great great-grandmother's story, I have given her a voice. To be remembered as nameless is a travesty, and I've tried to fix that. In terms of her trauma, I don't know if I've healed it, but I think beginning to shed light on it, is the start. And whatever those

residual effects of trauma have been on our family, I hope this book helps illuminate them. I think all people, not just African writers have a relation to trauma. America as a place was built on a lot of violence; a writer from that world can't escape that. It seeps in even in innocuous places.

MDR: It seems to me that the relationship among generations is important to you as a writer. I have read in a former interview (Africadialogue.com, June 2018) that you as an African agree that "we are extensions of those who came before us". What do you think of the statement "We [young women] are our grandmother's dreams?" I am thinking, for instance, about the relationships between Aminah and Wurche and their grandmothers, Sugri and Lizzie.

AHA: That's beautiful. I think we are. It fascinates me what we pass on in our genes, through our stories, and also through our dreams. We are here because they lived and dreamed and strived, so it seems obvious that we are their dreams, right?

MDR: Akua Afriyie finds her own healing through art. In which way do you think art can help heal wounds in a nation?

YES! A resounding yes.

MDR: How do you see the present and the future of Ghanaian women in particular and African women in general?

AHA: I see excited times up ahead, especially for African writers. The landscape is so wide and the possibilities seem infinite. As a reader, I am hungry for all the writing that African women are going to be producing.

MDR: Thank you very much.

AHA: Thank you so much for interviewing me, and I hope some of my responses are useful. I wish I could have gone deeper with some of the questions, but life has been non-stop since you sent me these questions. All the best with your PhD!