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Memory and Trauma in Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*

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Dedication 1

In the Name of the Most Merciful and the Most Gracious

To the one who taught me my first steps, the one who loved me with a heart free of conditions
and without bounds, my beloved grandmother Mamia

Your love will guide me, always and forever.

To the one who cared for me all times and all nights, to the sun that brightens my day

My mother

To the father that God has blessed me with, my source of pride and role model, my uncle

Brahmia Rafik

To my supporter, my aunt Sonia Brahmia

To the one whose heart dwells in the land of kindness, my uncle Salalou

To the uncle who's the closest to my soul, our doctor Brahmia Youssef

To my beautiful sister Touka, and my handsome brother Wassim

To my cousins

Roya and Ranim

Thank you...

Amira

Dedication 2

In the Name of the Most Merciful and the Most Gracious

I dedicate this work to the one who is always alive in my heart and my mind, to my monitor,
my pride, my beloved father

Ismael Salah Boufelfel

Your words, love, and strength, will guide me forever.

To my source of support, courage and endless love my mother

Malika Frioui

To my brothers, for whom I am forever a little girl.

Mehdi and Raouf

To my sisters, my beautiful girls

Houda, Sihem and Chaima

Thank you...

Rania

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Abstract

This study examines the interwoven complexities of memory and trauma in Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love* (2010). This relationship is deemed obscure and complex, since only through memory can trauma be truly revived. Drawing on the theories of Western theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth as well as Marianne Hirsh, the thesis examines the complex relationship between memory and trauma and the processes through which the memory of trauma is repressed, transmitted, and transformed. The relationship between memory and trauma has long been viewed from a Eurocentric perspective. However, in recent years, African writers have focused extensively on portraying memory and trauma in postcolonial contexts, demonstrating the long-lasting impact of traumatic events such as civil wars in their literary works. Accordingly, the study employs ideas of leading postcolonial scholars such as Stef Craps and Irene Visser to demonstrate a nuanced representation of memory and trauma in the African writer Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*, in the aftermath of the Sierra Leone civil war. Shedding light on the role of Forna as a post-rememberer, the study also shows that memory is an expression of these events; a process that entails transformation and creativity. In addition, the study demonstrates the complex nature of the memory of trauma and its recurrence in the characters' lives at the individual level. It also deals with the concepts of collective trauma and collective memory to demonstrate the manifestation of trauma at the collective level. Thus, based on the analysis of the novel's thematic concerns such as, silence, healing, and emotional belonging, the dissertation presents a postcolonial perspective in understanding memory, trauma, and healing.

Keywords: Trauma Theory, Aminatta Forna, Postmemory, Individual Trauma, Collective Trauma , Silence, Emotional Belonging.

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Résumé

Introduction

In contemporary era, memory and trauma studies have witnessed significant growth and popularity. The intersection between memory and trauma paradigms represent complementary and interconnected fields of study in literature since trauma theory is considered as a fundamental subset in understanding memory dynamics. The depiction of the interplay between memory and trauma in experiences such as wars, genocides and displacements is gaining considerable scholarly interest since scholars are urged by a desire to shed light on the different processes through which they strongly overlap.

The relationship between memory and trauma has long been viewed from a Eurocentric lens, focusing on the theories of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, as well as Marianne Hirsch. These theories have confined the frameworks of trauma to Western contexts, such as the Holocaust. However, recent studies on memory and trauma have shifted to different frameworks such as postcolonial context in which trauma is linked to long lasting forms of oppression such as civil wars. For this reason, this thesis is conducted to investigate the intricate, yet multidimensional relationship between memory and trauma in the African context. It examines the way memory carries trauma in the Sierra Leonean writer Aminatta Forna's novel *The Memory of Love* (2010) to show that memory serves as more than a mere storage of traumatic events, but it is also an expression of these traumatic memories that entail transformation and creativity.

Eurocentric memory and trauma theories have always denied the non-Western narratives of colonization, which has resulted in the suppression and silencing of postcolonial subjects, depriving them of the right to address their atrocities. Therefore, postcolonial trauma theory has emerged as a critical framework for Eurocentric views. It traces trauma theory inadequacies and provides formerly colonized and marginalized groups with a platform to articulate the historical wounds that have left them with long-lasting mental and psychological scars in the aftermath of the war.

Postcolonial trauma theory denounces the single story and event-based model of Western trauma, emphasizing its contextual roots to reshape the Western trauma model. Postcolonial trauma theory questions using the Holocaust as the definitive model for understanding global traumas. Thus, postcolonial trauma provides the collective ground to address the long-term brutalities of different acts of oppression and the unbearable scars they inflict on the psyche and memory of postcolonial subjects at the individual and collective levels.

African literature reflects aspects of postcolonial trauma theory because it sheds light on the long-lasting repercussions of postcolonial contexts such as civil wars. Postcolonial trauma is associated with African writers' works, in which trauma, memory, as well as healing, are recurrent themes. Writers like Aminatta Forna, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor portray the psychological and mental sufferings of war trauma that continues to be a source of massive pain rooted deeply in postcolonial subjects' memory. Through their writing, these authors enable postcolonial subjects to rewrite their unique histories, providing them with a collective ground to heal their traumatic memories and to construct a counter-narrative. In so doing, they stand against the falsified image and the single story of Africa provided by dominant Western narratives.

The rationale behind the choice of this theme stems from the novel's depiction the nuanced relationship between trauma and memory. The novel explores the traumas resulting from the civil war at the individual and collective level. It also illustrates how trauma shapes and alters the memory of characters who are seeking to remedy their mental and psychological scars.

Forna is one of the prominent writers who portray the civil war in her writing. She is a Sierra Leonean writer who is interested in the representation of memory, trauma, and ways of healing in her novels. In *The Memory of Love*, she reflects on the dreadful ramifications of the

civil war in Sierra Leone. Forna portrays the profound impact of the trauma of this war on Sierra Leonean's memory. It is worth noting that Forna is a post-rememberer who did not live the struggle herself, yet she succeeds in portraying how individuals and communities lived through and after these traumatic experiences. This denotes Marianne Hirsh's theory of postmemory which refers to the process through which traumatic memories are successively passed to generations who did not witness the traumatic event (106); also, it indicates the vivid nature of the traumatic memory, which continues to be felt in the lives of generations after the civil war.

This dissertation draws on trauma theory and memory studies, mainly Sigmund Freud's repression theory, Cathy Caruth's conceptualization of intergenerational transmission and collective trauma, as well as Marianne Hirsch's post-memory to explore the intricacies of trauma and memory. It also employs significant ideas of postcolonial trauma theorists mainly Steph Craps and Irene Visser to unravel how postcolonial writers interpret the relationship between trauma and memory in the postcolonial context. By approaching trauma from a postcolonial lens, this study defies Eurocentric views on trauma and memory.

This thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical examination of the concepts of memory and trauma, it consists of three main sections. The first section includes a Eurocentric perspective on memory and trauma; it examines Western theories of Western scholars such as Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, and Marianne Hirsh. These Western theories are generally used to interpret the overwhelming nature of memory and trauma. Likewise, the second section provides an examination of memory and trauma from a postcolonial lens. This section specifically offers insights into the change that the concepts of memory and trauma undergo in a postcolonial context, offering a fresh perspective of memory and trauma based on the ideas of Steph Craps and Irene Visser.

Finally, the third section deals with examples of representations of memory and trauma in prominent African literary works.

The second chapter is divided into three parts. It is devoted to the analysis of the individual and the collective aspects of memory and trauma. The first section initially offers an overview of *The Memory of Love*, emphasizing the historical context of the Sierra Leone civil war; it also emphasizes the role of Forna as a postrememberer who attempts to transmit the sufferings of formerly colonized people during Sierra Leone civil war. The second and third sections are analytical; the first section focuses on the representation of memory and trauma at the individual and collective level. It depicts the individual sufferings that characters endure and how the memory of trauma continues to manifest in their lives through dreams and flashbacks. Additionally, it portrays the impact of the collective trauma of war on society as well as the representation of collective memory as a crucial concept in understanding the way memory carries trauma in the novel. Finally, the second section investigates the three types of silence that exist in post-war Sierra Leone. It explores the silence as a core symptom of trauma ; also, silence as an integral part in the Seirra Leone's culture. In addition, it depicts silence as a coping mechanism in postcolonial context.

The third chapter is comprised of two sections, mostly concerned with the journey toward healing and reconciliation. The first section deals with the different healing strategies adopted by the characters to sooth their traumatic memories. It demonstrates how Forna portrays different healing and survival strategies that correspond with the nature of trauma in Seirra Leone. Finally, the last section represents the theme of emotional belonging in the novel and its prominent role in the process of healing. It shows how emotional belonging, which is the feeling of being at home, fosters connections and relationships between characters. Thus, through establishing emotional connections, characters are able to create emotional spaces for healing and reconciliation.

Chapter I: Theoretical Examination of Memory and Trauma

This chapter is a theoretical examination of the concepts of memory and trauma. It is divided into three sections. The first section involves a Eurocentric understanding of memory and trauma theories; accordingly, it is primarily devoted to examine theories of Western scholars such as Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth as well as Marianna Hirsch. The second section, on the other hand, is an examination of the theories of memory and trauma from a postcolonial approach. It presents ideas of Stef Craps and Irene Visser to offer a fresh perspective on comprehending trauma and memory. Finally, the third section tackles examples of representations of trauma and memory in African literary works.

I.1. Eurocentric Approach of Memory and Trauma

According to Cambridge Dictionary, trauma is defined as “severe and lasting emotional shock and pain caused by an extremely upsetting experience”. In this sense, trauma refers to the long-lasting and stubborn impact of an overwhelming event that a person is unable to overcome. In recent years, the role of trauma theory has become prominent in various fields including memory studies in which it becomes a crucial framework in understanding the different dynamics of memory; accordingly, Antze and Lambek highlight the strong connection between memory and trauma, they state: “memory worth talking about – worth remembering – is memory of trauma”(qtd. in Kurtz 146). However, the relationship between memory and trauma is complex since the perception, transmission, and transformation of the memory of trauma exist outside of traditional forms (Kurtz 141). Hence, the intricate interplay between memory and trauma manifests in different concepts, most importantly in Sigmund Freud’s repression theory, Cathy Caruth’s conceptualization of intergenerational transmission and collective trauma, as well as in the theory of postmemory.

Originally, the meaning of trauma was exclusively related to the medical field, “The definition of trauma as a physical wound first appeared in the 1650s in medical practice”

(Zhukova 218). However, the emergence of Sigmund Freud's progressive theories became a turning point in the field of psychoanalysis, and particularly in redefining trauma in relation to memory. In *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer refer to the memory of trauma as an "as a foreign body that must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work" (Freud and Breuer 6), it is an agent that remains active. According to Freud and Breuer, the primary cause of traumatic neurosis is fear rather than physical harm. Freud believed that memory traces are unconscious, while memories are conscious (5-6). He believes that trauma occurs when an individual is overwhelmed by an extremely distressing event or series of events.

In addition, drawing on Freudian theory, Leys defines trauma in *Trauma: A Genealogy* as, "an experience that immersed the victim in the traumatic scene so profoundly that it precluded the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what happened" (9). This shows that Freud focuses more on the impact of the traumatic experience on cognitive ability. He demonstrates how the traumatic memory causes ambivalence in the unconscious mind, thereby, the individual is neither able to understand nor to overcome the traumatic memory.

Accordingly, the process through which the traumatic memories are restored in the unconscious mind is referred to as repression; a defense mechanism introduced by Sigmund Freud. Repression: "consists in letting pass out of consciousness, and from re-entering consciousness and although it is stored in the unconscious, they are active and they continue to reoccur perpetually" (Peters 7). Repression occurs when the individual's mind may unconsciously block out or push traumatic memories out of awareness as a defense mechanism. According to Freud, although the repressed traumatic memories are stored in the unconscious, they continue to reoccur consistently in unexplained forms. This led Freud to further analyze the complexity of traumatic memories as well as the force they carry to constantly reappear in the conscious mind, through nightmares. Thus, in his 1920 essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud attempts to explain how the images of a certain

traumatic event still persist. He introduces the concept of traumatic neurosis and its deep connection with dreams which are inevitable in understanding the nature of traumatic memories, he states that: “Now dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright” (Freud 13). Hence, while traumatic memories constantly reappear in the form of dreams and flashbacks, they, at the same time, make the traumatized person re-experience the same intolerable situation in the present with almost the same intensity.

In this respect, the effect of traumatic experiences on memory becomes evident, since the reason behind the ambiguous repetition of the traumatic memories is primarily linked to their active circulation in the unconscious mind, Freud argues: “unconscious memories were not deactivated, or laid to rest, by the usual processes of forgetting” (Kennedy 182). In this sense, trauma becomes associated with memory, thereby making traumatic memories abstruse and unforgettable. In this regard, based on Freud’s theory, traumatic memory has an “elusive structure” (Kennedy 180). In other words, it is incomprehensible and illusory and most importantly, as it is mentioned earlier, is inaccessible to the conscious mind. This ambiguity is related to the nature of the traumatic memory, which is inherently confusing, Freud writes: Such memory-traces, then, have nothing to do with the fact of becoming conscious; indeed they are often most powerful and most enduring when the process which left them behind was one which never entered consciousness” (25). Thus, what makes the traumatic memories even more complex and stubborn, is the fact that they are not understood or fully absorbed in the first exposure.

Cathy Caruth, a notable figure in the field of memory and trauma studies, focuses on the processes through which traumatic memories continue to operate in the individual unconsciousness. In addition, she attempts to analyze the intricacies of trauma through her focus on the intergenerational transmission of trauma; a crucial concept in understanding the

enduring nature of the traumatic memory (Baleav 363). In this respect, in Caruth's book, *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), trauma is defined as a phenomenon 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" (4). This shows that the crucial problem of the traumatic memory is its fast and unanticipated appearance. In accordance with Freud's assumptions, Caruth sheds light on the incomprehensible nature of traumatic memories and how they manifest in the present, creating memory associations; as she states, "but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance— returns to haunt the survivor later on" (40). However, Caruth attempts to expand the scope of memory to not only involve the individual, as Freud did, but also to focus on the impact of traumatic memory on others who did not witness the traumatic event. In light of this idea, she introduces the expression "the voice of the other", in which she explains the echo of traumatic memory and how others share it, she writes:

But we can also read the address of the voice here, not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound. (8)

Thus, a traumatic memory can be transmitted to other generations who did not witness the traumatic event, through the process of intergenerational transmission. Drawing on Caruth's conceptualization, Roth et al. highlight this act of transmission, they state, "The event continues to stir unrest in those who live in its aftermath. Trauma is reflected in the testimonies of the generation that was 'there' and in the responses of the generations that were not" (78). Thus, survivors of a traumatic event transmit the weight of a traumatic memory to coming generations who did not witness the traumatic event. In the explanation of the notion

of intergenerational transmission, scholars generally link this act of memory transmission to the Holocaust writings in which the overwhelming memories of the survivors of the events are consistently passed onto other generations who did not witness the real tragedy, but rather listen to it from another's perspective (McGlothlin 53). In this sense, trauma becomes no longer attributed to an individual suffering, since it continues to influence people who live the aftermath of trauma. Thus, it paves the way for the creation of collective trauma.

In fact, the notion of collective and individual trauma is prominent in both memory and trauma studies (Kurtz 146). Accordingly, Caruth focuses on the role of collective trauma in understanding how trauma endures; based on her theory of trauma and memory, she argues: "that perhaps it is not possible for the witnessing of trauma to occur within the individual at all, that it may only be in future generations that 'cure' or at least witnessing can take place" (136). In this sense, the possibility of a certain traumatic event's reoccurrence is linked to collective witnessing as much, if not more than to the individual. In addition, Erickson, in his article "Notes on Trauma and Community", defines collective trauma as following: "By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (460). Hence, trauma leaves a certain group of people shattered, detaching their sense of community. It is worth mentioning that collective trauma is not merely concerned with the recollection of traumatic memories, since collective trauma is deeply embedded in the collective memory of the group (Hirshberger 1). This shows how collective trauma affects the collective memory of a certain group because it turns it into a rigid and reoccurring memory, constantly present in their minds.

Primarily related to collective trauma, collective memory is crucial in understanding the memory of trauma from a social perspective. Nevertheless, collective memory is more complex than just an extension of individual and collective trauma. Maurice Halbwachs, a French socialist, first introduced the term collective memory, which marked a new

understanding of memory as a social phenomenon. He argues that, “Memories can also be evoked in an indirect way through reading or listening or in commemoration and festive occasions when people gather together to remember in common the deeds and accomplishments of long-departed members of the group” (24). Thus, collective memory, “is the memory that is constructed and shared by members of a particular social group; they recall memories through conversations and social gatherings” (Bouallegue, *Home and Exile*). In this sense, society becomes a crucial element in constructing the meaning of collective memory: “Society thus functions as a location - a framework -where concrete individuals are capable of transforming their obscure images into clear concepts” (Gedi and Elam 38). Yet, what is termed collective is not the memory itself, but rather the story of a traumatic experience shared by a group of people (Kurtz 116). In this sense, collective memory is a mediated memory that carries a deep-rooted story of trauma (Doolan 16). Furthermore, drawing on Halbwachs’s work, Eyerman argues that “Halbwachs reveals how a shared version of past events is crucial in sustaining group cohesion. A collective memory in other words makes collective identity possible” (38). This identity construction, then, suggests that meaning should be attributed to collective memory in order to function appropriately “A meaning that emphasizes the resilience of the group and its ability to rehabilitate and change in the aftermath of calamity” (Hirshberger 11). Thus, collective memory can largely contribute to the formation of collective identity, maintaining social resistance as well as collective harmony.

The relationship between memory and trauma can also be perceived through the concept of “postmemory”, introduced by Marianne Hirsch in her article “The Generation of Postmemory”. “Postmemory” refers to the process through which the memory of trauma is transmitted to coming generations, Hirsch describes it as “an uneasy oscillation between continuity and fracture” (Hirsch 106). There is always a continuous circulation between past memories and their relation to the present. In line with Caruth’s conceptualization of trauma

and memory, Marianna Hirsch, too, considers the traumatic memory as active and dynamic. Her focus is devoted to the ability of past sorrowful memories to remain felt and integrated, peculiarly, in the ones who did not explicitly live it; like what Sontag refers to as the “pain of others?” (qtd. in Hirsch 104). Yet, Hirsch argues that “Postmemory” is not only achieved through remembrance, but it is a whole structured process that requires “imaginative investment, projection, and creation” (Hirsch 107). Indeed, postmemory is perceived as an ongoing journey that entails a creative investment as well as an adaptation of others’ traumatic memories.

Moreover, Hirsch highlights an interesting point on how the word memory, is slightly, different from ‘postmemory’, she argues: “it is ‘post,’ but at the same time, it approximates memory in its affective force” (109). Bouallegue notes that postmemories “are not just a repository of the victims’ past experiences. They transcend the passive imitation of the real experience because they encompass “affects”; a strong emotional engagement which generates physiological response to the victims’ memories” (253). Hirsch considers family as a significant pillar of postmemory that can facilitate transmission, “The idiom of family can become an accessible lingua franca easing identification and projection across distance and difference” (115). Thus, postmemory is considered a tool that aids subsequent generations to profoundly integrate into a story of trauma.

Along with this notion of transmission, Marianne Hirsh in her article “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory”, attempts to broaden the conceptualization of postmemory to be a question of responsibility and integrity towards a traumatic memory. She writes “It is a question, more specifically, of an ethical relation to the oppressed or persecuted other for which postmemory can serve as a model: as I can “remember” my parents’ memories, I can also “remember” the suffering of others” (10). In other words, postmemory requires engaging one’s self with the pain of others, and not merely remembering it.

In conclusion, as it is discussed previously, traumatic memory is largely based on the abreactive model in which it continues to persist in the mind of the individual, and eventually escapes the individual to include those who did not witness it by recalling memories and therefore forming a story. However, this representation of memory and trauma has always involved a vision that is not complete, a vision that is restricted to a single story, imposed by Western frameworks. This makes the theories of trauma and memory inappropriate to specific contexts. This is apparent in Kabir's chapter "Affect, Body, Place: Trauma Theory in the World", in which she states, "Eurocentric paradigms, even in revisionist forms, prove inadequate for explicating trauma and its memorialization outside European spaces" (68). So, Eurocentric representation seems inapplicable for works that are not conveyed from a western perspective. Wherefore, it is undoubtedly crucial to examine theories of trauma and memory from a different perspective, specifically from a postcolonial one.

I.2. Examination of Memory and Trauma from a Postcolonial Perspective

Traditional trauma studies are Eurocentric, and while trauma theory often ignores colonial trauma, postcolonial trauma theory focuses on it, including those subjected to political oppression, war, diaspora, slavery, and segregation. Thus, postcolonial trauma theory emerges to confront the inadequacies and shortcomings of memory and trauma theory studies in formerly colonized societies. It promotes marginalized voices and sheds light on non-western trauma narratives: "Such a Eurocentric approach fails to acknowledge that people respond to suffering in the context of a specific place and time and according to cultural assumptions, values, and beliefs: The range of contextual factors that specify the experience are often ignored" (Kurtz 143). In this sense, traditional trauma studies fail to examine the non-Western and postcolonial contexts of trauma; hence, postcolonial subjects cannot be identified or represented using traditional psychoanalysis paradigms. Postcolonial trauma theory seeks to address the repercussions of colonial legacies on the individual and collective postcolonial psyches. Originally, postcolonial trauma is rooted in the continued impact of

colonization on colonized communities, as it is mentioned in Frantz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth*: "like the smoking ashes of a burnt down house after the fire has been put out, which still threaten to burst into flames again" (75). According to Fanon, colonization is a historical wound that represents the collective trauma shared by those postcolonial subjects.

Craps argues that most discussions about trauma and memory often focus on the European perspective. However, looking at how diverse cultures experience and heal from trauma differently shifts the focus to start viewing the theory of trauma from a postcolonial lens instead of universal view (48). In this vein, Craps believes that the idea of creating cross-cultural integration, which was discussed by Caruth, was another false promise that trauma theory has failed to achieve. In her conceptualization of cross-cultural integration, Caruth attempts to broaden the scope of trauma to involve non-Western trauma, which creates cross-cultural solidarity between different cultural contexts. However, Craps criticizes "the uncritical cross-cultural application of psychological concepts in the west amount to a form of cultural imperialism" (48). This suggests that psychological notions and ideas constructed within Western context are frequently applied globally, without due considerations to the different paradigms and frameworks prevalent in other cultures. Therefore, the cross-cultural integration of trauma theory falls short due to its universality as it ignores the trauma models in the postcolonial context, focusing too narrowly on the modernist view of trauma that disregards other cultures.

Accordingly, postcolonial criticism highlights concerns regarding the Western approach of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Craps et al. declare that the current understanding of trauma is limited since it only considers experiences involving physical harm. They propose expanding the definition to include other types of traumas "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); the question of centrality of the Holocaust in trauma studies and the implications of this for the study of atrocities globally" (906). In this quote, Craps et al. point out to the

tendency of over generalizing the application of a Western model of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which may not adequately portray the experiences of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Moreover, they question the use of the Holocaust as an idealistic model for trauma studies to understand people's traumas around the world.

Similarly, in her article "Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospect", Irene Visser uses Michael Rothberg's ideas to criticize event-based model in trauma theory. It is a theory that is "tied to a narrow Eurocentric framework, it distorts the histories it addresses (such as the Holocaust) and threatens to reproduce the very Eurocentrism that lies behind those histories" (252). Thus, Visser believes that Eurocentrism tends to emphasize traumas based on immediate events; however, it disregards the belated and enduring effects of colonial trauma (252). Wherefore, postcolonial trauma studies emerge to examine the long-lasting repercussions of colonialism and its legacies that are continuing to persist in postcolonial subjects and communities.

In his book *Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response*, Rothberg sheds light on the absolute need for a gradual process of change by taking further steps in decolonizing trauma studies, aiming to address the limitations in traditional trauma theory. This change entails a departure from the classic Eurocentric model of trauma that solely focuses on the Freudian psychoanalysis to a more inclusive and diverse model that incorporate trauma in different cultural and historical context. Decolonizing trauma studies reveal the distinctive nature of trauma, which has faced criticism for its tendency to employ individualistic and psychological frameworks in the context of addressing instances of collective violence (Rothberg 230). In other words, traditional trauma studies are unable to identify colonial trauma including racism, slavery, colonialism, and wars...etc. Since the individualistic theories are primarily concerned with the psyche of the individual, they may not be applicable to non-Western cultures. However, colonialism is a collective experience, which resulted in a collective trauma that non-Western people and minority groups are still undergoing. Therefore,

postcolonial trauma theory provides the collective ground for postcolonial subjects to express their traumas, paving the way for them to voice their own stories and to remedy their own traumas. In this vein, postcolonial cultures view recovery as a shared experience, whereas Westerners often seek individual therapy.

Postcolonial subjects, particularly Africans, struggle to process the horrific experiences they have endured during colonialism. Thus, they fail to express their psychological and physical traumas ingrained deeply in their memory. In her article “Apartheid Haunts: Postcolonial Trauma in Lisa Fugard’s *Skinner’s Drift*”, Neeves declares that trauma can blur regular cognitive processes and cause the person to become speechless, it has an overwhelming capacity which hinders the individual from voicing themselves, also its nature may overturn the storytelling and therefore generates doubt about memory and history (114-115). In other words, the immense pain of the traumatic experience may result in silence as trauma victims try to cope with the aftermath of traumatic experiences, and avoid reviving the unpleasant memories.

I.3. Trauma and Memory in African Literature

Trauma experienced after colonialism has been a recurring theme in the works of postcolonial African writers. Through their writing, they have explored the complex and often painful distressing traumatic experiences of those who have suffered the persistent ramifications of colonialism, and offering those who are silent a platform to voice their traumatic suffering. The Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of Yellow Sun* (2006) is a remarkable example of postcolonial trauma. The story revolves around the lives of three protagonists from different backgrounds, and the narrative alternates between the early and the late 1960s, showcasing the characters’ experiences before, during, and after the war. Thus, in the context of Nigerian civil war, these characters: Ugwu, a poor house boy, Olanna, a quite rich Nigerian woman, and a British man named Richard, sustained gruesome incidents which profoundly impacted their lives as well as their personalities. It is worth noting that

although Adichie did not witness the traumatic experience herself, she succeeded to portray how both individuals and communities lived through and after this trauma, she states:

In some ways I think that I was able to write about Biafra because I did not experience it . . . often the people who experienced the trauma the first generation that experiences the trauma is often not the generation that is able to write about that trauma imaginatively my father's generation some of them did not talk about Biafra at all . . . I can not imagine being able to write a novel about Biafra if I had lived through Biafra.
(Sahara TV 00:06:35)

Thus, generations who did not witness the traumatic event have the potential to talk and write about trauma, even more than those who actually live it. Additionally, Adichie emphasizes the ongoing impact of colonialism, which has deeply ingrained psychological and mental scars in the characters, burdening their minds and psyches. Adichie's characters embody the trauma of wartime violence. A vital example of sexual violence is Anulika, Ugwu's sister. During the civil war, Anulika was a victim of rape, "They forced themselves on her. Five of them" (421). Therefore, this terrifying experience has inflicted irremovable scars on her psychologically and physically. Another key representation of trauma revolves around the protagonist Olanna. Although she is physically unharmed, she suffers symptoms of trauma resulting from her experience as a witness of violent acts during the war. In this sense, while Olanna runs from the horrific incident of witnessing her relatives being killed in Kano to reach safety, she encounters a woman who holds fragments of her daughter's head "Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl's head with the ashy-grey and the plaited hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away" (149).

These characters are drawn into silence to survive the unbearable memories of the war. In this respect, Craps affirms that, "silence is repeatedly put forward as a valid way of surviving the sufferings inflicted by the war" (55). In light of this quote, Adichie depicts

Olanna as a significant representation of silence, which is not the result of a single traumatic incident, but rather accumulation of many traumas. Thus, Olanna's speechlessness reflects a profound trauma of being a witness to the violent acts of the civil war. The narrator states: "Olanna had come home in strange silence. She spoke melancholically. She did not laugh" (194). This describes Olanna's inability to express her traumatic experience, the narrator adds, "Her lips were heavy. Speaking was a labor". Additionally, Anulika as well appears too disabled to articulate her traumatic experience, Adichie describes this unwillingness when she encounters Ugwu, "She did not answer any of his other questions in the way that he had expected, there were no energetic gestures, no sharp wit in her answers. She looked relieved when Chioke called her, and she got up quickly and left" (420-1). Therefore, Adichie successfully brings light to the persisting horrific repercussion of colonialism's legacies that continue to haunt its survivors in the aftermath of the civil war.

Additionally, in addressing trauma, African writers not only concentrate on silence, but also pay a specific attention to memory. Accordingly, it is worth noting that trauma studies should broaden its scope beyond the traumatic events and experiences to focus on a deeper examination of memory in a postcolonial context. This is necessary because Western-centric views can harm the collective nature of the postcolonial African memory. In her analysis of Leonora Miano's *Contours of the Coming Day*, Mackay discusses the great impact of colonialism and the use of Western models on the memory of postcolonial communities to the extent that they have completely forgotten about their traumatic past, she argues:

While acknowledging that European imperialism left a mark on continental memory, Miano stresses that specific aspects of colonization also led to voluntary amnesia in communities fundamentally marred by trauma that they are unable or unwilling to articulate. The author inscribes her fiction under the banner of continental memory rehabilitation, for she perceives the lack of acceptance of past traumas as having

contributed to the development of a diminished African self-consciousness. (qtd. in Mackay 3)

To phrase it differently, Miano argues that certain post-colonial communities affected by trauma have deliberately chosen to disregard or suppress their memories as a survival mechanism to cope with the pain caused by the traumatic memories.

In the same context, Azoulay introduces the concept of 'colonial amnesia'. In the article "Undoing Colonial Amnesia" along with other postcolonial theorists, Azoulay argues that the colonizer often imposes a selective or distorted version of history that erases or minimizes the experiences of colonized people. Based on this idea, she states "Colonial amnesia produces new realities and generates a repertoire of speaking positions for colonial citizens who are recognizable as legitimate speakers in a world shaped colonialism" (1). In other words, the author believes that the future of postcolonial communities depends on confronting and embracing their unpleasant memories. She claims that escaping history is futile without acknowledging the past, and the way it shapes the present. In this vein, the act of remembering and restoring those memories, no matter how painful they are, remains an integral part of history that cannot be easily erased.

Official historical narratives tend to disregard and ignore the stories of those who have been oppressed or subjugated throughout history. As a result, these stories are often overlooked and unheard in dominant narratives. Therefore, the act of remembering and recalling traumatic memories acts as a bridge between the postcolonial communities and their monopolized history. In this respect, counter-memory, coined by Michel Foucault is defined as, the memory of "other voices which have remained silent for so long" (qtd. in Bouallegue, *Home and Exile* 179). In this sense, counter-memory is a form of opposition and rejection to the falsified dominant narratives about formerly colonized communities. It gives a voice to the voiceless and minority groups who sidelined for so long to write the true version of their

history. In other words, counter-memory serves as a non-destructive weapon against the imposed oblivion that colonialism inflicted upon the postcolonial communities.

In this context, Adichie, again, offers a vital example of counter-memory in her novel *Half of Yellow Sun*. Through her main character Ugwu, she represents an act of counter memory. Ugwu engages in the process of writing a book entitled ‘The World Was Silent When We Died’ as an account of the suffering that people witnessed during the Biafran War. Accordingly, in his book, Ugwu reports the prevailing injustices that are happening in Biafra as well as the world’s obliviousness to them “In the United States, Biafra was under ‘Britain’s sphere of interest’ In Canada the prime minister quipped ‘Where is Biafra?’”(Adichie 258). In this respect, despite the atrocities that happen in Biafra such as the people’s slaughter and childrens’ dying out of starvation, the outsider world is still unaware of Biafra. This reflects the impact of colonialism, which disregards the suffering of postcolonial communities, and deprives them of the right to voice their traumatic memories. Therefore, Ugwu’s book serves as a form of resistance and a way of writing back, rejecting the dominant histories and recounting the truths behind their atrocities to create their histories.

Besides *Half of Yellow Sun*, a good instance of counter-memory in postcolonial African context would be the Kenyan writer Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor’s *Dust* (2013). In her novel, Owuor emphasizes the power of counter-memory through the character of Ajany, the protagonist. The story opens with the murder of a young man named Odidi Oganda, who was shot dead by the police on the night of the 2007 Kenyan election. Eventually, Oganda’s death reunites his family since they are trying to unveil the hidden truth behind his death. Accordingly, Oganda’s young sister Ajany returns to uncover the truth behind her brother’s murder and to break the silence that overlays her family as well as the whole country. The narrator notes, “After Mboya, Kenya’s official languages: English, Kiswahili, and Silence” (Owuor). In this novel, the silence of Ajani’s parents stands for the silence that envelops the whole nation. In this vein, in the article “‘To Name the Unnameable is a curse’: Silence as an

Enunciation of trauma in Yvonne Owuor's *Dust and Dragonfly sea*", Omwocha states that, "The weight of this silence is carried by characters like Nyapir, who passes it on to Akai and Ajany" (214). In other words, since her return to her ancestral land, Ajany holds the responsibility not only to find out the truth behind her brother's death and her family's secrets, but also to unbutton the nation's elected muteness and uncertainty towards history. Consequently, Ajany's journey involves around confronting both the imposed and silenced narratives. Throughout the novel, she unveils truths about personal memories and collective history, creating new realities, which have long been suppressed by the colonizer.

Similarly, Mackay examines the postcolonial perspective of memory, which indicates the role of memory as a resistance movement. Based on this idea, she claims: "In acting out, the victim of trauma is possessed by the past and unable to move beyond it . . . this must be achieved by remembering and celebrating who one is while recognizing that this is not solely dependent on one's past but equally so on what one will accomplish in the future" (14). In this respect, remembering one's history and culture, embracing it, and finding peace with traumatic memories is a way to move forward because unlike the past, which is static, the future definitely changes.

In short, postcolonial trauma theory has long addressed trauma in ways that shed light directly on the enduring legacy of colonialism, focusing on the ways in which trauma continues to affect those who were formerly colonized, at the individual and collective level. In this context, postcolonial memory serves as a crucial tool for preserving both memory and history. It offers means of resistance against the enforced erasure and forgetfulness that was commonly used by colonialism. Wherefore, by examining literature through the postcolonial trauma and memory studies, we offer a platform for the voiceless to voice their stories and articulate their experiences, allowing the marginalized to rewrite and redefine their histories.

Chapter II: Memory and Trauma: Individual and Collective

The second chapter is analytical. It seeks to examine memory and trauma in Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the novel, emphasizing the role of Forna as a post-rememberer as well as the historical context of the Sierra Leonean civil war. Moreover, the following section examines the relationship between memory and trauma and its impact at both individual and collective levels. Finally, the last section examines the theme of silence and probes deep into the three types of silence depicted in the novel.

II.1. An Overview of *The Memory of Love*

The civil wars that have broken out throughout the African continent, such as the Sierra Leonean civil war, persist to be a source of massive pain to postcolonial subjects, who are still holding the scars on both their minds and bodies for eternity. Aminatta Forna, who was born in Scotland and grew up in Sierra Leone is one of the prominent writers who portray the civil war in literature, mainly the Sierra Leone civil war. Moreover, trauma, memory, and healing are the spine of this author's literary works, as she always successfully reflects on the dreadful psychological and physical sufferings of the Sierra Leoneans through and after the civil war (aminattafornea.com). It is worth mentioning that because Forna carries her father's memories as well as Sierra Leonean' memories, we consider her a post-rememberer, to borrow Hirsch's concept of postmemory. In this respect, in an interview with Nicolae, Forna reveals the process through which she collected her nation's memories, she claims, "In the late 1990s, I began the process of collecting memories. The first memories I collected were my own. They were fragments from the first ten years of my life and they were memories of events that had taken place in Sierra Leone in my own family". Furthermore, the tragedies that happened during the civil war are transmitted to Forna who felt the responsibility to convey these memories since they are deeply integrated into her imaginative works. Through

her writing, she rescues the memories of previous generations that are fading through time. She also attempts to engage her creativity and emotions in order to portray the pain of others because “Postmemory is not a passive imitation of the real experience, it carries emotional engagement and empathy which Hirsch refers to as ‘affect’” (Bouallegue 168). Therefore, Forna considers remembering a crucial step in rewriting one’s story in the aftermath of a certain traumatic experience, she claims, “Like a person lost in the forest, they must retrace their steps as slowly as need be and search for the places where they stopped off the path, try to find those places where the wrong turns were taken and to walk in the right direction. They must remember”. In this respect, Forna becomes self-centered in the history of her country as she holds the ethical responsibility to reflect the continuous pain of her country as well as to show to the outside world the horrifying memories resulting from that bloody era. Accordingly, she states, “My country had a war. It would be extraordinary not to want to write about that” (Independent).

In her depiction of the Sierra Leone civil war, Forna shows the dreadful ramifications of eleven years of conflict. Between 1991 and 2002, the West African country of Sierra Leone witnessed one of the most gruesome wars in its history. Sierra Leone was torn apart by a vicious civil war that was marked by the death of over fifty thousand people and over half a million of the population were displaced with many rapes, mutilations, amputations, and the use of child soldiers (France 24 English, 00:00:14-00:00:34). In fact, the conflict was caused by multiple reasons, including governmental corruption, economic inequality and the exploitation of natural resources. Thus, there was no specific reason that led to the war, rather a mixture of reasons all linked to a government that failed its people, “The government stole from their own people for decades. They’re still at it. Did people say anything? Did they protest? No. Their children dressed in rags and went hungry. Nobody stood up to those men. And yet a poor man would be lynched for stealing tomatoes” (253).

The novel delves into the lives of three male characters: Elias Cole, a retired history professor. Kai Mansaray, a brilliant surgeon haunted by his past, and the English psychologist, Adrian Lockheart. Through their voices and their interrelationships, Forna shows the diverse impact that trauma inflicts on each character's psyche and memory. The book begins in a hospital room with Elias, as he recounts his history and revisits his memories of the late 1960s with Adrian. Meanwhile, Adrian who recently arrived from London, leaving a wife and a daughter, becomes a friend with Kai Mansaray who is haunted by his unspeakable traumas. Through Elias and other patients, Adrian witnesses a distinct model of pain, one constructed by experiences different from those studied in the Western framework of trauma, the so-called postcolonial trauma. This Western framework proves ineffective in treating Adrian's patients. In this vein, Craps argues that, "The supposed universal validity of Western traditions and experiences is further challenged by pointed remarks throughout the novel highlighting their situatedness or denouncing their imperialist pretensions" (54). In light of this idea, Forna's novel trumps the universality of Western paradigms before the local models in a post-war context.

Accordingly, the novel depicts the psychological wounds endured by the characters in a post-war context, reflecting on the Sierra Leoneans' inherited traumatic legacy in the aftermath of the civil war. As the novel moves between the past and the present, it explores the traumas resulting from the civil war at the individual and collective levels. It demonstrates how memory shapes and alters the history of a country whose people are striving to heal their psychological wounds (africanwords.com). Furthermore, Forna highlights the non-Western coping strategies adopted within the country, assuring their adequacy in comparison to the Western approach. In light of this, Craps argues that "*The Memory of Love* can be seen to pose a challenge to trauma theory to remove its Eurocentric blinkers" (57). Consequently, through her novels, Forna skillfully depicts the enduring psychological scars that continue to

distress the postcolonial subjects in the aftermath of the civil war at the individual and collective levels.

II. 2. Memory and Trauma: Individual and Collective

The themes of memory and trauma are excessively manifested in *The Memory of Love*. Forna highlights the active nature of traumatic memories and their ambivalence in the unconscious mind. Thus, through her writing, she portrays trauma as a psychic wound that affects the character's life and emphasizes the complex nature of memory as the main instigator of traumas. In this sense, Imma considers the representation of memory in *The Memory of Love* as "contested, fragile, submerged, and malleable" (132). Forna attempts to depict the traumatic memories that are immersed in the character's minds as well as the power they carry to alter their lives. Yet, in contrast to the Western representation of trauma, the novel paves the way for a postcolonial view of trauma, which does not deal with trauma as a short-lived experience, but rather as "*a way of life*" (Kurtz 239). Hence, Forna focuses on the permanent effects of traumatic memory at both individual and collective levels in the aftermath of a destructive civil war.

Accordingly, the traumatic experience of the Sierra Leone civil war has a deep impact on the memory of the characters since it causes them profound psychic wounds. In the article "Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*: A Chronicle of Psychological Disaster in a Post-War Context", Makosso et al. argue that, "A peruse of this novel reveals that symptoms of post-war are manifest in individuals through some psychological scars" (2493). Thus, the civil war left profound psychological wounds on characters who are in constant battle to overcome their sufferings. Indeed, the enduring power of traumatic memories is related to their repetitive nature since they are consistently repressed in the unconscious mind; hence, they appear in the form of flashbacks and distressed dreams (Kurtz 242). This is evident in the novel's characters whose traumatic memories continue to haunt them perpetually.

At the individual level, the complex nature of traumatic memories manifests through different characters, showcasing the multifaceted nature of their struggles with the past. For instance, Kai Mansaray is a Sierra Leonean surgeon who is experiencing painful symptoms of trauma related to a traumatic memory he witnessed during the civil war. When he was treating the victims of war during the time of revolution, he was brutally violated along with his colleague Ballia. The rebel soldiers raped and killed Ballia in front of his eyes on the peninsula bridge. In addition, he was subjected to sexual violence (356-357). Afterward, Kai is left with the horrifying images of the traumatic memory in his mind, which continue to haunt him repetitively in the form of nightmares and fragmentations. In light of this idea, Freud and Breuer refer to the memory of trauma “as a foreign body that must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work” (6). Thus, the memory of trauma persists to operate consistently as a source of pain. This is evident in the narrator’s description of Kai’s memories, she writes, “Kai wasn’t woken by dreams about the bridge, or even a dream at all. But a memory, a sudden intrusion of conscious thought upon his world of sleep” (286). In this respect, Kai’s behaviors portray the enduring power of traumatic memories and their ability to alter the ordinary functions of the mind as Kai becomes unable to sleep.

In this sense, the horrifying traumatic memories cause Kai stress and anxiety. Later on in the novel, Kai is afraid of sleep since his dreams will revive traumatic memories again. According to Freud, dreams are the storage of repressed traumatic memories, which remain active in the unconscious mind; also, they consistently generate intense feelings of fear (13). This can be demonstrated in the novel’s scene when Kai’s traumatic memories appear perpetually in his dreams, the narrator remarks, “He will lie on the sofa, hating the prospect of sleep, checking the luminous numerals of his watch and counting off the hours of darkness. Sleep, when it comes, arrives in flights, accompanied by a rush of images or sometimes lingering dreams. He wakes, often, bathed in sweat” (99). In addition, the traumatic memories of Kai do not manifest in dreams only, but also in his daily life, at any unanticipated moment

“The memories come at unguarded moments when he cannot sleep” (184). Thus, through Kai, Forna illustrates the dynamic nature of traumatic memories as well as their constant readiness to appear unexpectedly. In addition, the narrator adds “Nights on end Kai did not sleep or slept standing up, for he had no memory of sleeping and could not later imagine where such an event might have taken place, there was not a spare bed, chair, or inch of floor space” (434). Hence, although Kai’s traumatic memories are related to an earlier event, their impact endures in his mind as they cause him regular frustration and anxiety.

Furthermore, Adrian, the British psychologist who works voluntarily in Sierra Leone to help traumatized people overcome their traumatic memories, notices Kai’s irritated behaviors since they share the same apartment, so he tries to provide help to Kai. In this context, Craps considers Adrian as “an outsider who does not fully understand the situation in which he finds himself and who moves from bewilderment to insight in the course of the narrative” (52). Thus, Adrian is not aware of the reasons behind Kai’s constant anxiety and interrupted sleep. In addition, even though Kai and Adrian become relatively close, Kai always hesitates to open up to Adrian about his traumatic memory. In a conversation between Kai and Adrian, Adrian recounts stories about his work as a therapist in Britain, but Kai is unable to understand Adrian’s perspective since Kai believes that the experience in Europe is different from the reality in Sierra Leone; the narrator thinks, “Kai does not know what he means. Still, he chooses not to say. This is the way Europeans talk, as though everybody shared their experiences” (182). Ultimately, the narrator reveals the truth behind Kai’s uncertainty towards Adrian since Kai believes that Adrian, from his position as an outsider, will not understand the nature of traumatic memories of Sierra Leoneans, he tells Adrian: ““This isn’t your country, man. I’m sorry. But this isn’t your country”” (228). Kai believes that everyone who comes to Sierra Leone aims to achieve his/her personal goals, the narrator demonstrates, “There were too many like Adrian, here living out their unfinished

dreams”(220). In this sense, Kai is skeptical about Adrian, as a European psychologist, to help him overcome his unbearable traumatic memories

The complex nature of the traumatic memory is also depicted in the act of avoidance. Characters tend to avoid any trigger that can reactivate their traumatic memories or unfold a distressed emotion related to it (Makosso et al. 2495). This is seen in Kai’s attitude towards anything that can remind him of the terrible scene he lived in the past. On a ride with Kai outside Freetown, Adrian takes the road near the bridge; the place where Kai witnessed his traumatic experience. Suddenly, Kai becomes so frightened that he screams at Adrian to go back “ ‘I said stop! I don’t want to go that way. Would you just do as I ask and drive on?’”, Adrian describes Kai saying: “He looks terrified” (255-256). In this sense, based on Adrian’s comment, it is clear that Kai is so deeply traumatized that he refuses to come across anything associated with his traumatic memory of the war. Undoubtedly, this avoidance unveils the depth of Kai’s traumatic memories.

Besides the traumatic memories of Kai, Forna indeed demonstrates the complex nature of traumatic memories through Agnes, a woman who lost her husband and witnessed the death of her two daughters in a refugee camp in Guinea. These horrible traumatic memories alter Agnes’s behavior as she becomes constantly irritated due her recurring dreams. The narrator reveals, “It was maybe a year ago. Harmattan time again. It began in the same way as everyone since, with dreams so real she could not escape them . . . The dreams brought on a headache and she remembered waking in the morning with a blurred patch in the centre of her vision” (162). Later on in the novel, she is brought to the psychiatric hospital where Adrian works, and in his first encounter with her, she is silent. Adrian becomes interested in her case and he makes efforts to understand her condition. After many attempts to understand her, he finally diagnoses her with Fugue, Adrian states: “Fugue, as they call it in his profession, a condition in which the body and the disturbed spirit are joined in shadowy wanderings (116).

Agnes, due to her traumatic memories, frequently experiences lapses in consciousness and struggles to maintain control over her life.

Additionally, Forna does not portray the traumatic memories of victims only, but also those who participated in the violence. Imma argues, “*The Memory of Love* demarcates the line between victims and perpetrators of violence” (145). In addition, the scholar and psychologist Rachel MacNair draws attention to the trauma of perpetrator as a crucial subset of trauma that continues to manifest in the lives of those who participate in violence. She claims that “perpetrators also undergo a process of acting out and working through of their traumas of violence. . . victimisers can not only experience intrusive symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares and unwanted thoughts but that these symptoms can be greater than those suffered by innocent victims. (qtd. in Romo-Mayor1). In the novel, perpetrator’s trauma is manifested through Adecali’s traumatic memories. Adecali, a former member of the rebel soldier is haunted by memories related to his job during the civil war as he used to burn bodies following the government’s orders. Eventually, his traumatic memories deceive him with false associations, Adecali says: “I dream. It is such that I am afraid to sleep. But it m-m-makes no sense. Sometimes in the day, they come, sometimes by night.’ His fingers work upon his forehead. ‘Sometimes I smell something that is not there” (317). Indeed, his traumatic memories are wrapped in shame and guilt as he considers himself responsible for others’ pain, the narrator thinks, “The fragmentation of the conscience. Adecali, tortured by those acts he had committed” (416). To alleviate this tormented conscience, Adecali manages to contact Adrian. With signs of fear and hesitation, Adecali tells Adrian about his symptoms. Adrian, then, tries to make him aware of the situation, he states “Adecali ‘What you’re experiencing,’ says Adrian, ‘are called flashbacks. A flashback is a memory of a bad thing that has happened, but sometimes these memories are so strong they make it feel as though the thing is happening all over again, as though you are back in the same place” (373). Thus,

through Adekali, Forna depicts the power of traumatic memories and how they persist as a source of pain, not only for victims but also for those who wage violence.

Along with the individual suffering that each character separately sustains, Forna enlarges the realm of memory and trauma as she integrates a sense of collective suffering that is widely shared among characters in the novel. According to Hirshberger, collective trauma is the result of psychological damage to society, he states, “The term collective trauma refers to the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society; it does not merely reflect a historical fact, the recollection of a terrible event that happened to a group of people” (1). In this respect, unlike the individual suffering which manifests in dreams, flashbacks and avoidance, the collective trauma is directly related to the destructive civil war that left a shattered society, the narrator writes: “It was as though plague had struck, a plague which tore open men’s chests, blew off limbs, ripped through muscle and bone, unleashed arrowheads of shrapnel into soft flesh” (434). In the same vein, in the article “Connecting Testimony, Trauma, and Memory: The Sierra Leone Experience”, Ibrahim argues that the experience of war in Sierra Leone influenced the larger community and not only the individual, he states:

Additionally, in societies like Sierra Leone where interdependency and interconnectedness are considered the foundation of well-being, the Western concept of selfhood fails to capture the experiences of many. For example, the impact of a traumatic event, though personally experienced, could be felt by others, namely family and community. (256)

Thus, in the novel, the narrator depicts the impact of collective trauma in different scenes. For instance, the collective trauma of war is devastating to the extent that people lose trust and faith in each other. This is evident in the relationship between Elias, the retired history professor, and Julius, the professor of history. Because of the political corruption that persists

after the war, Julius never trusts Elias to tell him about his political affairs as a secret anti-government activist. The narrator notes, “Elias Cole averts his gaze, looks to the blank wall. He says with bitterness, ‘Julius acted as though he was my friend. All the times he would stop by my office, and take me for a drive. We went gambling together. They borrowed my office, my typewriter. And he never trusted me enough to tell me’” (348). Thus, the novel shows how the collective trauma of war weakens the social fabric of life and raises doubts and mistrust about human relationships.

Another instance of the impact of collective trauma in the novel is when Kai and his close friend Tejani are talking about the feelings of emptiness and self-loss they feel in the aftermath of the war. Their experiences of the war leave a void, as they mourn not only the physical loss of loved ones and homes, but also the intangible loss of dreams, ambitions, and plans that they attempt to achieve in life, as the narrator puts it:

Kai shakes his head. ‘We were too young. At least so I thought. I’d set myself a lot of things to do when I graduated. A few things got in the way of that.’ He belches.

‘Like what?’

‘A little thing like a war.’

‘What did you want to do?’ ‘Plans, man. I had big plans.’

‘To do what?’ ‘To be the best, I guess. Just that. Me and Tejani, he was my friend back then. We never imagined it any other way’. (105)

Thus, the previous quote demonstrates the feelings of loss and regret that characters experience after the war. Furthermore, the narrator shows how the pain of the war is deeply felt at the collective level. In light of this idea, Caruth focuses on how the pain of trauma can be embraced and felt by people who are not directly involved in the traumatic scene (8). This is evident in the way the medical staff feels every loss and pain that the patients experience, the narrator reveals, “He had experienced less conflict over doing so than he imagined. Yet

once a patient had become their own, once the team became united in that goal, the loss was bitterly felt by all” (179). Through this quote, the novel demonstrates how the pain of war is perceived at the collective level as well as the ability of people to feel and embrace the pain of others.

In the same vein, the collective trauma of war is deeply associated with the collective memory of war that the characters share in the novel. However, while collective trauma has a destructive nature, the collective memory has the potential to reconstruct a story of trauma and to attribute meaning to it. In this respect, Hirshberger believes that collective trauma “suggests that the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of the group, and like all forms of memory it comprises not only a reproduction of the events, but also an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it” (1). In this sense, Forna focuses on the collective memory as the social background for the novel. In fact, collective memory of war is a crucial element in the novel since Forna considers it as an investment to Sierra Leone’s collective memory (Fernández 212). In other words, Forna endeavors to reshape her nation’s shared memories. In this pursuit, she does not only revise her memories gathered during the writing process, but also participates in constructing the Sierra Leone’s collective memory of the civil war. In her interview, she claims, “Placing my own memories alongside the memories of others and the collective memories of a nation” (Nicolae and Forna). In light of this idea, Forna represents the collective memory through the characters’ collective remembrances about their involvement in the same horrible memory of war. Accordingly, the collective memory is the bridge that connects all characters in the novel especially Adrian, Kai, and Tejani, whose memories of the war become intertwined together.

Additionally, the manifestation of the collective memory can be seen in novel where characters come together to recount their pasts or discuss shared hardships. In light of this idea, Halbwachs argues that collective memories are evoked in indirect ways when people gather to share their traumatic stories through gathering and communal interactions (24). This

is seen when Kai finds out the truth about Agnes based on the testimonies and oral narratives of people. Thus, the story of Agnes is reconstructed based on the narratives of witnesses which contribute to the collective memory of people in general as Fernandez argues “Agnes's story is, by extension, the story of Sierra Leone during the war as a whole; it is an example of the collective memory Forna is contributing to” (218). This is apparent in Forna’s writing where she focuses on testimonies in the reconstruction of a collective memory that adds meaning to the story of Agnes, the narrator notes, “Each person told a part of the same story. And in telling another's story, they told their own. Kai took what they had told, given him and placed it together with what he already knew and those things Adrian had told him” (306). Eventually, based on the collective memory of war, Kai is able to understand Agnes’s story. Hence, Forna emphasizes the importance of collective remembering and recollecting the testimonies in constructing a full vision of a story of trauma.

II.3. Silence in *The Memory of Love*

The theme of silence takes a prominent space in *The Memory of Love*, it is manifested in many ways in the novel since Forna portrays three distinct types of silence. Throughout the novel, Forna depicts silence as a symptom of trauma, she also demonstrates how silence is deeply rooted in Sierra Leonean culture. Furthermore, the author emphasizes the role of silence as a coping mechanism that postcolonial subjects adopt to endure the aftermath of trauma (Postcolonial Writers Make Worlds 00:18:39-00:20:15). According to the Concise Dictionary of Psychology, silence is defined as “the fact of deliberately refusing to speak about something for the goal of not mentioning or revealing a secret”. In this sense, silence refers to a state of speechlessness that individuals immerse themselves into in order to undercover certain episodes in life, thereby avoid addressing as well as confronting them.

Trauma as a psychic wound has a profound impact on traumatized people since they become unable to articulate it into words; thus, in “Speaking through Silence: Trauma in

Literary Work”, Nungki et al. state that, “Traumatic experience is hard to express easily because it is beyond comprehension and too threatening to be accepted into consciousness” (166). In other words, due to the immense pain of the trauma, the conscious mind can neither process the traumatic memory nor bear re-witnessing it; therefore, it is repressed and located in the realm of unconsciousness where it is permanently stored. Accordingly, the overwhelming nature of trauma hinders the victims from voicing their traumatic memories. Thus, Kurtz argues that, “In so far as trauma is at least initially unavailable to the consciousness, efforts to articulate it often result in silence and textual space” (101). In this respect, silence is a main symptom of trauma that indicates its unspeakable nature. Thus, trauma results in silence as it inflicts a state of muteness on its survivors.

In the novel, silence is depicted as a symptom of trauma originating from sexual violence. In this context, in his article “Redressing the Trauma: Gender, Slavery, and Survival in Africand Literature”, Amandeep states that, “‘Silence’ is the most potent weapon wielded to keep off blues. Festering emotional wounds of sexual exploitation” (76). A vital example in the novel is Kai. Kai drowns in silence because he is a victim of rape and sexual assault during the civil war. In describing that horrific incident, the narrator says, “Kai tried to force himself to think. He was helpless . . . The pain was acute and rippled through his body” (441). Kai endured a terrifying traumatic experience that left a huge scar on him; yet, he never speaks about it and faces his trauma with total silence. Moreover, like many Sierra Leoneans, Kai believes that speaking of the traumatic memory is purposeless since no one will erase it from his mind. In a conversation with Adrian, Kai states, “I could tell you, but it would not make any difference. You can’t not undo it” (423). These words indicate Kai’s unwillingness to confront his traumatic memory.

A further instance of silence as a trauma symptom that stems from wartime violence is the case of Adecali. Despite being a perpetrator; however, his experience of waging violence

has rendered him into a speechless person who fails to express himself, “Adecali is silent. Words seem to fail him. This happens often. Without Adrian’s prompting, the man seems incapable of acting. Perhaps this is how it worked in the battlefield. Adecali’s spirit, broken in much the same way as he set about breaking villagers’ will” (372). In other words, Adecali’s reluctance to recount his crimes stems from a profound trauma that burdens him as much as it burdens his victims.

Another silence that is depicted in the novel is the country’s silence. This silence is not linked to trauma but to the country’s culture. Throughout the novel, Adrian learns that holding conversations is not a skill in Sierra Leone, Adrian argues: “Conversation here can be challenging, language is a blunter instrument, each word a heavy black strike with a single meaning. To say exactly what you mean, to ask precisely the right question, this is what has to be done” (47). Additionally, Forna portrays this silence in a discussion between Adrian and Kai, “A pause. And because he is trying not to show how discomfited he is by Kai’s lack of niceties and because the notion that a conversation is a continuous act is bred into his bones and silences like nudity should be covered up lest they offend, Adrian asks, ‘How long have you worked here?’” (48). Thus, silence is at the core of the Sierra Leonean culture which is not the result of painful traumas, but a feature embedded in characters. Moreover, as a newcomer to Sierra Leone, Adrian expected that the country would reveal itself and unravel its hidden secrets to him. Accordingly, from the beginning, his connection with the nation's people proves unsuccessful; eventually, he realizes that silence is related to the nature of existing and living in Sierra Leone. Therefore, Forna shows the importance of silence in Sierra Leonean culture and to what extent Sierra Leoneans value it. Another key representation of the country’s cultural silence is portrayed through Adrian’s ineffective therapeutic sessions with the Sierra Leonean patients, “Here those tricks have no place, even with those whom he calls his patients. If Adrian falls silent, so too do they, waiting patiently and without embarrassment. Here the silences have a different quality, are entirely devoid of

expectation” (28-29). In this respect, Adrian finds that the silence in Sierra Leone is different and hard to interpret in contrast to his situation in Britain where silence was conditionally related to a specific reason or sentiment. However, in Sierra Leone, silence is embedded in the country’s culture since people have been oppressed for twenty-five years. Through a long era of discrimination and corruption, Sierra Leoneans learn to be silent. In this vein, Adrian unveils this silence through a discussion with Mamakay, she questions him, “Have you never noticed? How nobody ever talks about anything? What happened here. The war. Before the war. It’s like a secret” (321). In other words, the silence that is adopted in the country sustains a collective trauma that has taken place before, during, and after the war, reflecting a cultural feature that is deeply anchored in Sierra Leone’s way of living.

Furthermore, in the postcolonial context, rather than being only a trauma symptom, silence is a prevalent coping mechanism that trauma survivors intentionally resort to. Craps affirms that “Rather than merely a symptom of trauma, to be dispelled without a second thought, silence is also a coping mechanism, a conscious choice deserving of respect” (55). Therefore, silence is a double-edged concept since it is not only a trauma symptom, but also a local strategy to survive and cope with a traumatic past that is still lingering in the present. However, silence is not always silent; it is the traumatized language to communicate the horrifying incidents in a speechless way. In this sense, Forna portrays characters whose silence is the only escape from trauma. This is evident through the character Agnes, a woman who survived an awful traumatic event, the narrator remarks: “And in her silence, she was more eloquent than in anything her barbed tongue could produce” (296). In this sense, the more painful the traumatic memory is, the deeper is silence, as Achiri argues that, “Silence creates a space for another language that permits the articulation of the ‘counter sentence’” (54). Thus, in the novel, silence seems to be strongly connected to the deep-rooted scars of trauma that continue to haunt characters perpetually.

Furthermore, a critical case that Adrian tries to understand is Agnes, a woman who lost her husband during the civil war to find out later that her son-in-law JaJa is her husband's murderer. Agnes decides to conceal this brutal truth from her daughter (308-12). Thus, Forna describes Agnes's silence when she encounters Adrian at the psychiatric hospital, and her unwillingness to speak "She was silent still, though she had moved her head slightly at the sound of his voice" (102). In this sense, Adrian interprets Agnes's silence as merely a symptom of trauma. However, when he spent more time with her, he discovered that Agnes's silence reflects her attempt to forget and cope with her traumatic memories. Additionally, in their discussion on Agnes's tragic story, Kai and his nephew Abass state:

'So, the man killed the lady's husband and then he married her daughter,' Abass says.

Kai doesn't spare the child, but replies, 'Yes.'

'And now she has to live with him and keep quiet because her daughter doesn't know what

he did.' He had been listening to every word spoken in the house.

'That's right,' says Kai. (313)

Thus, this tragic incident affects Agnes's psyche as well as mental health; it robs her of her memory about the dreadful trauma she witnessed and drags her into silence. In Agnes's case, silence is a conscious choice, it is the only way to survive an awful reality. Wherefore, besides being a core symptom of trauma, silence becomes a coping strategy. In a conversation with Forna, she claims that silence is not always flawed because someone who undergoes trauma, does not want intentionally to revisit it or even try to articulate it through words (Postcolonial Writers Make Worlds 00:39:49-00:39:59). Significantly, silence becomes the only way Agnes survives since confessing the truth will make the situation worse, "In Agnes's case it was the unbearable aftermath, the knowledge, and nothing to be done but to

endure it” (326). So, through silence, Agnes bears the weight of her trauma that makes her restless in her own home.

To conclude, silence is a prominent theme in the novel. It covers all aspects of life after a destructive civil war. In this vein, in the article “‘What is the use of talking-talking?’ Reflections on talking, silence, and resilience in Sierra Leone”. Based on Jackson’s quote, Mieth challenges the existing stereotypes concerning silence, discussing its potential in the healing process, he argues: “Who are we to say that silence is denial, and talk therapeutic? For silence may be, as in Africa, a way of healing and reconciliation, and not a way of evading or repressing an issue” (qtd. in Mieth 39). In other words, silence cannot always be interpreted as a sign of trauma, especially in the aftermath of the war’s atrocities; thus, Forna shows that postcolonial subjects have long been silent due to many reasons related either to the way of living in Sierra Leone or to their attempt to heal and resist their traumatic memories

Chapter III: Healing and Survival in *The Memory of Love*

This chapter deals with the idea of healing and survival in Forna's *The Memory of Love*. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with healing, it examines the different healing and survival strategies that the characters adopt to deal with the sorrowful traumatic memories. The second section, on the other hand, deals with the theme of emotional belonging as an effective way of healing in the novel; it shows how characters construct emotional spaces to soothe their traumatic memories.

III.1 Healing and Survival in *The Memory of Love*

Although Forna highly focuses on the long-lasting effects of traumatic memories on characters, she also explores the way characters heal from their traumas. Primarily, healing is a central theme in the novel because most of the events take place in a psychiatric hospital. Thus, in *The Memory of Love*, Forna highlights how each character adopts different healing and survival strategies to overcome their painful memories. However, in her writing, Forna attempts to provide a non-Western view of healing which questions the effectiveness of a Eurocentric approach to healing in a non-Western context. In light of this idea, Craps considers the representation of healing in *The Memory of Love* as an initial stage in the construction of a more distinct view of healing in comparison to Western paradigms that draw a generalized framework of trauma (51). In addition, through her novel, Craps argues that Forna includes coping strategies that are exclusively related to the African context and especially to Sierra Leone civil war, it is a strategy that leads people to deal with trauma differently (51).

Accordingly, European ways of healing seem inadequate in dealing with the traumatic memories of characters. In the novel, Forna illustrates this idea through different conversations that take place in the psychiatric hospital, and most importantly through the character Adrian who is trying to attribute European methods of healing to African patients.

Thus, Adrian, the British psychologist, is unable to alleviate the suffering of his patients. This is evident in his discussion with another European psychologist, Ileana, who questions the inefficacy of European strategies such as the talking cure, Ileana says: “Years of investigation. Therapy. And even then there are no guarantees. After all, it was we Europeans who invented the talking cure. And most of the maladies it’s designed to treat. She snorts faintly” (169). This shows that Adrian’s and Ileana’s patients are not responding to the treatment nor to the talking cure they are trying to impose on patients. In addition, Adrian’s expectations about his work in Sierra Leone fall apart because these patients are no longer interested in therapy and his knowledge seems irrelevant in treating Sierra Leone’s traumatized people:

In the months before his arrival, in those same hazy visions of his youth, he had imagined lines of patients – patients, not clients – and in responding to his patients’ needs his workload would create itself and he would end each day gratifyingly exhausted. So he had thought. But they have stopped coming now, more or less entirely. And, he suspects, his colleagues have stopped bothering to make referrals. These are the thoughts that swirl in the back of his mind, like the colors of the paint in the water. He came here to help and he is not helping. He is not helping. (64)

Thus, through this quote, Forna shows that European psychologists such as Adrian and Ileana, who are supposed to provide help to patients, face the cruel reality that their efforts are ineffective in dealing with the locals’ symptoms of trauma.

Along with the talking cure, Forna explicitly challenges the reliability of the concept of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which seems inapplicable in the Sierra Leone context. In the same vein, Craps, drawing on the works of psychiatrists, Summerfield and Watters, argues that their findings reveal the inapplicability of PTSD as a universal concept since it is constructed through European models; he argues that PTSD “reflects a Eurocentric, monocultural orientation” (49). Thus, Forna encourages this idea in the novel. For instance, Atilla, a local psychologist, discusses the outcomes of research made by European

psychologists in an attempt to understand the enduring effects of trauma in Sierra Leone. This is evident in the provocative conversation between Attila and Adrian, in which Attila deliberately questions the notion of PTSD, he says:

They sent me a copy of the paper. The conclusion they reached was that ninety-nine percent of the population was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.’ He laughs cheerlessly

Post-traumatic stress disorder! What do you think of that?’

Adrian, who is entirely unsure what is expected of him. (319)

In this sense, Attila is making clear that the situation in Sierra Leone is too complex to be simply identified through the frameworks of PTSD. In addition, continuing their conversation, Attila’s anticipations about the success of this concept are doubtful because the main goal of the research is to bring back patients to their normal state. Yet, this state of normality is a false promise as Attila argues:

“So then I must ask you, whose normality? Yours? Mine? So they can put on a suit and sit in an air-conditioned office? You think that will ever happen?’

‘No,’ says Adrian, feeling under attack.

‘But therapy can help them to cope with their experiences of war.’

‘This is their reality. And who is going to come and give the people who live here therapy to cope with this?’ asks Attila and waves a hand at the view. ‘You call it a disorder, my friend. We *call it life*’. (319)

Significantly, Attila who lived through the circumstances of the war believes that people who have a shallow understanding of the real conditions in Sierra Leone, cannot claim to provide help; also, PTSD cannot be applied globally because the brutal events that they faced are unbearable and the process of bringing traumatized people back to normal state is complex. In this respect, the trauma of war results in profound scars that cannot be easily erased. Eventually, the traumatized people need to create alternative ways of healing. In the

same vein, reflecting on Attila's words, Forna focuses on the notion of hope as a central part of healing in the novel. So, it is apparent that rather than therapy, people need to take different paths towards healing, Adrian admits: "The man is right, of course. People here don't need therapy so much as hope. But the hope has to be real" (320). Hence, characters in the novel find an alternative source of healing which is to find purpose and meaning in life. This hope, then, is the only option left to survive.

Healing is intimately tied up with the notion of hope and the urge to find meaning in life. Subsequently, Kline and Mone argue that some Sierra Leoneans "found a significant measure of personal pride and self-satisfaction in the recognition that the value and significance of their life had not been destroyed by war experiences" (qtd. in Sarikaya-şen 1053). This is evident in the character's attempts to find different ways of survival in the aftermath of a hostile civil war that left them unable to continue their lives. In this sense, Forna portrays healing through different characters. Kai, who suffers profound traumatic symptoms related to sexual violence, perceives hope as something beyond the reach of therapy and medical knowledge and it is the only solution to prevail over their sufferings, he states "It is a belief in the possibility of life, almost a spiritual belief which dwarfs all scientific knowledge, all medical learning" (179). Kai's words highlight the strong connection between hope and spirituality; spirituality is this state, "which emanates hope and optimism" (Bouallegue, "Spirituality in Black" 46). This strong feeling of hope that fills Kai generates a spiritual state that lifts him above his worries and struggles.

In addition to hope, Kai is a brilliant surgeon who considers his work a shield against the traumatic memories that are constantly haunting him. In this sense, the narrator adds, "Amazingly, Kai succeeded in losing himself in his work, in forgetting his surroundings and the circumstances, seeing only wounds, what could be debrided, sutured, what was a viable limb and what was not" (435). Thus, Kai becomes obsessively immersed in his work; a refuge to escape his thoughts and to forget about his recurrent nightmares.

Significantly, Kai's addiction to work is prominent in the novel as he considers the physical wounds that he is treating easier to repair than the distressed thoughts in his mind. Through work, he achieves a sense of resilience and capability. Kai considers surgery as the only thing he can manage and control because it is tangible in contrast to the inaccessible sorrowful memories buried in his mind. The narrator thinks, "Operating affords him a privacy, an escape from the world into a place which has its own narratives, its own emergencies, but which is a less random world, one he can control with his skills" (123). Kai manages to create a secure world in which he can control his ideas and actions. So, Kai's patients can breathe again, walk again, and continue their lives with removable scars (218). For this reason, the physical recovery of Kai's patients mirrors his mental recovery as well, since it generates feelings of achievement that positively contribute to his mental and emotional healing.

Through work, Kai succeeds in forgetting his past and moving on with life. Even though he is constantly afraid of sleep because it brings his traumatic memories back, he manages to maintain his professional life, "In the morning he stands beneath the shower waiting to feel restored, then he begins to work again" (93). Kai continues in this pattern of life with regular readiness to work. Ultimately, this routine brings him joy and fulfillment, being able to spend hours in the hospital while providing help to patients (184). Through Kai, Forna portrays certain methods of directing one's energy toward an action that helps to forget the traumatic memories and construct a better vision of life. In this vein, Mieth argues "Yet, resilience does not mean that a person is not affected by the extreme event. Rather, shock, grief, or sadness will not prevent one from functioning in everyday life" (46).

Another instance of healing is represented through Saffia who lost her husband in cruel conditions and is trying to overcome her traumatic memories. She marries Elias Cole who offers her hope in life after years of hardship. Elias and Saffia decide to become parents for the first time, he says: "One word. Yet so much more. She had said yes. Agreed her life was

not over. I looked at her. I was consumed by a feeling of inexpressible joy. Only later did I recognize it for what it was. Hope. For in that instant the beauty and pain of the past, the unbearable present, and the possible future all ran together” (269). Then, it appears that Saffia’s decision to have a family is the outset of her healing journey and a reason to hold a bright vision for the future.

Furthermore, ironically, healing is not only portrayed through African characters such as Kai, Saffia, and Agnes but also through Adrian himself who attempts to help his patients overcome their traumatic memories. In fact, his arrival in Sierra Leone is not a coincidence because he is escaping an unhappy marriage and an unsuccessful career in London as a psychologist. Thus, Forna makes this clear in a discussion between Adrian and Kai in which Adrian desperately explains to him the reasons for his coming to Africa, “Kai could feel the disappointment in Adrian, the slackening of the shoulders. He didn’t look at him. Too bad. What to do? There were too many like Adrian, here living out their unfinished dreams” (220). Eventually, this marked the beginning of a long journey of Adrian’s self-discovery because, through his therapeutic sessions, he makes discoveries that add to his healing process and his sense of accomplishment. Moreover, through his experiences and interactions in Sierra Leone, Adrian begins to recognize the locals’ healing strategies such as maintaining value and meaning in life in contrast to Western patients, Craps argues, “In fact, Adrian now begins to develop a greater appreciation for local coping mechanisms such as the adoption of a fatalistic outlook on life. While Westerners he has met ‘despise’ such a response to trauma”(54). In this sense, Forna shows how Adrian is becoming more aware of the situation in Sierra Leone in which finding meaning in life is inevitable, she writes: “Since then he has grown to understand it was also part of a way of being that existed here. He had realized it gradually, perhaps fully only at this moment. It was almost as though they were afraid of becoming implicated in the circumstances of their own lives” (321).

Adrian's efforts in understanding the way patients deal with their traumas, fills him with a sense of purpose in life. It is sensation he never expected to experience, "The truth is that since arriving here his life has seemed more charged with meaning than it ever had in London. Here the boundaries are limitless, with no horizon, no sky. He can feel his emotions, solid and weighty, like stones in the palm of his hands. Everything matters more" (238). During his visit to the hospital with Kai, Adrian is amazed by the people's capacity to move on with their lives. In this sense, the narrator depicts the strength that people acquire to endure and confront their sufferings, she comments: "Everybody around him seems to walk with speed and purpose. There is no one to talk to, no one to ask what is happening. He wants to catch one of them by the arm, but he is afraid of becoming a distraction, aware of how irrelevant he is to all of this, how purposeless his presence" (423). Although Adrian finally accepts the truth that the goals he set while in England faded, his experience in treating local patients in Sierra Leone helps him to perceive life from a different, yet realistic angle.

III.2. Emotional Belonging in *The Memory of Love*

The idea of healing gains much significance in the novel, Forna attempts to draw our attention to another strategy the characters employ to find meaning in life and to adapt to the reality in Sierra Leone. This strategy is emotional belonging through which characters are able to create emotional spaces for healing and reconciliation. Undoubtedly, collective trauma such as the civil war shatters the social connection between people. In this sense, Erikson describes collective trauma as "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages bonds [leads to] a general realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and an important part of the self has disappeared" (qtd. in Abrutyn 2). However, in the novel, Forna attempts to create connections between characters, which enable them to deal with their trauma effectively and to move on with their lives. Thus, trauma can strengthen the relationship between people who experience the same traumatic memory and "often bolsters

affiliation with the group through a feeling of shared fate and destiny” (Hershberger 4). In this way, Forna highlights the role of emotional belonging. Her idea recalls Rubenstein’s understanding of belonging where she states, “Belonging is a relational, reciprocal condition that encompasses connection and community” (4). According to Bouallegue, this view of belonging “revises its conventional understanding as an adherence to a specific geographical location” (*Home and Exile* 1). Emotional belonging is the feeling of being at home when fostering connections with others. This idea of emotional belonging is reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “smooth space”, which is “heterogeneous”, it is a space “without conduits or channels” (Deleuze & Guattari 371), as opposed to “the sedentary space” that is fixed and homogeneous (Deleuze & Guattari 478). The war and the political oppression create a sedentary space that confines characters to oppressive existence. Instead of considering escape from their homeland, the characters nurture emotional belonging. This strategy shows that “Emancipation and creativity should not be restricted to physical movements because smooth and striated spaces exist everywhere. Freedom depends on the individual’s capacity to create a smooth space within the oppressive milieu” (Bouallegue, “The Modern Nomad” 111). Characters are able to create smooth space that is maintained through strong bonds between each other.

Emotional belonging creates different possibilities for healing. In this sense, even though the novel is set in a psychiatric hospital, healing is constructed beyond the walls of hospitals in the emotional and social connections that characters establish (Fernández 210). In this vein, establishing human connections and emotional spaces is a crucial trope in the novel. Forna highlights the role of emotions in strengthening ties between characters and developing mutual support. For instance, what keeps Kai motivated is his close friendship with Tejani, who witnessed the hard circumstances Kai lived during the civil war. Tejani frequently sends letters to Kai, recounting his daily life in Britain, which creates an expectant faith in the future:

They all live with endless possibilities and leave their homes for the sake of something new. But the dream is woven from the fabric of freedom. For desire to exist, it requires the element of possibility, and that for Kai has never existed, until now, with the arrival of Tejani's letters. There for the first time is the element of possibility, kindling for the small flame of his own desire. (182)

Though Tejani is not physically present in Kai's life, the simple idea of the possibility that circumstances will get better one day is what keeps characters in the novel holding on to life and accepting the sufferings that they witnessed.

Furthermore, the relationship between Kai and Mamakay, the daughter of Elias Cole, is a prominent reason for the sense of joy Kai experiences because as soon as he dreams of her he wakes up happy rather than frightened (449). Then, it is through Mamakay's love that Kai can feel deep emotions; he is able to look at life differently after surviving his traumatic memory. Thus, Kai and Mamakay are able to distract themselves from the outside world since they create an emotional space for each other. In this sense, the narrator remarks:

Kai and Mamakay, like siblings really. In the way they both resolutely occupied only the present, kept doors closed, showing only what they chose to reveal. Both Kai and Mamakay had places from which all others were excluded, from which Adrian was excluded. Even now the fear coiling around his heart is that in those closed-off places is something the two of them share from their past, some arc of emotion, incomplete, requiring an ending. (391)

Through this passage, Forna highlights the deep relationship between Kai and Mamakay and their ability to find ease and calmness in their relationship after a traumatic event. When Kai leaves Mamakay out of fear of affecting her, he is still attached to her and his love does not fade through time. He still feels her presence that constantly reminds him of the good

memories of love rather than his trauma, for Kai, Mamakay does not represent “love. Something else, something with a power that endures. Not love, but a memory of love” (185).

Furthermore, the idea of emotional belonging is also portrayed through Adrian. When Adrian arrives in Sierra Leone, he always considers himself a stranger who does not belong to his surroundings. However, Adrian’s friendship with Kai has a deep impact on his life because their relationship fulfills the emptiness that Adrian felt. In this respect, Adrian and Kai establish a friendship initially based on their professional careers, the narrator notes: “in the days and weeks that follow, the rhythms of their lives begin to intertwine” (51); also, the narrator adds “Each evening Adrian and Kai spent in each other’s company. When Adrian heard the sound of Kai’s key in the lock he was glad. It allowed him an excuse to stop the pretense of work, of trying to keep himself on track” (439). Thus, through Kai’s friendship, Adrian can forget about his work, which is a source of disappointment to him.

Throughout the novel, Adrian also develops emotional feeling for Mamakay. Although he does not want to confess his feelings since she is Kai’s former lover, Adrian finds peace in her; he states: “I wished I could stay there all night. I let go of my self-imposed restraints and allowed myself to fantasize, to think what it might be like. That this was all mine, my home, lit up against the night”(187). Thus, Mamakay is emblematic of a refuge for Adrian who feels emotionally attached to her. Thus through Mamakay, Adrian can establish connections to the country itself. In this respect, the narrator writes:

He didn’t come here looking for happiness. He came here to change who he was. And in her, he has found his escape, this sleeping woman, for she offers him a way out of himself, away from the person he might have become. She wandered by accident through a portal into the hollow of his heart and led him out into the light. (362)

The sense of loss and displacement that Adrian experiences is curbed through his love for Mamakay. In fact, Adrian’s love for Mamakay changes his vision of his situation in Sierra

Leone. The narrator adds, “Through Mamakay the landscape of the city has altered for Adrian. For the first time since he arrived, the city bears a past, exists in another dimension other than the present. Places he passes, the Mary Rose, the water pump, already hold memories. Growing in confidence in the city and his place in it, Adrian heads out of town towards the Ocean Club” (255). Significantly, Mamakay represents not only a person for Adrian, but she also signifies the whole country for him. Thus, through Mamakay, he can construct the place where he emotionally and mentally belongs. His relationship to Mamakay gives him a sense of direction as well as a strong feeling of belonging.

Emotions are deemed a force that endures through time and space. This enduring power of emotion is represented through Mamakay’s death, which has an ongoing effect on Adrian. Despite her death, he is still emotionally attached to her. The narrator writes: “For death takes everything, leaves behind no possibilities, save one – which is to remember. Adrian cannot believe with what intensity one can continue to love a person who is dead. Only fools, he believes, think that love is for the living alone. So he sits and watches the sea and thinks of Mamakay” (439). Thus, the emotions that Forna portrays through her characters are so intense in the way that enable them to connect deeply with each other.

These emotional connections spur the characters’ capacity to move beyond trauma and pain and offer the possibility of growth, advancement, and movement. Thus, characters create emotional and human connections that enable them to realize their worth and value. In this sense, Hershberger argues: “Although trauma is undoubtedly destructive, meaning is often unexpectedly found in calamity and facilitated by processes of sense making” (4). In light of this idea, the narrator reveals, “War had the effect of encouraging people to try to stay alive . . . Survival was simply too hard-won to be given up lightly” (341). Thus, the healing journey requires strength and courage to accept the dark truth in Sierra Leone and to find a sense of belonging and meaning which aids characters to heal and survive.

Forna succeeds in portraying healing from a distinct view that is exclusively related to Sierra Leone. Thus, through her depiction of the characters' ways of healing, she reveals the different possibilities that can emerge from enduring trauma. Forna also displays the resilience of characters who have endured the long-lasting effects of a devastating civil war, and despite all circumstances, they manage to attribute meaning to their traumas as well as to establish a journey towards healing and rehabilitation.

Conclusion

The complex relationship between memory and trauma had long been viewed from a Eurocentric perspective that restricts its representation to Western contexts. This narrow scope was exclusively devoted to Westerners, restricting the studies on memory and trauma. Nevertheless, decolonizing memory studies and trauma theories acknowledge the shortcomings of the Eurocentric views of memory studies and trauma theory and advocates for a broader framework that incorporates memory and trauma across different contexts and cultural backgrounds. This led to the emergence of postcolonial trauma theory, which draws attention to the unique nature of memory and trauma in non-Western contexts.

This work delved deep into the concepts of memory and trauma. It explored how these concepts were exclusively viewed from the Eurocentric perspectives. Through the first section of chapter one, this study showed the deep impact of trauma on memory. Drawing on studies of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth as well as Marianne Hirsch, it represented the different processes through which the memory of trauma is repressed at the individual level, and then transmitted to other generations who did not witness the traumatic event. Moreover, through the theory of postmemory, the study also showed that memory is an active process that entails imagination as well as responsibility toward a story of trauma. Additionally, this study further discussed how postcolonial trauma theory criticized and opposed these Eurocentric perspectives of memory studies and trauma theories. Accordingly, the second section of chapter one, shed light on the absolute need for change and taking further steps in decolonizing memory studies and trauma theories because non-Westerners, particularly Africans, are highly undefined through the traditional model of memory and trauma. Moreover, it showed how Western trauma focused on the event-based model in which trauma is a short-lived experience. Thus, postcolonial trauma provided those who were formerly colonized with the collective ground to express their collective traumas and to voice their

traumatic memories. Additionally, this study examined the long-lasting effect of civil war in Sierra Leoneans' context in which the impact of traumatic memories is permanent. It showed how the horrific experiences of colonialism affected the postcolonial subjects' collective memory, leading them to suppress and forget their traumatic past.

The second chapter of the dissertation has explored the relationship between memory and trauma at the individual and collective levels in a postcolonial context through the analysis of *The Memory of Love*. Initially, the first section demonstrated the significant role of Forna as a post-rememberer who carries the traumatic memories of her nation. Moreover, the second section of this chapter examined memory and trauma, and their manifestation within a post-war context. It indicates the active nature of traumatic memories that continue to persist as a source of massive pain in the lives of trauma survivors who shared the pain of the war. Unlike individual trauma, which manifested in dreams, flashbacks, and avoidance, collective trauma had a direct impact on the social fabric of life in the novel. It questions human and social relationships, profoundly affecting social construction and order. On the other hand, the section dealt with the concept of collective memory and its significant role in constructing social narratives about a story of trauma. In addition, the third section discussed the three distinct types of silence. It expanded the examination of silence beyond the Western perspectives, seeing it not only as a trauma symptom but also as a coping mechanism and a conscious choice deliberately embraced by Africans. Furthermore, it is important to note that silence in African countries, such as Sierra Leone is not just a mere result of trauma, but it is a cultural feature, deeply anchored in the country's way of living.

The final chapter examined a journey of healing and reconciliation existing in a post-war context. It probes deep into the survival strategies adopted by characters in *The Memory of Love*. The first part examined the different ways of healing such as hope and finding meaning in life to overcome the unbearable memories. These healing strategies, then,

corresponded with the nature of life in Sierra Leone in which the impact of trauma is a permanent. Eventually, the final part dealt with the theme of emotional belonging in the novel as a significant phase in the healing process. In a detailed analysis, this part discussed the emotional spaces that characters in the novel under study constructed to deal and reconcile with the traumatic memories.

In conclusion, postcolonial subjects have long sustained trauma in ways that reveal the enduring legacy of the civil war. African writers sought a gradual change of the Eurocentric views towards memory and trauma as well as for the recognition of their people's traumatic memories. Thus, authors like Aminatta Forna attempted and succeeded in portraying the wartime memory of postcolonial subjects in the aftermath of the civil war. Her novel voices the atrocities and the pain of the Sierra Leoneans ingrained deeply in their individual and collective memory as well as the distinct local healing strategies existing within a postcolonial context.

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المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في التعقيدات المتشابكة للذاكرة والصدمات في ذاكرة المحبة في أميناتا فورنا (2010). وما فتئت العلاقة بين الذاكرة والصدمات ينظر إليها منذ أمد بعيد من منظور أوروبي. ويُنظر إلى هذه العلاقة على أنها علاقة غامضة ومعقدة، لأنه لا يمكن إحياء الصدمة حقاً إلا من خلال الذاكرة. ومن ثم، وبالاستناد إلى نظريات المنظّرين الأوروبيين مثل سيغmond فرويد، وكاثي كاروث، فضلاً عن ماريان هيرش، تبحث الأطروحة في العلاقة المعقدة بين الذاكرة والصدمات والعمليات التي يتم من خلالها قمع ذكرى الصدمات ونقلها وتحويلها. غير أن الكتاب الأفارقة ركزوا في السنوات الأخيرة تركيزاً مكثفاً على تصوير الذاكرة والصدمات في سياقات ما بعد الاستعمار، مما أدى إلى تشويه الأثر الطويل الأمد للأحداث المؤلمة مثل الحروب الأهلية في أعمالهم الأدبية. وبناء على ذلك، تستخدم الدراسة أفكار علماء بارزين في مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار مثل ستيف كرابس وإيرين فيسر لإظهار تمثيل دقيق للذاكرة والصدمات في الكاتب الأفريقي أميناتا فورنا " ذاكرة الحب " ، في أعقاب الحرب الأهلية في سيراليون. وإذ تسلط الدراسة الضوء على دور فورنا في فترة ما بعد الالتحاق بالدراسات، فإنها تبين أيضاً أن الذاكرة ليست مجرد مستودع للأحداث الصادمة، بل هي تعبير عن هذه الأحداث؛ وهي عملية تنطوي على التحول والإبداع. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، تظهر الدراسة الطبيعة المعقدة للذاكرة الصدمة وكيف تظهر تكراراً على المستوى الفردي. ويتناول أيضاً مفاهيم الصدمات الجماعية والذاكرة الجماعية لإظهار مظاهر الصدمات على المستوى الجماعي. وبالتالي، واستناداً إلى تحليل الاهتمامات الموضوعية للرواية مثل الصمت، والشفاء، والانتماء العاطفي، فإن الأطروحة تقدم منظوراً لما بعد الاستعمار في فهم الذاكرة، والصدمات، والتعافي

Résumé

Cette étude examine les complexités entrelacées de la mémoire et du traumatisme dans *The Memory of Love* d'Aminatta Forna (2010). La relation entre la mémoire et le traumatisme a longtemps été vue d'un point de vue eurocentrique. Cette relation est perçue comme obscure et complexe, car ce n'est que par la mémoire que le traumatisme est réellement ressuscité. Par conséquent, en s'appuyant sur les théories de théoriciens européens tels que Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth ainsi que Marianne Hirsh, la thèse examine la relation complexe entre la mémoire et le traumatisme et les processus par lesquels les souvenirs du trauma sont réprimés, transmis et transformés. Cependant, ces dernières années, les écrivains africains se sont largement concentrés sur le portrait de la mémoire et du traumatisme dans des contextes postcoloniaux, démontrant l'impact durable des événements traumatiques tels que les guerres civiles dans leurs œuvres littéraires. En conséquence, l'étude utilise les idées de chercheurs postcoloniaux de premier plan tels que Stef Craps et Irene Visser pour démontrer une représentation nuancée de la mémoire et du traumatisme dans *The Memory of Love* de l'écrivain Africain Aminatta Forna, à la suite de la guerre civile de Sierra Leone. En mettant en lumière le rôle de Forna en tant que post-rememberer, l'étude montre également que la mémoire n'est pas seulement un dépôt d'événements traumatiques, mais qu'elle est une expression de ces événements; un processus qui implique la transformation et la créativité. En outre, l'étude démontre la nature complexe de la mémoire du traumatisme et comment elle se manifeste de façon répétitive au niveau individuel. Il traite également des concepts de traumatisme collectif et de mémoire collective pour démontrer la manifestation du traumatisme au niveau collectif. Ainsi, basée sur l'analyse des préoccupations thématiques du roman telles que le silence, la guérison et l'appartenance émotionnelle, la thèse présente une perspective postcoloniale dans la compréhension de la mémoire, du traumatisme et de la guérison.