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Alienation and Women's Identity In Selected Novels by Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta

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Alienation and Women's Identity in Selected Novels by Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta

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Acknowledgement

I would like to express my heartful gratitude to my mother for her encouragement and understanding. I owe my greatest debt to my supervisor, Dr. Ait Hamou Louisa for her help to complete this work. Special thanks to my family and friends who continually provided me with moral support.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the memory of my father

Abstract

This thesis attempts to investigate the theme of alienation and African women's identity in Bessie Head's *The Cardinals* (1993) and *A Question of Power* (1974), in addition to Buchi Emecheta's *Gwendolen* (1989) and *Second Class Citizen* (1974). It aims at: studying the concept of alienation in the novels, explaining the factors that create this sense of estrangement in the female characters, and finally exploring ways to overcome alienation and reach self-assertion. Accordingly, this study proposes three facets of alienation: social, racial and sexual. Society with its conformism can lead to the marginalization of women who fail to fit its standards. Using Social-psychology, the alienating social processes such as conformism will be studied, in addition to exploring the states or syndromes of alienation including isolation and withdrawal from society. Racial discrimination dictated by white supremacy can equally be responsible for the alienation of black and coloured women who are denigrated and stigmatized as inferior beings. This study uses the works of Frantz Fanon that explore and explain the black's sense of alienation engendered by the colonizer's oppression. Women can also be sexually alienated from their bodies that are objectified and turned into commodities to be evaluated and controlled by men. The objectification theory helps understand the process of sexual alienation of women in patriarchal societies. Finally, this thesis endeavours to unravel the writers' vision about the mechanisms that helped to desalienate the female characters mainly motherhood and writing. With the womanist and motherist approaches, the link between motherhood and desalienation will be demonstrated, in addition to the therapeutic effect of writing and its contribution to the healing of the alienated protagonists.

Key Words: Alienation, women, race, conformism, sexual objectification, motherhood, writing, desalienation.

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Introduction

Introduction

The field of African women's writings constitutes today part and parcel of African literature. Despite the difficulties faced by early women writers such as Flora Nwapa and Ama Ata Aidoo in the 1960s, African female authors succeeded in affirming their presence on the literary scene thanks to their talent. In fact, the earliest works proposed by African women writers were received with rejection from prominent publishers, in addition to a fierce criticism from their male counterparts. Their literary works were considered of low standards and most importantly they failed to answer the needs of the post-independence era of their respective countries. Indeed, after the independence of most African countries, the 1960s and 1970s saw an eager attempt from African male writers to rehabilitate the true image of Africa. This image was distorted by years of European colonization that associated the African continent with barbarism, regression and primitiveness. On the other hand, most early female writers of the post-independence era dealt with themes in relation to women's status in Africa by giving a realistic depiction of their societies and the way some traditions and customs contributed to their domination and oppression.

Women's quest for self-identification and realization often characterises literary works produced by female authors, poets and playwrights. Indeed, women in Africa faced the difficult task of finding a place for themselves in society. Even today, many are victims of patriarchal systems that impose on them a set of ideologies that consecrate men's domination and define them as appendages to their male counterparts. During decades, women in most African countries had to fight in order to have equal rights with men in fields such as education, civil rights and employment.

In addition to sexism, women in Africa were victims of racism during the colonial era and under systems that were dominated by whites such as the Apartheid system in South Africa. As immigrants to European countries after the

independence of their countries, many women faced also racial discrimination that set them as second-class citizens. Racism and sexism were woven together as destructive forces that affected African women's identities. Moreover, many African authors captured the way some socio-cultural factors such as customs, values and norms participate in the oppression of women. A woman is exclusively defined according to a set of rigid social standards that allow little room for her to exist as an autonomous individual. Women who fail to fit these definitions are often rejected by their communities and experience a sense of lack of belonging. This feeling of being estranged from society is equally known as alienation that will be explored in this research. The concept of alienation has animated hot debates among scholars and thinkers. They were divided between those who consider it as a phenomenon engendered by industrial urbanized societies (Fromm, 1955; Seeman 1959) and those who define it as a universal phenomenon related to all human societies (Berger and Pullberg,1965). It should be stated that alienation is a multidimensional concept due to the variety of perspectives associated with its study that can be social, philosophical, psychological, political and existential. Motivated by the multifaceted and complex aspects of alienation, I will examine this concept in four literary works: *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *Gwendolen* (1989) by Buchi Emecheta, in addition to *The Cardinals* (1993*)* and *A Question of Power* (1973) by Bessie Head.

Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta are today leading literary figures and their works stand as landmarks in the field of African women's writing. Buchi Emecheta is a Nigerian writer who immigrated in the 1970s to England where she published all her works. With her thirteen novels, four children books, and three plays, she is one of the most prolific African women writers. Among Emecheta's numerous novels, I opted for *Second Class Citizen* (1974) and *Gwendolen* (1989). The two works offer a good illustration of the theme of women's alienation, in addition to a better understanding of Emecheta's development as a writer. Moving from an early novel to a late one in Emecheta's career, may help the reader to follow the

changes in Emecheta's thinking especially in relation to issues about women and society.

Second Class Citizen is an autobiographical novel written by Emecheta when she was still struggling with her bad living conditions as an immigrant in England. Through the protagonist Adah, she narrates the hardships she faced to settle as a full citizen right after her arrival to England in the 1970s. The novel highlights the discrimination that she undergoes and the poverty in which she lives. Adah's life is further complicated by an irresponsible and abusive husband who treats her as an object to be exploited. The novel offers an image of the African woman who is torn between her respect for traditions and norms and her personal aspiration as an individual. After a long period of hesitation and suffering, Adah frees herself from the constraints of her Nigerian traditions and separates from her husband. The next step in her life is to achieve self-realization as a citizen and face the stigma of poverty and regression attributed to black immigrants by the British society. Commenting on the novel, Alice Walker states: "it is one of the most informative books about contemporary African life that I have read"(Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* 70). In fact, reading the novel provides details about life and experiences of an African woman trying to become an independent self-affirmed individual. It gives also a holistic image of both African traditional life and women's shift to the contemporary realities with their new challenges.

The second novel I will study in this research is *Gwendolen*. This literary work captured my attention because it deals with a Jamaican heroine and the difficulties she faces when she emigrates to England. Both novels handle the theme of immigration, but what I find interesting is to see the difference of perspective in both works and how two women who come from two diasporic settings, react in the new British environment. Moreover, *Gwendolen* explores the themes of rape and incest which have remained taboos for a long time in African literature. Consequently, it will be very riveting to study the way Emecheta translated this theme into fiction. Also, the two novels meet in various points: both are London

novels that deal with the issues of immigration, women's status in traditional societies, gender inequalities and sexual objectification.

Emecheta got the idea of writing *Gwendolen* when she met a Caribbean girl on her visit to Sussex College. The girl told Emecheta her story of rape and she decided to write a novel in order to throw light on sexual abuse against women not only in Africa, but also in the diaspora. What makes this novel different is the look it offers at the African diaspora and the contribution it makes to Caribbean women literature. Commenting on the originality of Emecheta's handling of the story, Caryl Philips concludes that the novel is "an ambitious story of West Indian migration that has been told before, but never from the point of view of 'mother country' as opposed to the Caribbean 'mother country'…the African perspective given by Emecheta makes the novel, a valuable contribution to the canon, particularly Caribbean bildungsroman"(Philips 356). In his article "Lost in the Moder Kontry" that appeared in *The New York Times* on April 29 ,1990, the writer Reginald Mcknight places *Gwendolen* within the African-American literary tradition. He states that the novel is a valuable critique of the "problems that plague the African diaspora- its rootlessness, prejudice, self-hatred and perhaps even some of the sexual violence that nearly destroys Gwendolen- are the direct result of slavery and colonialism" (Mcknight 30). Emecheta gives a fresh eye on issues that characterized Jamaican communities and women of African origins in general.

The novel is about Gwendolen, a little Jamaican girl who lives in a village called Granville with her mother and grandmother. Her father Winston emigrates to England in the 1970s to seek a better life. After a while, her mother joined him and Gwendolen remains with her Granny Noami. The little girl's childhood is shattered when she is sexually abused by a friend of the family. Gwendolen finally joins her family in London where she faces racial discrimination at school. Her self-esteem is further destroyed as she fails to integrate the white community and has to bear all sorts of racist remarks and attitudes from her teachers and classmates.

Gwendolen is again victim of sexual abuse by her father who rapes her when she is sixteen. This traumatic experience leads to the psychological breakdown of Gwendolen who discovers after a while that she is bearing the child of her father. She is admitted to a mental hospital waiting for her baby to come.

In addition to Emecheta, I will study two literary works by the South African writer Bessie Head who equally made a great contribution to African literature. Head was born in 1937 of a union between a rich white woman and a poor black man at a time when interracial relationships were forbidden by the Apartheid System. Because of this past, the writer faced rejection from both black and white communities. This problem of integration to her society is reflected in most of her literary works that represent alienated coloured women who face an identity crisis because of their lack of belonging, in addition to racism. Head moved to Botswana with a non-return visa in 1964, but she was refused citizenship by the Botswanan authorities. All Head's literary works were written in Botswana except *The Cardinals* (1964) that was produced in South Africa, but published thirty years later.

A remarkable aspect of Bessie Head's writings is the universal humanism that goes beyond the African context. Her novels are appealing to any reader regardless to his cultural and historical background. Stressing this aspect, the critic Tourkia Khanous states: "Head advocates an inclusive humanism that is pluralistic, heterogeneous, and reaches beyond the African continent. She adopts a human centred approach to Africa's problems, putting humanity above the exclusivity of nationalism and racism"(Khanous 39). I find this universal aspect of Head's works particularly gripping as she deals with universal themes such as power abuse, human nature, good and evil, in addition to alienation. To explore these themes, In this research, I will study two major works by the writer. Like for Emecheta, I opted for an early novel and a relatively late one to highlight the writer's development. Written in 1964, *The Cardinals* is her first novel although it was published in 1993. Published in 1973, *A Question of Power* remains the most

complex and powerful work written by Bessie Head. Both novels contain a lot of autobiographical elements since both cover two important periods in her life. *The Cardinals* narrates Head's beginnings in the world of journalism while *A Question of Power* chronicles Head's life as a refugee in Botswana and her slip through madness, depression and suicide.

The Cardinals was written when Head was still working as a journalist for *The Golden City Post* in Cape Town. The novel was given to Patrick Cullinan, a prominent publisher in South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the manuscript was rejected and the novel was published posthumously in 1993. The critic Desiree Lewis sheds light on "the originality" of the work because it was judged not suitable for the readers of that time who were not accustomed to "open-ended meanings" that characterize her work (Lewis 418). The critic Collette Guldiman considers *The Cardinals* as an avant-garde novel since it gives "the earliest gender perspective and critique of black South African journalism in the 1950s" (Guldiman 101). Head's protagonist Mouse is a young coloured journalist who has to make her way in the highly masculine domain of journalism at that time. In this sense, Head's novel challenges the preconceived ideas that women cannot succeed in fields exclusively dominated by men.

It is quite important to stress the autobiographical aspect of this novel since it narrates Head's experiences as a coloured little girl who was born of an illegal union between a white lady and a poor black man. Like Head, Mouse is born in a mental hospital and given to a white family who immediately rejected her because she was not "white enough" for them. Mouse is going to exchange families and names as she grows up in the slums of Johannesburg amid poverty and violence. In spite of all these miserable conditions, Mouse managed to get an education and have a job as a journalist in *The African Beat* which stands in the novel for *The Golden City* newspaper where Head used to work. There, Mouse meets Johnny, a journalist who decides to help her become a self-confident and successful writer. From the context of the novel, we can deduce that Johnny may be Mouse's father,

but Head does not sate it clearly. Many hints are given to readers to believe that Johnny and Mouse will have an incestuous relation, but again the novel closes with an open-end leaving room to the reader's imagination. The novel offers also a fierce criticism of Apartheid depicted as an oppressive system that deprived blacks and coloureds from their rights and freedom.

In this sense, I found the novel captivating especially in relation to its criticism of gender inequality vis-à-vis women, mainly in the field of journalism. The novel's open-end is another aspect that attracted my attention as it opens the door to the reader's interpretations. The novel is also interesting in relation to feminism since it treats the issue of African women's low status in society and the patriarchal systems as early as the 1960s, in addition to breaking the taboo of incest. As a coloured, she is victim of racist white discrimination and rejection from the black community. Similarly, as a woman, she is crushed by a sexist society that hinders her self-accomplishment. Mouse lives as a stranger at the margin of a society that considers her as a social pariah.

The second novel under study in this research is *A Question of Power* considered as the most widely read work by Bessie Head. Similar to *The Cardinals*, it holds many autobiographical elements represented by the main character, Elizabeth, who seemingly stands for Bessie Head in the novel. As a daughter of a white woman and black man, she lives in a liminal situation between the black and white races. Victim of racism in South Africa, Elizabeth leaves her native country to settle in Botswana where she experiences the same feeling of unbelonging. She works as a teacher in a primary school, but after a while she falls into madness as she starts to have hallucinations. In her delirium, Elizabeth conceives three characters, Sello, Dan and Medusa who will torment her and make her ask existential questions. She questions her identity as a coloured woman, but most importantly her hallucinations will be a journey into the very essence of the human nature, especially in relation to concepts such as good, evil and power abuse. Commenting on the depth, richness and plurality of meanings of *A Question of Power*, Lionel

Abraham qualifies the novel as "a small insight into religion, sex, sociology, psychology and morality from which patients and receptive readers will be retrieving treasures of a new understanding for decades to come"(qtd.in Zell et al. 110). In his article, "Colonization and The Feminine in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*", Lorenz Paul writes: "*A Question of Power* is a novel that demonstrates and directly confronts on a personal level the interrelationships which exist between racism, sexism and economic cultural colonization"(Paul 592). The novel exposes the correlation between colonialism and the oppression of women in Africa which adds racism to the agenda of African women writers who had to fight sexism and racism in their writings.

After looking into the novels, we can note that the four protagonists live in a state of alienation from the world in which they live and this common point between the literary works brings us to formulate the following questions: How do the writers pinpoint the factors that led to the alienation of the main characters? How did each character exemplify this sense of alienation? What are the effects of this alienation on them? And finally, how did the writers manage to desalienate themselves through their protagonists and reach self-assertion at the end of the novels?

To answer these research questions, I intend to use some theories that explain and study the concept of alienation. Before dealing with these theories, it is necessary to define the concept of alienation since it constitutes the basis of this study. The term alienation comes from the Latin words "alienus", "alienare" and "alienatio" which all fall in the same meanings: estrange and estrangement. In fact, alienation implies a sense of being a "stranger" to a given place, person and even to oneself. The term was first used as a legal word that means the legal transfer of ownership to another person or party. In early 19th century, the term "aliéné" was used in French to refer to a person with mental disorders, more precisely, madness. With time, the concept of alienation had been subject to many theories developed by philosophers, sociologists, psychologists and other thinkers.

As a concept, the term alienation first appeared in the works of Friedrich Hegel who used it to describe man's condition in the modern world. According to Hegel, man's alienation started when the idea of private ownership appeared as a social institution. He relates alienation to work that altered the human being's relation with his environment be it natural or social. Nature represents for Hegel the objective world of man that used to "estrange" him before he starts work and production. Indeed, work and knowledge allowed man to master nature and reduce his sense of alienation from his world that used to dominate and objectify him. However, with the rise of industrialization, machines replaced man and made his work less satisfying since it was no more a means of expression of his capacities to overcome nature. Man produces more than he needs and this over production that goes with industrialization transforms products into commodities; hence, they lose their use value and this engenders alienation. This idea was developed by Karl Marx who studied the correlation between work and man's alienation. The first ideas appeared in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of* 1844 (1932) and the concept was further developed in his famous *Capital* (1867). Marx agrees with Hegel in his theory about work and alienation and he further developed the idea that the workers' labour may be transformed into some powers that control them. Because of capitalism that divides society into rich bourgeoisie and poor proletariat, the worker cannot afford the product that he makes so it confronts him as an alien object. Marx further gave four types of alienation including an alienation of the worker from other workers, from the act of work, from products, and from himself.

Many theories have been advanced since Marx's study of the concept of alienation and two main perspectives emerge to the surface; psychological and sociological. Defining this concept as the individual's separateness from his world, psychologists focus on alienation as "a state". The psychologist Melvin Seeman studies the psychological manifestation of alienation and he distinguishes five states: meaninglessness, powerlessness, isolation, self-estrangement and

normlessness (Seeman 753-754). From a sociological point of view, alienation is approached as "a process" that is explained through the analysis of factors that lead to the estrangement of man in his social environment. According to sociologists:

> alienation must be recognized as a relational concept involving an interaction process between the individual, including his relationship to family, ethnic group, and so forth, and the social-structural conditions of fundamental social institutions, such as hierarchal organization and delimited responsibility in work. (Twining 422)

In other words, Sociology is concerned with the study of social structures and processes that alienate man such as conformism, stereotyping, stigma, labelling…etc. Psychology on the other hand, is concerned with the individual's reaction to these social alienating processes such as isolation, powerlessness, and self-estrangement.

In this sense, there was a growing interest in this double meaning that the concept of alienation may bear: an estranging process and a state of estrangement. To answer the problematic of our research about the reasons behind the alienation of the main characters and its impact on them, this perspective that allies both sociology and psychology may be very helpful. Indeed, it will allow to approach alienation as a social process by studying the structure of societies in which the protagonists are set and point out the different processes of alienation such as conformism. The psychological aspect of this perspective may also help unravel the impact of these processes on the female characters and see whether any of the five states mentioned by Seeman that is meaninglessness, powerlessness, isolation, self-estrangement and normlessness characterises the protagonists. This perspective is known as social psychology, a field which may answer our need to handle the double meaning of alienation; psychological and sociological

Starting in the 1940s and 1950s, Kurt Lewis and Andrews Colman established the theory of social-psychology as a rigorous scientific discipline. This theory is defined as follows:

> Most authorities agree that social psychology is the biochemistry of the social experience, a field lying sociology and individual psychology. The field is in this sense interstitial and it plays a pivotal role as a major social science discipline. In its theories and research, social psychology provides vital information about how social factors influence individual thoughts, feeling and actions.(Colman 797)

Early social psychologists were motivated by German Nazism to investigate how Adolph Hitler subdued his fellow citizens and made them adhere to his ideologies without objections and committed atrocities during the two world wars. In this field, the famous German psychologist Erich Fromm wrote his books, *The Sane Society* (1955) and *Escape From Freedom* (1941) that made a great contribution to the discipline of social psychology. We can mention also Muzafir Cherif (1936) and Solomon Asche (1952) who conducted studies on the social processes and structures that lead to the alienation of man. The works of Fromm will be used in my research to approach alienation from a social psychological point of view.

After the second world war, social-psychology expanded steadily to other topics including aggression, inter-group relations, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and segregation. In the 1970s and 1980s, social psychology used cognitive psychology based on advances in computer technology to become more cognitive oriented. Social cognition is based on "an understanding of how our knowledge about our social worlds develops through experience and the influence of these knowledge structures on memory, information processing, attitudes, behaviours and judgments"("Defining Social Psychology"). The connection between social conditioning and the individual's construction of identity has been then demonstrated and proved. In the twenty first century, social psychology dealt with new areas such as social neuroscience that studies the relation between the social behaviour and brain activities.

By definition, alienation socially implies separateness from a given group; hence, it is necessary to study the social environment and the processes that trigger this sense of estrangement. This definition implies also the individual, so it is equally important to explore the impact of this sense of estrangement on

him/her and the way he/she experiences alienation from the group. The individual may be socially alienated when he fails to integrate his group, and to conform to its norms, values, customs, behaviours and attitudes. Conformity appears then as the best known social process that may alienate the individual who shows problems of "adjustment" to institutions dictated by an established socio-political system. In our novels, the protagonists seem to be heavily influenced by the social setting that is drawn by Head and Emecheta. They show a certain inability to adapt socially; therefore, it is crucial to approach their alienation from a socio psychological perspective. The characters' social alienation is going to be the first facet to examine using social-psychology.

In addition to the social norms, conventions, and conforming behaviours of their societies, the main characters are victims of racial discrimination. Whether as black immigrants or as coloured women living under the Apartheid system in South Africa, the protagonists' identities have been widely affected by racism. In fact, racism appears as a dominating theme and it is vital to throw light on the relation between racial oppression and alienation. To study this side of alienation, the works of Frantz Fanon seem to be very relevant. The psychiatrist Frantz Fanon worked on the concept of alienation and the psychology of the oppressed. Colonialism and its drawbacks on colonized people mark the heart of all his works where he explores the relation between the white colonizer and the black colonized. His famous work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) is an auto-theory book based on Fanon's own experiences and his criticism of the effects of racism on the human psyche. His book is based on black people from French-colonized islands especially Martinique and Antilles. The main idea of his work is to study the black man's pathological desire to become "white" as the title of the book suggests. This desire comes from the black man's strong belief that "whiteness" stands for civilization, progress and intellect whether the black race is associated with backwardness, barbarism, and violence. Fanon explains that this denigration of the black race and culture is the result of western indoctrination of blacks from

their childhood to believe in their inferiority. A misrepresentation of the black race characterized children's literature, books of history and most importantly the media that broadcast a negative image of black people. With time, these images become integrated in the general conscience of the blacks who come to believe and accept the white man's superiority; hence, their desire to become "whiter". The black man's rejection of his race and his impossible belonging to the white one created in him a sense of alienation since he is estranged from both cultures.

In his book, Fanon explores the loss of identity of blacks dreaming to get rid of their blackness and "magically turning white". He further presents his well-known inferiority complex that makes blacks internalize a degrading and inferior image of themselves:

> If he is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible, in a society that derives its stability from the perpetuation of this complex, in a society that proclaims the superiority of one race…he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation.(Fanon*, Black Skin* 74)

Alienation then appears in Fanon's theory as a neurotic situation in which the black man finds himself after he accepts a low self-image that is set by a racist white society. The black man is alienated from his own race that he repudiates to be part of the "civilized" one. As Fanon writes, the problem is that no one can escape his own race and the black man's alienation starts when he fails to identify with the white race that perceives and conceives him as an inferior being. This dislocation creates an identity crisis that leads to the alienation of the black man. The belief of inferiority makes the black hate himself, but he cannot escape the reality of his blackness. Racism is studied here as a pathology creating a neurotic situation for the black man who lives in a liminal situation between his hatred for his origins and the rejection of the white society.

The third facet of alienation that I intend to study is sexual. In fact, we cannot have a complete study of the female characters without throwing light on the sexual commodification of women in the patriarchal system. The interest in this

theme comes from Emecheta and Head's treatment of sexual objectification of women's bodies in their novels. In fact, the four women characters experience sexual abuse by some male characters, and this affects their identity. This type of alienation takes place when a woman loses control over her body which becomes an object or commodity in the hands of the other. To conduct the exploration of sexual commodification of women's bodies, I will employ the sexual objectification theory that explains how this process occurs and describes the different types of sexual objectification. The theory of sexual objectification is defined as follows:

> Sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the state of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her. In other words, when objectified, women are treated as bodies-and in particular, as bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others.(Fredrickson and Roberts 175)

Most feminists consider sexual objectification as a form of gender oppression because it imprisons a woman in her biology; she is defined exclusively as a "female" and not as a person. Moreover, sexual objectification affects women's self-definition since they are seen as objects to be constantly evaluated and looked at by men. In other words, a woman can have a sense of identity only if she is recognised by the other (man). Thus, a woman's existence is only possible in the presence of the other whose gaze or visual inspection of her body validates her sense of the self. At a psychological level, this process is interpreted by a woman's internalization of a particular image of the self that fits the observer's expectations and consequently she monitors her behaviour to stick to that image. Women are socialized by their cultural environment to internalize the other's view of themselves and gradually incorporate these expectations into their sense of self so much so that they unconsciously treat themselves as objects to be evaluated and controlled.

Feminists relate sexual objectification to patriarchy and men's power control. In her book *Gender and Power*, R.W.Cornwell sustained that "the cultural practice

of objectifying female bodies originated to create, maintain, and express patriarchy"(Cornwell 177). Women's bodies become then the terrain on which patriarchy is inscribed. Patriarchy is based on men's control of power and the submission of women, so that by sexually controlling their bodies, men impose their power. This leaves women with no control over themselves and become alienated from their own bodies used by their male counterparts without their consent. This sexual objectification may take different forms; from the indirect or subtle control of women's bodies to the direct or overt sexual objectification. The indirect type of sexual objectification is rather cultural as it implies the projection of images of women as objects of beauty to feed men's sexual ideals. The other type of sexual objectification refers to direct sexual abuse including incest, rape and sexual harassment in public or at work. Being thus victimised, women become strangers from their own bodies, and owned by those who hold power over them. A woman who is victim of sexual abuse finds herself in a confusing situation where her body becomes alien to her, but remains at the same time part of herself.

In our novels, we can detect both kinds of sexual objectification. Rape, incest, marital rape and sexual harassment are represented by both Head and Emecheta. Indeed, Gwendolen, Elizabeth, Mouse, and Adah's bodies are evaluated, and controlled by male characters who stand for the patriarchal order. In addition to these indirect forms of sexual objectification, Gwendolen is victim of incest and rape, Adah is sexually assaulted by her husband and finally Mouse is sexually abused by her adoptive father.

After the study of the social, racial and sexual dimensions of the main characters' alienation, I will turn to exploring the way they succeeded in breaking this state to assert themselves. Motherhood and writing are two main possible healing processes proposed by both Head and Emecheta to end the characters' alienation. To understand the link between motherhood and desalienation, I intend to use the notions of motherism and womanism. Both approaches study

the importance of motherhood for African women's self-accomplishment. Motherhood is not presented only as a biological act of procreating, but it also refers to the spiritual significance of mothering that implies nurturing, creating and healing. Catherine Objanu Acholonu sets the tenets of this theory in her book *Motherism : The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism* (1995) where she presents the African mother as a spiritual figure. Achonolu takes motherhood to the spiritual level as a nurturing and healing process that brings a sense of unity to the community. Motherhood is also presented as an empowering process for women and not as an obstacle that hinders their self-realization. It gives mothers a feminist awareness about their strength and abilities to defy all forms of oppression and defeat them. A mother who can bear and raise children has all the necessary power to build an autonomous identity and exist as an individual.

Acholonu explains that motherism transcends patriarchal ideologies to bring a balance of power between men and women and rejects any antagonism between the sexes. It fights gender inequality and men's power control for "the creation of a society based on love, tolerance, service and mutual cooperation between the sexes"(Acholonu 3). In addition to the wholeness of the community and the rejection of all forms of abuse, the motherist is engaged in the survival of mother earth. Preserving the land is another crucial tenet of motherism which is involved in "the dynamics of ordering, reordering, creating structures, building and rebuilding in cooperation with mother nature at all levels of human endeavor"(Achonolu 53). The aim of the motherist is to create a balanced society where gender inequality recedes and a balanced eco-system where men and women work together for the protection of mother land.

Womanism joins motherism in many principles since it is defined as a philosophy that calls for a complementary male-female relation for the construction of a healthy society free from all forms of oppression including sexism and racism. Hence; this approach may help explain the way to overcome sexual and racial alienation. First used in 1983, the term womanist appears in

Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden: Womanist Prose* to describe a literary movement that advocates social change and justice for black women in America and to fight racism, classism, and sexism. Womanism is known for its inclusive philosophy of men that contrasts with the separatist aspect of some early branches of western feminism and insists on the participation of men to create a balance between the sexes. Womanist ideology is deeply rooted in everyday experiences of black women and their struggles to survive. Womanism is then "culture-specific" and celebrates the African cultural heritage that stands as an essential part in the representation of black women's experience. In this sense, all feminist movements that come from the west cannot speak for black women who have been through different historical, political, social and cultural conditions.

Gradually, womanism made its way to Africa and it was adopted by many African women writers. Chikwenye Okanjo Ogunyemi proposed African womanism as a literary movement and she claimed that she has "arrived at the term womanism independently and was pleasantly surprised to discover that [her] notion of its meaning overlaps with Alice Walker's"(Ogunyemi, *Womanism : The Dynamics* 28). Ogunyemi's womanism shares the same ideals of African American womanism in its commitment to the survival of the entire people, male and female. African womanism denounces sexist oppression of women; however, it gives a balanced view of African men who are capable of making positive change. African womanism is concerned also with power structures in general that subjugate both men and women. The unity and wholeness of the community should be promoted where power is equally distributed among its members, males and females, "its ideal is for black unity where every black person has a modicum of power and so he can be a brother or a sister or a father or a mother to the other"(Ogunyemi, *Womanism : The Dynamics* 28). In our analysis of the main characters' desalienation, the African womanist ideology could be helpful

to explain this process with its spiritual reading of mothering and the ideas of healing and wholeness.

In addition to motherhood, the therapeutic effects of writing will be explored to show the link between writing and self-healing. Writing is used today as a therapy in the field of psychology to help patients externalize repressed feelings and thoughts. Articulating and narrating painful experiences can act as a clinical practice to recover from traumas. To help unravel the contribution of writing to the characters' desalienation, I intend to use the works of the psychologist James Pennebaker who made extensive studies in the field of writing and mental health. After conducting various experiences persons who were asked to write about their childhood traumas and bad experiences, he found that:

> Expressing thoughts and feelings has potent and measurable effect on our biology. When disclosing deeply personal experiences, there are immediate changes in brain activation, skin conductance levels, and overt behavioral correlates of the letting-go experience. After writing, significant drops in blood pressure and heart rate as well as improvements in immune function occur. In the weeks and months afterwards, people's physical and psychological health is improved. (Pennebaker and Smyth. *Opening Up by Writing it Down* 41)

All these positive changes have been observed after these individuals write about personally upsetting experiences. Writing allows them to confront their pains and take a certain distance from some bad memories. The act of writing makes them put words on bad events and acknowledge certain emotions such as fear, sadness, shame, guilt and disappointment that were buried in their mind and soul. People who live traumas in their lives find difficulties to share their experiences with others because of shame or the fear to be judged. Writing is a private experience that stands as a safe space for self-expression which may translate bad emotions into words. Confronting past pains through writing gives traumatized individuals insight into the source of their suffering as well as agency. Writing becomes a way of resistance as Paulo Freire states: "only as the oppressed discover themselves to be 'hosts' of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy". He adds: "to speak a true word is

to transform the world”(Freire 33,75). Indeed, Adah and Mouse who stand for Emecheta and Head respectively use writing as a self-expression tool to release their negative feelings and pains. It will be interesting to study these characters’ use of writing to heal themselves from the different ordeals they went through and gain control over their lives.

In addition to the different theoretical tools explained earlier that will help understand each type of alienation, it must be stated that the whole work will be conducted from a feminist perspective. Various definitions have been proposed to explain feminism, but the most common aims of this movement are: to denounce gender inequalities in societies, fight all forms of oppression against women and promote changes in patriarchal systems to provide equal opportunities for both sexes. The feminist perspective will help examine the way female characters are portrayed in the literary works. As an approach, it “offers strategies for analysing texts to emphasize issues related to gender and sexuality in works written by both men and women, but particularly concerned with women's writing” (Benstock et al.153). The main characters' life is widely shaped by the values of a patriarchal society based on the supremacy of males' power. The study of male/female relations in the novels will reveal that masculine power control that is promoted by patriarchal ideologies participates in the protagonists' alienation.

The feminist movement went through three periods known as waves. The first one refers to the late 19th century and early 20th century feminists in Britain and America who fought for women's right of suffrage and ownership. The next wave started in the 1960s and lasted about two decades. It broadened its scope to include issues such as sexuality, work opportunities, domestic violence, and the family. The third wave came in the 1990s in reaction to western and white American feminists' universalization of women's experience which led to the exclusion of women from different cultural and historical contexts. It rejects an essentialist definition of females in terms of white middle-class standards. Race

was also ignored as a form of oppression that is responsible for the suffering and low status of women when their countries were under European colonization. Women of colour in America also developed a different form of feminism known as womanism (Alice Walker) that was based on black aesthetics in order to differentiate themselves from white feminism.

Feminist literary criticism made its way to Africa by the late 1970s and early 1980s with the development of African women's works. The aim of African women writers is to expose gender inequalities and women's oppression in their societies which corresponds to the feminist ideology. However, most African women authors were very careful with the feminist label since it did not answer their needs. Indeed, they come from a different socio-cultural and historical context that European feminism of the 1970s could not represent. Hence, it was important to redefine and adapt western feminism in accordance with the African context in order to make of it an effective instrument of women's liberation. In this respect, Carole Boyce Davies defines African feminism as a theory that:

> 1.Recognises a common struggle with African men against the forces of colonialism and n eo-colonialism,2. recognises that African societies historically addressed the problem of women, 3. examines African societies for institutions that are of value to women and rejects those which are not, 4.respects African women's self-reliance and their penchant for co-operative work,5. scrutinises objectively the status of women in countries that have experienced wars of national liberation and social reconstruction, and finally recognises the true power of women in African society.(Boyce 8-9)

It is clear that African feminism comes with a different paradigm inspired by an authentic African context. Subsequently, African feminism developed into several branches such as womanism (Ogunyemi 1985), stewanism (Ogundipe 1994), and motherism (Achonolu 1995). These forms of African feminism are created to answer the needs of different women living under diverse conditions and circumstances. The works of some of these feminists and others such as Marie Umeh, Juliana Makuchi Nfah Abbenyi, Catherine Achonolu, Chikwenyi Ogunyemi, Omar Sougou and Desiree Lewis will offer a critical feminist scope to approach the theme of alienation in this research.

Concerning the organization of this thesis, it will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with social alienation using social-psychology. The aim is to explore the social environment in which the characters are introduced and thus understand its structure. Alienation will be approached in this chapter as a social process. Conformity is the most apparent estranging process in our novels; hence, the main focus will be directed to the way it functions to alienate the protagonists. The next part of this chapter will be dedicated to the study of alienation as a state of estrangement, that is to explore the main characters' psychological reaction to conformism. The four protagonists suffer from isolation from their societies and these could be studied as possible psychological states or responses to their social alienation.

The second chapter studies racism and its contribution to the female characters' alienation. As immigrants living in Britain, Gwendolen and Adah faced racial discrimination within the welfare system that was supposed to help the under privileged classes of society during the 1970s. Both are relegated to second class-citizenship status with poor living conditions. My interest is to show the impact of racism on Adah and Gwendolen's self-identification in a society that rejects them on the basis of their skin colour. The second part handles the Apartheid system in South Africa with its oppressive systems and institutions that disregarded the blacks and coloureds as well. The theory of Frantz Fanon will help explain the correlation between racism and alienation, in addition to the main characters' reaction to these racist practices and laws.

The third chapter explores the sexual alienation of Adah, Gwendolen, Mouse and Elizabeth. Within the patriarchal ideology of their societies, women's bodies are objectified in a society that treat them as sexual objects used either for procreation or to satisfy men's needs. Using Barbara Fredrickson's objectification theory, I intend to study the way the main characters are estranged from their own bodies as they fail to have any control over them. The first part will deal with the subtle or indirect sexual objectification of the female protagonists. This

section studies the strategies used by society to project and consecrate images of women as sexual objects. Adah, Elizabeth and Mouse are victims of verbal sexual harassment and men's control of their bodies and this affects their self-awareness. The second part treats the direct sexual objectification of women that have more devastating effects than the first type. Sexual abuse may take the form of incest, rape and marital rape that are all present in the novels. I intend to study these traumatic experiences undergone by the main characters, their psychological and physical impact on them and the way they contribute to their alienation.

The last chapter deals with the factors that helped the characters to reach self-realization. After all the forms of oppression that crushed their self-esteem leading them to psychological breakdown and suicidal attempts, the protagonists find strength to resist and pull themselves from the pits of alienation. In the novels, motherhood and writing appear as important leverages that help them reach self-assertion. The first part then throws light on the role of motherhood in the process of Adah, Elizabeth and Gwendolen's healing. Motherism and womanism will help us to study this link and show how motherhood can be an empowering experience to women. The second part will highlight the connection between writing and self-healing. The works of James Pennebaker may be useful in the study of writing as a therapy that leads Adah and Mouse to self-accomplishment. The last chapter completes the study conducted in the previous parts to explain the elements that participate in the process of desalienation.

Chapter 1:

Women's Identity and Social Alienation

a-Conformism and Social Norms

The main concern of this chapter is the study of women's Identity and the social factors that help to shape it through the main characters of *Second-Class Citizen*, *Gwendolen*, *The Cardinals* and *A Question of Power.* These novels raise the issue of identity crisis at a given point of the protagonists' development. They face decisive moments when they have to answer existential questions about who they are and what position they have in their respective societies. Before they reach self-identification and resolve this questioning, the protagonists go through difficult experiences which led to their alienation from their social environment.

In this part of our research, we intend to study the link between the alienation of our women characters and the social context in which they are set by Buchi Emecheta and Bessie Head. Our aim is to show the impact of society with its codes of behaviour, social norms, beliefs and structures on the making of Adah, Gwendolen, Mouse and Elizabeth's identities. The first section of this part explores the social context depicted by Head and Emecheta in their novels to understand the way it is constituted and whether the characters' alienation resulted from their conformism to its norms and codes or not. I will study alienation as a social process and the strategies applied by society to enforce conformism on its members, these strategies consisting in excluding, labelling and stigmatising. The second part deals with alienation as a state that is to say, I will study the characters' social reaction to alienation in terms of isolation and withdrawal.

Our work also consists of the study of the interaction between society and individuals in the novels. Sociology provides effective and relevant tools for research on society and its structures. The psychological aspect is an equally important aspect in the novels. In fact, concepts like social alienation and lack of adjustment need to be approached from a psychological perspective. A

combination between sociology and psychology seems to be the best way to deal with the theme of social alienation and its social and psychological impact. For the study of alienation as a social process and a psychological state, I intend to conduct my discussion through the medium of social psychology.

Social-psychology is defined as "the scientific field that seeks to understand the natures and causes of individual behaviour in social situations"(Baron et al. 6). It deals with the factors that lead us to behave in a given way in the presence of others and look at the context under which certain behaviours/actions occur. It explores also how feelings, thoughts and intentions are constructed and how such psychological components, in turn influence our interaction with others. The early socio-psychologist Floyd Henry Allport, defines it as "a science which studies the behaviour of the individual in so far as his behaviour stimulates other individuals, or is itself a reaction to this behaviour"(Allport 12).

These definitions share a common point, which is the link between the individual and the group and their mutual influence on. This individual-group relation seems to be at the heart of social-psychology which provides the theoretical frame of social identity. In fact, the term identity becomes a unifying theme of social and psychological sciences during the last decades and is still a current topic of research. Social identity theory was developed by many sociologists and psychologists such as Henry Tajfel (1970), Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams (1970), John Robinson (1996) and Richard Jenkins (2004). They all agree about the importance of interaction between the individual and society in order to form identity. In fact, there is something active about identity as it must be established through the interaction with the outside world. Richard Jenkins explains this dynamism of identity as follows:

> In fact, identity can be only understood as process, as 'being' and 'becoming'. One's identity- one's identities, indeed, for who we are is always singular and plural- is never a final or settled matter. Not even death freezes the picture: identity through reputation can be reassessed. (Jenkins 5)

Identity is a process of being and becoming through which an individual knows himself through his relation to the others. Identification thus takes place when individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relation with other individuals and collectivities. Identity is a matter of knowing who is who. Jenkins further explains that identification or knowing who is who takes place in terms of similarities and differences. In another word, "identifying ourselves or others as a matter of meaning, a meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation"(Jenkins 5).

The socio psychologist James Boon explains self-definition as the game of "playing the vis-à-vis"(Boon 26) which means that the individual is in constant comparison and contrast with the others to know and define himself. He relates to the others in terms of sameness/similarity which implies sharing common points like language, values, religion…,.etc. However, sharing these similarities is not enough for self-definition for not all individuals are the same and must be distinct from one another by being different from the rest of the group. Defining oneself is achieved by being both similar to and different from the others. The sociologist Goerg Simmel explains that similarity and difference are the dynamic principles of identification, the heart of social life.

We can conclude that a healthy identity formation means the coexistence of both concepts, that is being both a part and an autonomous element of the same community; not only sharing similarities with others, but also by retaining certain independence and individuation. Identification becomes problematic when this balance is not respected that is when similarity becomes the only way the individual relates to the group or the opposite by being completely separate from the group. This leads to what is known as conformism which rejects all forms of individual difference from the groups' social norms and codes of behaviour. The

sameness with others, in the case of conformism is imposed on the individual who should be like the rest of the group and renounce his distinctness.

Conformism leads to the social alienation as the famous socio-psychologist Erich Fromm demonstrates in his works. Fromm explains that with industrialisation, man freed himself from natural determinism and dominated his environment, but this freedom created in him an “increased isolation”. In reaction to this imposed freedom, man developed various escape mechanisms and one of them is conformism. Conformism provides a feeling of security to the individual through a superficial sense of belonging to society. However, the individual's social adaptation that goes through the acceptance of imposed social norms, codes and behaviours creates man's alienation from himself. Fromm states that when man “adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns, he ceases to be himself”(Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* 44-45). Alienation means in this case, the loss of the self and its individuality for the sake of a securing feeling of belonging to a social group by conforming to its codes. For him, man should relate to the others while retaining his individuality and spontaneity as the only way to get out of his alienation.

Erich Fromm further uses the terms distinctness/relatedness to refer to the dichotomy similarity/difference that permits one’s identification. He holds that “one aspect of the process of the individual self-definition is that one becomes aware of being an entity separate from the others”(47). This process, once again is supposed to take place “automatically in the course of human development”(Fromm, *The Sane Society* 35). Initially, at the stage of “pre-individualistic existence” man is purportedly bound to his fellow man by “ties regulated by instincts”(35). This period is generally associated with childhood where the individual instinctively internalizes and conforms to the codes of his social environments. Hence, conformity starts in childhood when the individual

lacks this awareness of being "separate" from the others to use Fromm's terms. Childhood appears as an important phase in identity formation.

George Herbert Mead further suggests that "two motivations inspire conforming behaviour: the desire to be correct, and the desire to remain in the good grace of others. Each is rooted in primary socialization (childhood)"(Mead 12). It is clear then that conformity to social norms begins in childhood and this makes the study of this phase in the development of our female characters of great importance to understand their alienation. Indeed, we intend to explore the South African, Nigerian and Jamaican traditional societies in relation to the established conception of gender relations, in addition to the study of women's position within the social and economic systems and the various beliefs, customs and norms that might explain the idea of conformity and its consequence on the protagonists.

In *Second-Class Citizen* and *Gwendolen*, Emecheta depicts the childhood of both Adah and Gwendolen as salient phases in the building of their identities as women. Adah spends her early years in the traditional Nigerian society during the 1940's and 1950's. Although the beginning of the novel takes place in Lagos which is an urbanised centre compared to Adah's native village of Ibuza, the Nigerian society was still very conservative concerning the traditional beliefs and customs. The feminist critic Neerja Chand highlights the sociologist aspect in Emecheta's works:

> Emecheta is a socialist-novelist who is trying in these novels to give a comprehensive insight into the woman question by situating her protagonists in a certain sociological context in Africa…The collective forces of society's institutions like tribe, group or family are always impinging upon her individual consciousness.(Chand 70-71)

This statement corresponds to our desire to approach Emecheta's novels from a sociological point of view. Chand insists on "the sociological" context in which Adah grows up to forge her individual-self and this confirms the relevance of our intent to use feminism and sociology.

The Nigerian society is characterised by a strong patriarchal order where men hold the monopoly of power over women. The opening scene of the novel is suggestive of women's position among Adah's people called the Ibos or Igbos (communities living in the eastern parts of Nigeria). In this scene, we see the incertainty of Adah in relation to her date of birth, as Emecheta writes:

> She was not even quite sure that she was exactly eight, because, you see, she was a girl. She was a girl who arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant. (S.C.C 9)

This passage demonstrates the traditional attitude that the Ibo society had towards women. The terms used by Emecheta such as "insignificant", "disappointment" reveal the low esteem that girls suffer in their societies. The girl/boy dichotomy serves to show power distribution within the patriarchal system where women are subordinate to men. For the feminist critic Julian Nfah Abbenyi, Emecheta "questions the Father's law that posits sons/males supremacy over daughters/women without whom patriarchy can neither be perpetuated not reinforced"(Abbenyi 48). In fact, this over idealization of male children emanates out of the belief that boys are supposed to take care of their families in old age while a girl is to be married away. Emecheta describes the preference given to boys in Nigeria as follows:

> In Nigeria where I grew up; one's enemy would make special prayers for the birth of a girl child. The normal prayers went so, 'you will be safely delivered of a bouncing baby boy, a real man-child, on a large banana leaf…' The pregnant woman would not protest to this prayer because in her heart, she too would like to have a man child who would not be married away but would stay in the family's homestead and look after his mother when she became old, and weak. In most African societies, the birth of a son enhances a man's authority in the family: male children are very, very important. (Emecheta*, In Our Freedom* 1)

In addition to her insignificance as a baby girl, Adah faces gender biases. From her early age, she has to bear the sexist attitudes of her people who privileged her brother Boy. Her first confrontation with gender constraints starts with her dream of education since the patriarchal order denies girls access to schooling

while boys are educated. The social norms of education to which Adah has to conform are strongly criticized by Emecheta:

> Boys were usually given preference, though. So even though Adah was about eight, there were still discussions about whether it would be wise to send her to school. Even if she was sent to school, it was very doubtful whether it would be wise to let her stay long. 'A year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn how to sew'. Adah had heard her mother say this many, many times. (S.C.C 10)

The need to educate girls is not urgent since they are supposed to marry and bear children while boys are destined for a more "important" existence. They have to get an education, work and later take care of their families as fathers. Being a wife and a mother are conceived as the only roles a woman can have while for a boy, being a husband and father is just one part of his future. We can clearly see the categorisation of the patriarchal society and the construction of separate social and economic spheres where men and women evolve, as Omar Sougou observes:

> Western education appears to be the key to success in the changing Africa of the late 1940's and 1950's. But women and girls are excluded from it because of the two combined factors of money and discriminatory gender practices…It was more prudent to invest in male children who were likely to support them in old age, than in girls who were fated to marry and join other households.(Sougou 41)

Even when the family accepts to send Adah to school, she has to attend one with low fees while her brother joins the expensive Ladi-LacK school. Here again, Emecheta draws our attention to the unfair treatment of daughters in comparison with sons: "Yes, she would go to school, she would not go to Ladi-Lack, because Boy was there and they might ask her to pay, it being such an expensive school. She would go to the Methodist school round the corner. It was cheaper"(S.C.C. 11). In spite of all these constraints, Adah's dreams to pursue her education come to reality after a long struggle with her family. Before joining the Methodist school, she secretly attended classes in a nearby school and her mother is charged by the police with child neglect. Ma is taken to the police office where she has to drink a big bowl of 'gari' with water while the police men are

laughing at her. According to Omar Sougou, this scene marks Adah for the rest of her life when she sees her own mother being humiliated. He further explains how Adah internalizes the gender codes of her society through this experience that confirms men's power over women:

> Gender difference impresses itself in Adah's consciousness with respect to the image she has of her mother. The representation of the treatment to which the policemen subject the little girl's mother when she is suspected of negligence points to the ridicule in which women can be held by male power.(41)

Ma represents the traditional submissive woman who perpetuates the patriarchal conception of womanhood. She refuses to educate Adah and she wants to prepare her to be a "good wife" by learning domestic chores and 'sewing'. The critic Juliana Nfah Abbenyi describes the only position women had in the male-female relation among Ibos: "the exchange of women, marriage, child-bearing, and child rearing are the most important components around which male-female relationships are grounded"(Abbenyi 37). Hence, women's gender roles consist exclusively in wifehood and motherhood for which no education is needed.

However, Adah has bigger dreams of a successful educated woman in spite of the strong socialisation taught by her people to become a wife and a mother. We find here the idea of sameness or similarity that is imposed by the social group on its members. Adah is asked to be like the other girls; an uneducated submissive wife and mother and as the other women, she has to conform to this conception of womanhood. Adah is divided between her aspirations of success and her adherence to the traditions of her people. She has to accept the social norms of her society because she is still a young child, a phase that corresponds to Fromm's 'pre-individualistic period'.

In addition to the problem of education, Adah has to conform to another traditional custom after the death of her father. According to Ibo society, when a man dies, his wife, children and wealth are inherited by the elder brother.

Although the intention of this custom is the protection of the dead man's family, it brought a lot of hardships to women. Here again Emecheta is raising the issue of women's inheritance that characterized many traditional African societies by showing its negative effect on Adah and her mother:

> Adah, like most girl-orphans, was to live with her father's elder brother as a servant. Ma was inherited by Pa's brother, and Boy was to live with one of Pa's cousins. It was decided that the money in the family, a hundred pounds or two, would be spent on Boy's education. So Boy was cut out for a bright future, with a grammar school education and all that.(S.C.C. 17)

This passage demonstrates the idea of women's objectification in which women are treated as properties to be inherited and not as full human beings. Adah becomes a 'servant' for her uncle and family and her mother a co-wife. Ma and Adah are represented as 'objects' to be passed on from one man to another and they have to conform to this tradition without questioning it.

Adah's sufferings start after the loss of her father, who is represented by Emecheta both as a figure of power when we see him caning her after Ma's arrest, and as a protector. Adah was happy when her father was alive and he even agreed to send her to school when her mother showed her resentment. The father figure is often used by Emecheta to convey both control and protection as we can see in the *Joys of Motherhood* and *The Bride Price* with Nnu Ego and Akunna's fathers. Emecheta has a special relation with her own father whom she depicts as a man with a lot of respect to traditions but who is also capable of showing great care and love to his daughter. Her mother on the other hand is often depicted as the guardian of traditions whose main duty is to guarantee Adah's conformism to them. The critic Ashley Dawson explains the relation Adah has with her mother as follows:

> Adah directs her anger to the women of her society. This is due in part to the fact that among extended kin groups, it is the older women who are charged with the social reproduction, which includes preparing their daughters for lives in domestic servitude thus, Adah's rebellion against her allotted place in life initially targets her mother, whom she sees as complicit in perpetuating her subordination.(Dawson 102)

The expression “social reproduction” highlights a certain social pattern with specific established rules to be preserved. The social identity of Adah is formed to correspond to this pattern, and in this case to “domestic servitude”. Adah lives in her uncle’s house as a domestic servant and she calls him “New Pa and master”(S.C.C 18). Her situation worsens when her dream of education is threatened by her relatives. Her schooling is to stop after the death of her father. Here Emecheta introduces another tradition in Nigerian society which is the bride price or dowry which makes women in traditional societies appear as objects to be passed on from one hand to the other.

In this respect, Adah is seen as an object by her uncle who wants to get a good price by marrying her off to a wealthy man. The notion of the pride price is not new to the traditional Nigerian society, but because of Western education, the custom changed. In fact, after the introduction of education, it was believed that an educated girl could fetch a higher bride price which is slightly contradictory. A society that denies girls access to schools, gives a high pride price for an educated woman. Adah is then allowed to attend classes just for the sake of her future dowry; otherwise, she has to stay home and serve her uncle’s family, as Emecheta writes:

> Adah’s schooling would have been stopped, but somebody pointed out that the longer she stayed at school, the bigger the dowry her future husband would pay for her. After all, she was too young for marriage at the age of nine or so, and moreover the extra money she would fetch would tide Boy over.(S.C.C 17)

The representation of women as commodities is one of the ways to criticize the social conception of womanhood in the traditional Nigerian society. The feminist critic Chikwenye Ogunyemi observes how Emecheta “exploits the language of commodification implicit in the word ‘bride price’ in order to locate the core of the Nigerian marital problem as bartering/battering”(Ogunyemi, *The Shaping of A Self* 245). Adah seems to be a helpless person who is inherited and in the future given to a man for an amount of money. To cap it all, this money would be partly

spent on her brother's education. She is depicted as a voiceless character who has no control over her life.

At this point of her development, Adah is unable to resist the overwhelming forces of patriarchy that impose on her a certain way of conduct which she has to accept. She is characterized as a weak, silent and submissive person without any kind of individuality. Using Fromm's terms, we can state that Adah fails to develop any individuality or spontaneity as a girl because she has to conform to her social entourage.

It seems clear that Adah lacks the awareness and self-consciousness about her subordination. She does not question whether her status in society is 'right' or 'wrong' because her conditions give her a little room for that and she even thinks that she is given an opportunity to have this kind of life in her uncle's house. This confirms the power of her early socialization.

Unlike Adah, Gwendolen spends her early life between Jamaica and London. In a rural place called Granville, Gwendolen lives with her grandmother, Granny Noami after the departure of her parents who emigrated to England. Lately, she joins the family which grows larger with the birth of two boys and a little girl. Like Adah, Gwendolen's social identity is forged by the norms and conventions of her Jamaican society. However, because of the shared African origins between Jamaica and Nigeria, Emecheta constantly makes references to the common history and traditions of both societies. In fact, several times Emecheta mentions the Nigerian community living in London and draws points of similarities and differences with the West Indies' people.

The Jamaican society kept some of its African customs as we can note a lot of common aspects between Adah and Gwendolen's childhood. For both Adah and Gwendolen, education constitutes an important issue. The Jamaican traditional society also gives little importance to the education of girls who should be

confined to domestic spheres. Nevertheless, Emecheta shows that progress started to make its way to the Jamaican society which implemented laws that make education compulsory for both boys and girls.

However, the Law is not effective as it is applied only in big cities. People in rural and remote areas like Granville still refuse to abide by it. Moreover, it is stated in the novel that education costs so much money that the poor population cannot afford it. Unlike Adah's parents, Gwendolen's father Winston and mother Sonia wanted to send their daughter to school, but her Grandmother opposed their desire because she needed her to work at home and in the bee farm. In an attempt to convince Granny Noami, the family friend, Uncle Johnny observes: "Every child is supposed to go to school on these islands, you know Noami, but many parents on the hill pay no mind to the law" but Granny Noami answers that "schools cost money..Dem school uniforms, books, and the parents losing all the help the child give at home and on the farm"(*Gwendolen* 26). Poverty and difficult living conditions are responsible for the illiteracy of many children in Jamaica in the 1970s. In Jamaica, Gwendolen is allowed to take some lessons with a teacher but once her parents stop sending money from England, she has to stop her education and do hard work to survive with her grandmother.

When she moves to England, where education is compulsory, Gwendolen has a complex situation as she takes extra lessons because of her illiteracy when she joins school. The problem is that Sonia keeps the same idea about the vanity to educate girls and imposes on her hard tasks to perform at home. Sonia is surprised to see that girls in England are not asked to participate at home: "why some mothers allowed their daughters to do little or no housework. They could not be right because even in Jamaican girls did a lot of work at home. Some of these white girls were spoilt silly, she thought viciously"(*Gwendolen* 83).

Gwendolen is so overwhelmed by her work at home that she has no time to revise lessons and reinforce her knowledge. Sonia clearly explains that the reason

Gwendolen is brought to England is to help at home and not for education: “You study all day at dat school doing nutting, and when you came home, you have to help. You understand me? When you Dat’s why me send for you to come, not just for education!”(Gwendolen 84). This statement implies that girls' “socialization” requires little time to be spent on their education and much more on their instruction related to being housewives.

A parallel can be drawn here between Adah and Gwendolen’s mothers Ma and Sonia. Both embody the traditional construction of gender norms that limit women to the domestic sphere and give all the privilege to male children. Sonia perpetuates the conventions of her Jamaican society and tries to impose them on Gwendolen even when they move to a different social context in England. Sonia is furious at Gwendolen’s behaviour when the latter complains about the responsibilities she has, compared to her friends:

> When she had been little, though her parents spoiled her, yet it was always, ‘yes Mammy, yes Fa’. She had never challenged her parents. She had never given the feeling of not having authority over her. She would understand Marcus and Ronald, demanding their freedom early because they were boys and two born here [England].(Gwendolen 90-91)

This passage holds two aspects of the patriarchal society in which Sonia grew up. The first element is the submissiveness of women to the authority of elders. A woman is not supposed to challenge the power of her parents and by extension the social group with all the norms, values and conventions it represents. The second aspect of this society is men’s preference to women. Like Adah’s brother, Marcus and Ronald are considered differently by Sonia. They have more importance, and freedom compared with Gwendolen whose education is not given priority and who is asked to accept her position in the family as a “second mother” to her two brothers.

Gwendolen’s insignificance for her parents starts earlier in the novel when she is first left by her father in Jamaica. She directs all her love to her mother who

equally abandons her with her grandmother. Gwendolen is stricken by the indifference of her mother when she starts to prepare for her trip to England. In fact, while Gwendolen is devastated by her sorrow to see her mother leave Jamaica, Sonia is eager to join her husband and does not show any sign of sadness. This experience deepens in Gwendolen the feeling of being the "unwanted" or "rejected" child that will be confirmed and worsen when she finally moves to London. "Mammy going was the final act of rejection life imposed on her…Would she be wanted by anyone?"(*Gwendolen* 35), Gwendolen wondered after this difficult separation. Her sense of abandonment proves real since she has received only four letters from her mother who had been absent for more than two years.

The critic Omar Sougou describes "the family as a site of socialization and subject formation"(Sougou 208). Gwendolen's first site of socialization is marked by rejection in Jamaica and later in London; it is characterised by a distant father, and an indifferent mother. The protagonist is to internalize this feeling of abandonment as a girl both by a family in which she fails to find a place and a society with norms that limit her as a girl to domestic life.

Gwendolen's father is absent from her early childhood. He leaves for England when she is a little baby. The next meeting between daughter and father will take place many years later when Gwendolen joins him in London. The scene describing their meeting is significant as it shows a certain malaise in Winston's attitude towards his own daughter. Their relation along the whole novel will be characterized by the distance that separates Winston from his daughter:

> Winston was surprised and uneasy at the critics of the little girl, who was his daughter, and whom he was beginning to realize he had to work hard and wake up fatherly feelings towards. He tried to smile back, but gave a mechanical grin instead. He was uneasy with her. (Gwendolen 49-50)

Gwendolen is thus socialized in this atmosphere of dislocation where the fantasy of the loving family is torn apart by an absent-present father, a non-caring

mother, two brothers and a little baby-sister she barely knows. The critic Neerja Chand describes the disillusions of Gwendolen when she meets her family in London:

> She discovers that the large possibilities of life in London that she had imagined in Jamaica, were a big lie because she is quite alienated from her nuclear family as well. She comes expecting to be welcomed into the family, a family she had hardly known. (Chand 179)

In addition to Gwendolen's failure of integration in her family, an event occurs in her childhood that shows the impact of social norms on women. Gwendolen is victim of rape by the family friend, Uncle Johnny who comes regularly to visit her grandmother, Granny Noami. The theme of rape will be thoroughly explored in the following chapters, since our interest in this part is to see the reaction of the society of Granville to this crime. Although considered as an abominable sin by her people, the reaction to Gwendolen's accusations of Uncle Johnny reflects the patriarchal organisation of the Jamaican society and men's control.

When Gwendolen finally finds courage to reveal her rape to her grandmother, we observe two distinct reactions to that. The women of the village are revolted at the horrible act of Uncle Johnny who used to abuse the little girl for years: "Everybody came and shouted at him, calling him all kind of names under the sun. Her Mammy's friend Roza, suggested Uncle Johnny should be reported and sent to prison"(*Gwendolen* 33). Men on the other hand, had a different reaction since they were shocked at first but quickly looked rather amused.

The term "amused" is quite suggestive of the way men consider women in this society. For them, this traumatic experience is seen as a kind of amusement and they are curious to know how Uncle Johnny raped Gwendolen many times while she was constantly with Noami. No man seems to care for the little girl's suffering and they start to wonder about the reason behind her silence. Quite symbolically, it is a man called Jeffrey who plays the judge when Noami accused Uncle Johnny. After asking some questions, Jeffrey concludes that Gwendolen was not a victim,

she even likes to be molested by Uncle Johnny: “Maybe the lill marm love the job”(G*wendolen* 34).

No one believed her because Johnny is a highly respected man, a fervent Christian while Gwendolen is just a little girl. Gwendolen “felt like screaming every time people said that it was her word against that of Uncle Johnny”(*Gwendolen* 35). She is the victim of her people's misjudgement that was dictated by a male dominated community. The angry group of women is very soon silenced by the overwhelming power of men who finished up declaring Gwendolen, ‘a bad girl’. Through this episode in Gwendolen’s childhood, Emecheta is critical of a society that victimizes girls. Like Adah, she is surrounded by codes and norms drawn from a patriarchal world where men rule.

In Bessie Head’s *The Cardinals* and *A Question of Power*, the protagonists’ childhood takes place within the heavily racist South African society. While Gwendolen and Adah grow up with a family, Mouse and Elisabeth are illegitimate daughters who are passed on from one foster family to the other. Both characters are born of a white mother and a black father. This relation is condemned by the mother’s white family and the two girls are given away. Mouse’s foster mother Sarah who works for the white family is given five shillings to take in the little girl: “Sarah indicated to the five shillings on the table. Her friend shouted in contempt: `that is not much. You should have asked for more. What kind of woman is it who will sell her child for five shillings.’”(*Cardinals* 2)

In spite of the grandmother’s insistence, Sarah agrees to take the baby without money. This passage is quite symbolic as it suggests the low value given to Mouse. It represents a transaction and five shillings are all that Sarah has for the little coloured girl. From the beginning of the novel, Head draws a picture of Mouse as an unwanted child who is devalued because of her skin colour. Sarah explains to her friend that Mouse is described as an accident. Commenting on Mouse's birth, the critic Sisi Maquagi holds:

> The description of Mouse as an 'accident from another man' is a metaphor that epitomises an unfortunate calamity that is disowned by its creator to reiterate this absence of being claimed, she is initially objectified as 'it' and the 'bundle'. This description immediately places her in the negative and disabling position of being 'othered'.(Maquagi 167)

Maquagi emphasises the idea of objectification of Mouse by society. Mouse is dehumanized and appears as an object to get rid of. These birth circumstances will have a direct impact on the future of Mouse as she grows up with this traumatic scare of rejection. Here again, we can see the power of social norms that consider her as an abomination or an "accident" that results from a socially unacceptable relation between a middle-class white woman and a servant black man. To correct this transgression of social codes, the grandmother reacts by throwing her granddaughter away.

Mouse grows up with a loving foster-mother who named her Miriam. But the little Miriam has to leave her first home at the age of ten after her step-father tries to abuse her sexually. From then on and until the age of sixteen, she is placed and replaced in ten different homes. The critic Sisi Maquagi explains how "the harsh treatment and crushing poverty [Mouse] experiences in these homes reinforce her outcast state"(167). In fact, Mouse fails to find a home of her own. Her social identity is framed by the society that considers her as "deviant" because she does not live up to the expectations of the white South Africa. Maquagi further observes that "the instability of her situation is further reflected in the changes to her names"(170). Indeed, at first, she is called Miriam by her foster mother than Charlotte Smith and finally Mouse. Her social alienation is reinforced by her unknown family name and all these names correspond to artificial social identities imposed on her by the others.

In *A Question of Power*, Elizabeth shares the same childhood with Mouse. She is an illegitimate child of a white woman and a black man. We learn that she is

born in a mental hospital where her pregnant mother is admitted. It is only later that Elizabeth discovers the truth about her birth:

> It caused so much trouble and the family was frightened by the behaviour of the grandmother…first, they received you from the mental hospital and sent you to a nursing home. A day later, you were returned because you did not look white. They sent you to a Boer family. A week later, you were returned. The women on the committee said: what can we do with this child? I**ts** mother is white. (A.Q.P 17) [emphasis added]

Mouse and Elizabeth are placed in different families but no one seems to accept the baby who is either too white or too black for them. Elizabeth is rejected as a child who fails to belong to either the blacks or the whites. We equally find the language of commodification used by Bessie Head in *The Cardinals*. Elizabeth is similarly referred to as an object to be passed on from one hand to the other. The "it" is very symbolic of her objectification by the social environment.

We equally find the same path of conformism of her uncle and grandmother who tried to hide the scandal of her mother by locking her up in a mental hospital and giving the child away. The mother who fails to bear the injustice of her society that separates her from her child commits suicide. This act is a consequence of the harm that society can inflict on individuals who do not conform to its laws; hence, are represented here by The Immorality Act that prohibited inter-racial relations. Madness and suicide are strategies for her to escape the pressure put on her by her people and the guilt of bringing "disgrace" to her family. Suicide serves as an emotional shock to Elizabeth's grandmother who after the death of her daughter, starts to question her behaviour and regrets the rejection of the little child. Elizabeth's foster mother explains:

> When you were six years old, we heard that your mother had suddenly killed herself in the mental home. The grandmother brought her toys and dolls to you…It was such a beautiful story, the story the grandmother, her defiance, her insistence on filial ties in a country where people were not people at all.(A.Q.P 17)

The grandmother decides not to conform to the norms of her white society and tries to consider her granddaughter and even acknowledge her as a family

member despite her sons' opposition. The price of this late self-consciousness is the death of her daughter. Head describes South Africa as a place where "people were not people" which implies that society loses its humanity when it considers human beings as pawns arranged to fit a specific frame and stick to it. In this respect, the feminist critic Shivalik Pathania explains that "Head's own racial experiences led to a profound sense of alienation from the prevailing ethical traditions and standard social norms and institutions"(Pathania 84).

As demonstrated earlier, the societies described in the novels are characterized by a set of rules that frame the characters' self-identification as women. Conformism is an important aspect of these environments and both Emecheta and Head deal with its devastating effects on the individuality of women who refuse to bend to the rigid model set for them. In the following section, I move to study how the writer describes the strategies employed by society to impose its cultural and social patterns on individuals. I will also study alienation as a state that is manifested mainly through the protagonists' isolation and withdrawal.

b-Strategies of Enforcing Conformism and Social States of Alienation

After explaining how social alienation occurs through conformism, we need to explore the strategies employed by society to impose its norms on individuals. These strategies constitute an important field of research by socio-psychologists who explain how "the pressure that members feel to conform to their group norms, exerts a powerful effect on their behaviour"(Moghaddam et al. 71). The pressure exercised by the group then shapes our worldview. Among these strategies, the sociologist Erving Goffman proposes the concepts of stigma and labelling to explain how social pressure is conducted on individuals. Gwendolen is, for example, labelled or stigmatised as a "bad girl" by her society and more exactly by men to influence the others' judgment about the innocence of her rapist, Uncle Johnny. The labelling is so powerful here that it changed the society's perception of Gwendolen who is turned from a victim to a victimizer. In this respect, Erving Goffman describes stigma as follows:

> Stigma, emphasises the demands that others make of us on the basis of our public image. As a consequence, trajectories that are anything but those we would choose can be thrust upon us. Others do not just perceive our identity, they actively constitute it. And they do so not only in terms of naming, labelling, or categorizing, but also in terms of how they respond to or treat us. (Goffman 92)

Goffman holds that the labelling process takes place when others shape our identity not only by their perception but they "actively constitute it". Gwendolen's identity is thus constituted by the social group through stigma which becomes her way of identification or self-definition. Her people treat and refer to her only as the "bad girl". This external image is internalized by Gwendolen whose social identity is defined by her society. From a feminist perspective, women have long been defined through images set for them by gender norms. Goffman uses the term "virtual social identity" that is made by the others' categorisation. He distinguishes between a "virtual social identity" seen

through the public image and an “actual personal identity” which is the real image of one’s self. Goffman further holds that “often it is the fear of stigma which attaches- or which would attach- to the discovery of the personal or actual identity by others, imposes on us the wearing of the public image mask ”(92). Thus, stigma is the gap between the “virtual” and the “actual” identities.

In this respect, Gwendolen was right to hide her rape from the rest of the village because she was afraid of their stigmatization which actually happened when they discovered her “actual/personal” identity, that of a raped girl. Emecheta describes the community's reaction to Gwendolen’s rape as follows: “Gwendolen knew she would be ridiculed, she knew they would not believe her…Some people were even giving her black looks. So she kept away in her corner”(*Gwendolen* 34-35). The black looks in this passage correspond to Goffman’s idea of the others’ perception that form the public image of an individual. Gwendolen is looked at by her people not as a victim but rather as a sinner.

The grandmother, Noami succumbs to the identification of Gwendolen as a ‘bad girl’ by her community. Although she shows rage against Uncle Johnny, after a while, she internalizes the preconceived image of her little daughter. This shows how a group moulds an individual’s perception of himself and others. Noami, as part of the Jamaican society, has to conform to its codes and judgments, so her behaviour is dictated by the group. Instead of believing her own granddaughter’s innocence, she likewise condemns her and directs all her anger on her. Noami starts to criticize her way of walking:

> She complained about the way Gwendolen walked, why she always rolled her back side when she moved about…Granny Noami tried to straighten her up, by telling her to tuck her backside in, otherwise men would think she was a bad girl, inviting trouble….Soon Granny Noami herself started calling her a bad girl. How come Uncle Johnny did not trouble the other girls? How come she was the only one?(Gwendolen 36)

Noami appears in this scene as a conformist whose behaviour leads to the suffering and misfortune of the little child. Her reaction deepens Gwendolen's sense of rejection that was already experienced because of her parents' abandonment. Noami corresponds to the view of Richard Jenkins who believes that the conformist's behaviour emanates from his "desire to remain in the good graces of others" and an "emotional desire to belong"(Jenkins 125). Noami accepts its worldview and condemns the little child just to remain part of the community as she fears rejection.

Because of the social influence, the individual's perception can be totally mistaken and arbitrary. The Turkish social psychologist Muzafer Sherif is one of the pioneers to study the process of norm formation and social influence on human perception in his famous experience called the spot-light and this as early as the 1930's:

> The spot light experience consists of successively placing subjects in a dark room with a stationary spot light. All subjects perceive the spot light moving while it does not. The length of movement differs from one person to the other and some perceive more movement than others. Each subject establishes a norm about the amount of the light's movement but what is surprising is that when put together, the subjects' judgment converges towards a common 'group norm'. Once this norm is established, individuals will continue to abide by it even when placed in the darkened room alone. The light never moved and the judgment about the amount of movement was all arbitrary. (Sherif 43)

His aim is to show how a social group can make all its members see a given reality in the same way no matter how different the perspectives are. His experience goes even further to prove that the group can even convince individuals to believe in an invented or distorted reality. *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller stands as a good illustration of the community's power to distort an authentic reality and how innocent people are sacrificed because of the group members' desire to conform to an arbitrary judgment.

Mouse in *The Cardinals* is equally stigmatised as an "illegitimate" child. Like Gwendolen, Mouse internalizes the label made for her by society and her

identification is to be conducted through this stigma. The grandmother, like Noami, throws away her own flesh to stay "in the good graces of the others" as explained earlier. She is another conformist who has to stick to the norms of the white society which prohibits inter-racial relations. However, Mouse's mother's behaviour by having a black boyfriend, is considered as 'non-conformist' or 'deviant' by her people and this justified for them her internalisation in a mental hospital. According to them, only an insane woman could do such an abominable act and bring disgrace to the white race. The stigma of 'madness' is used by society to define the mother and this label follows Mouse in her future.

It is important to understand the tools or strategies of society to enforce conformism on individuals. For social-psychologists:

> Conformity always involves relinquishing independence at some level, usually by an individual to his peers. The peers may have no special legal or moral right to direct the individual's behaviour; they do so by putting into effect informal norms such as mocking, flattery or threat.(Moghaddam et al. 72)

The individual tends to attribute a lot of importance to the others' reaction to his behaviour. The group's opinion is taken into consideration when decisions and choices are made. For example, a simple flattery about the way an individual dresses can comfort him in his choice of style, as a mocking look can disturb him. However, not all the strategies or tools are informal. Sometimes social groups resort to power and laws to implement its norms. While for Adah's and Gwendolen's societies norm-formation is achieved through traditions and customs transmitted from one generation to the other, in the case of Mouse and Elizabeth, the story is quite different. Society in South Africa imposes its codes of behaviour concerning inter-racial relations through legislation and laws. Imprisonment is even inflicted on those who transgress laws that prohibit sexual intercourse between whites and blacks.

Because of their origins, Mouse and Elizabeth have to bear the stigma of the coloured in the novels. According to the feminist critic Carol Davison, Elizabeth is

"conditioned and victimized by her social and familial environment"(Davison 20). She adds: "labelled as coloured and rejected in her childhood, Elizabeth embarks upon the critical and almost impossible quest for self-definition"(21). Having always been identified through the stigma of the 'coloured' and 'mad', she has to live with these labels for a long time. As her mother, she tries to escape the imposed identity of the mad woman on her by her society when she decides to leave for Botswana, dreaming of a new self far from racism and social alienation.

As stated in the previous section, the conformist is defined as a person who might be so eager to get along with others, to please them, to befriend them, that he "becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be"(Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* 209). As part of a given society, we must 'relate' to the others and share some common aspects, but we must also retain our 'difference' or 'distinctness'. According to Erich Fromm, "alienated conformity" occurs when the conformist thinks he has "reached a new harmony with others" through his 'sameness' or 'relatedness', but he definitely "is not properly related to them"(Fromm, *The Sane Society* 145). Fromm explains that one cannot "relate oneself fully to others unless he has a genuine self to relate to, if this is lacking, one may be related to others, but his relatedness to them will lack depth and significance…He achieves a very extensive unity with others, but he is not related to them as a unique individual"(Fromm 309). In other words, to be correctly related to society, one should first retain his individuality through his difference from the others.

In order not to be socially alienated by keeping the 'genuine self', the concepts of sameness and difference must occur simultaneously during the process of self-identification. The sameness/difference dichotomy may be likened to the individual/community antagonism and the identity crisis it engenders. Alienation results from the individual's need for self-fulfilment as a separate person and his

duties towards the community. The conformist is thus the individual who has no separate self except the one which conformity with the majority can give.

The construction of the "genuine self" or individuality is a difficult process because of the tight hold of society on its members. Each female character has to go through a long journey into the self to find her individuality apart from the constraints shaped by patriarchy, race, and sex. All characters face traumatic experiences to free themselves from societal conformity. We have discussed childhood or the early socialization of the protagonists and during that phase of development, it is impossible to find what Fromm calls the "genuine self". The characters lack maturity and self-consciousness to understand the social conditions of their societies to which they conformed.

Furthermore, the social influence on the protagonists' self- definition continues in their adult life. In *Second-Class Citizen*, Adah's dreams of education prove difficult to realize for after the Methodist school, she wants to carry on with her learning. She solves the problem of financing her education when she successfully gets a full board scholarship. No one accepts to pay for her studies and she is even asked to start working to help in the family spending, however; the idea of fetching a higher pride price being an educated girl, convinces them to let her finish her studies.

The social conventions seem to catch Adah up again when she wants to prepare a degree, but for that she has to leave home. According to the norms of her society, as a girl, Adah cannot live alone far from her family even if for the sake of education. The labelling process operates again to reduce women's freedom and keep them away from realizing their dreams. Adah is to be labelled 'prostitute' by her people if she decides to live as a single woman in Lagos. Through this stigma, the social influence works to shape Adah's behaviour to conform to gender-norms that make a woman's existence dependent on men. Commenting on the term "prostitute", the critic Joya Uraizee holds: "Adah was

later forced to marry a selfish man in order to continue with her studies without being labelled a prostitute" (Uraizee 99). The only alternative Adah has, is to conform to the social codes of Nigeria at that time or abandon her dream.

Through this episode, Emecheta throws light on the subordination of African women in their traditional societies as the critic Sadia Zulfiqar explains: "Emecheta's novels reflect the predicament of the Nigerian woman trapped in biased and prejudiced traditions that only help to maintain and strengthen the male authority and power in her society"(Zulfiqar 57). In fact, the feminist stand in Emecheta's works is clear and Adah represents the Nigerian woman who has been degraded and humiliated by men. As a child, she is undervalued because she is born a girl, later she is inherited and beaten by her uncle and in adult life, she has to marry to fetch a good bride price in order to avoid the stigma of prostitution and pursue her dreams. All the obstacles she meets come from the patriarchal construction of womanhood in Nigerian society. Adah's conformism to her society's expectations does not come from her conviction about their legitimacy, but rather out of helplessness.

All the decisions in Adah's life are to be taken by the others. The man she is supposed to marry is chosen for her by her relatives and her mother. We have to stress the role Ma plays in Adah's inscription in traditions. She pushes her daughter to marry a rich man no matter how old he is. Adah accepts her people's decision but we can see that she does not completely conform to her society as she starts gradually to build her 'genuine self' when she insists on going to school. Feminists have always insisted on the importance of education to empower and free women from their subordinate status in society and in both Emecheta and Head's novels, education contributes to the self-realization of the feminine characters.

Adah challenges her society in her firm pursuit to be educated when she first defies her mother and later when she steals her uncle's money in order to pay for

her examination fees. Hence, Adah's attitude to the conventions of her society is different from the rest of the characters, for while it fits to most of its norms, she sometimes shows signs of 'retaining her individuality'. We find a kind of ambivalence in her attitude to her entourage, between internalizing some norms and rejecting others. This confusion in Adah's mind is understandable and quite expected for her identity is still in the making in youth. However, her reactions are indicators of the beginning of a process of individuation which starts by her education and is confirmed when Adah refuses to accept the suitors brought to her by her cousins and mother.

Adah stands against her people and decides to marry Francis, a young poor educated man who does not pay the expected and mandatory bride price, as explained by Emecheta:

> She got satisfaction, too, from the fact that Francis was too poor to pay the five hundred pounds, such an expensive bride price because she was 'college trained', even though none of them had contributed in her education. The anger of her people was so intense that none of them came to her wedding…It was the saddest day in Adah's whole life. (S.C.C 22)

Her family has even set a price for her. Five hundred pounds were asked from her future husband Francis, a high bride price justified by her education. The passage above encloses also the strategies society applies to impose its decisions on Adah. In addition to labelling and stigmatising, rejection is used as a means to dissuade her and make her accept her relatives' demand for the bride price. As Adah clings to Francis, her ties with her people are cut off for ever. Her wedding turns out to be a sad day in which Adah loses her family and her life after marriage was just another form of prison. Indeed, her family in law takes over to dictate how her life is to be led, so it is just an exchange of power that is affected to keep her under submission. To free herself, Adah decides to emigrate to England where she hopes to build a better life, far from the rigid norm system of her people. After a long struggle with her family in law, she succeeds in moving to London with her husband and children.

Surprisingly enough, in England, Adah keeps the same ambivalent attitude she had before about Nigerian traditions and norms. She continues to play the role of the submissive wife who is abused and beaten by her husband Francis. It takes her a long time to change her perception about the status a woman should have in relation to men.

When approached from a socio psychological point of view, Adah fits the alienated scheme of the one who has to belong to society and be at the same time an independent individual. Adah is alienated by this dual antagonistic feeling. The rejection of Adah by her people as an educated woman follows her to London. After she joins her husband, Adah manages to get a job in a library, but she has to stay in a one room apartment among a community of Nigerian immigrants. Despite the distance, the African traditions and norms continue to dictate her life. Her dreams of freedom turn into a nightmare, she has to conform to the same patriarchal codes left in Lagos. She is victim of all sorts of discriminations and intimidations by the Nigerian immigrants who criticised her life style. In fact, Adah's job and education are the source of her neighbours' resentment and exclusion.

Adah is a successful woman in a place where most of her people fail to have good jobs or pursue their education. What disturbs the community is the fact that Adah is a woman who reached a position that men fail to have. With her job in the library, she has upset the gender bias and social norms of Nigerian society as Emecheta observes:

> …there were many factors working against her. In fact, to most of her Nigerian neighbours, she was having cake and eating it. She was in a white man's job, despite the fact that everybody had warned her against it, and it looked as if she meant to keep it. She would not send her children away to be fostered like everybody else; instead they were living with them…To top it all, they were Ibos, the hated people always believe blindly in the ideologies else, they would have to go away from there. (S.C.C 59)

To remain part of the Nigerian immigrant community, Adah and Francis have to share the same life style. Another problem faced by Adah is inter-cultural discrimination because of her origins and her presence among Yoruba people, another Nigerian ethnic group. Because of this situation, the community decides to exclude Adah's family as, the young woman expresses her feeling of being discriminated against: "thinking about her first-year in Britain, Adah could not help wondering whether the real discrimination, if one could call it that, that she experienced was more the work of fellow-country men than of the whites" (S.C.C. 60).

It is interesting to study the strategies used by the Nigerian community living in Britain to exclude Adah and her family. As explained earlier, conformism is often imposed trough informal tools such as stigmatising and labelling. In the case of Adah, social influence is achieved through threat, mockery and moral harassment. Her neighbours satirise her through songs that they keep repeating each time they see her. Their aim is to put pressure on her to make her change her life style and accept to conform to their rules. Otherwise she has to leave the house:

> Most of the songs are about the fact that she and her husband would soon have to make their home in the street. What use would her education better? The songs would ask. To whom would she show her children off then? It was all so Nigerian. It was all so typical…Meanwhile the songs and the laughs took a much more direct form. 'I can't wait to see them pack their brats and leave our house.' The landlady would say loud and clear along the hallway. (S.C.C. 62)

Adah becomes socially alienated from her people as she tries to retain her individuality by keeping her job and children at home, but at the same time she cannot cut the umbilical cord with them. If she succumbs to their harassments and conform to them, she would lose her 'genuine self' as an educated and financially autonomous woman. Adah is evicted from her room and she has to face another form of alienation because of her race. As a black woman with children, Adah finds a lot of difficulties to find an appropriate accommodation.

The Ibo society where Adah evolves is equally mentioned in *Gwendolen*. We find in this novel a lot of episodes where Emecheta describes some aspects of traditional Nigerian society through the Nigerian immigrants living in London such as Sonia's best friend, Gladys. She represents the Nigerian educated woman who like Adah emigrated to England with her husband and children to improve her living conditions and seek freedom from her relatives. Gladys is also victim of an abusive husband who like Francis, perpetuates the patriarchal system. She takes refuge in Sonia's house after her husband has savagely beaten her. In fact, Emecheta uses Gladys as a feminist character to denounce male dominance in her culture. Describing her people's conception of womanhood, Gladys confesses:

> Well his people won't see all the beating and harassment. They'll say he's your husband, stay with him. And in our culture, it'd bad to talk about the beatings you receive from your husband outside the family. Many people think a wife who is beaten deserves to be beaten. And you know that I talked to social workers and the police. All that had stamped me as a bad woman.(Gwendolen 65)

Gladys appears as a woman who is victim of a double fold oppression: an abusive husband and a chauvinistic attitude of a society that justifies physical violence against women. As men, Francis and Gladys's husband Tunde are given the patriarchal right to control and beat their wives while these should be silent about this kind of behaviour. This social standard of male dominance is imposed on women through the strategy of labelling that has been introduced earlier in this section. A woman is stigmatised 'bad' when she resists her husband or denounces his violence. Gladys is 'stamped' by her people because she refuses to endure her husband's ill treatment. The feminist critic Marie Umeh describes the Ibo culture as having "a rigidly and clearly defined code of morals and any infringement of these laws attracted penalties or punishments that were commensurate with the offence committed"(Umeh, *Emerging Perspectives* 7). It is clear that any deviance from the established social order is to be punished accordingly, the case of Gladys reveals.

Gladys tries to fly away from the grip of the community thinking that in England her life will be different. She explains to her friend Sonia the pressure she was subjected to while she was in Nigeria: “there is work in Nigeria you know, but too many family pressures; I mean my husband’s people; they’re bound to make trouble. They would gladly interfere in my upbringing of the children”(Gwendolen 65). Gladys is later abandoned by her husband, who turns to a younger woman. Although she does not ask for a divorce for fear of being labelled ‘bad’ by her people at home, she obtains a council house and decides to pursue her studies. Gladys adopts the same ambivalent attitude to her traditions as Adah since she tries to find a compromise between her respect of customs and self-independence. She reports her husband to the police, takes an independent apartment, but refuses to divorce.

The same can be said about Mouse and Elizabeth in Bessie Head’s novels. Indeed, both characters are alienated mainly because of racial discrimination and the stigma of “coloured” and “mad”. Mouse's early experience with stigma and labelling in her society is inscribed in her psyche for she develops later into a submissive woman who is controlled by Johnny, a journalist in the newspaper where she works. Johnny is the most important male figure in the novel and symbolically he decides to call her Mouse. According to the critic Sisi Maquagi, "in calling her Mouse, Johnny imposes an identity that names her fragility, insecurity and permanent fear so as to control her more”(Maquagi 170). We can notice here that she is identified by a man who gives her an identity on his own terms.

As a woman, Mouse suffers from a sexist discrimination at work. She is stigmatised “stupid” as she is constantly intimidated by her colleagues who show their male chauvinism through sexist remarks to humiliate her. Mouse faces a lot of difficulties to find a place in what is considered by the conventions of her society at that time as a man’s job. Head writes:

> She fared no better with the other men James taunted her with sly, odd remarks and Pk treated her with patronizing and paternal indulgence that was humiliating; to all that taunts she responded with silent impassionate stare only to herself would she admit how they disturb her. (C*ardinals* 15)

Mouse is victim of gender categorization that confines women to a certain kind of jobs considered fit for them by society. Following the norms of the South African society at that time, the public/domestic spheres are generally distinguished as male/female attributes. In this respect, the definition of gender given by the feminist critic Juliana Nfah Abbenyi may be helpful:

> gender has been seen as a play of power relation that defines men's and women's activities as public and domestic respectively. This opposition rigidly controls the organization of production and manipulates the division of labour into male and female categories. (Abbenyi 17)

The sexist discrimination that hinders the professional success of women has been a salient issue among western feminists. In fact, in the field of employment, women have been denied a lot of job opportunities because of gender issues and social conventions. Until recently, sectors such as engineering, science and technology have been restricted to men. Women are considered incapable of performing such jobs which require a certain degree of intelligence and sometimes physical strength. Gender economic discrimination is criticised by most feminists for it does not allow women to secure a financial autonomy which would free them from patriarchal constraints.

Gender construction of womanhood, thus, generally associates women with "stupidity" and "emotions" as opposed to men's intelligence and rationality. These prejudices about women curb their progress. The feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir explains that historically, women have been doomed to 'immanence' which refers to "a sphere or mode of existence characterized by passivity, submission to biological fate, and confinement or restriction to a narrow round of uncreative and repetitive chores". Men on the other hand, are associated with 'transcendence' which is defined as "a sphere or mode of existence characterized by activity, by freedom from biological fate, by the

freedom to burst out of the present and into the future, by a capacity to transform the world so that it accommodates itself to one's intentions"(De Beauvoir XXII). The concepts of immanence and transcendence correspond to domestic/public spheres.

By entering the world of journalism, Mouse refuses to conform to the behavioural codes of her society in the 1960s, since not only is she a woman in a man's job, but also a coloured. When she is reading a book about electricity Johnny says: "who do you read such complex things? The average reading interest of women your age is the fashion magazine and true-love story"(*Cardinals* 17). Johnny's remarks about the kind of books Mouse is supposed to read, shows a reductionist male attitude towards women who are believed not able to understand complex scientific topics.

Concerning Elizabeth, the patriarchal system of her society is demonstrated through a husband that she marries when she is still living in South Africa. Because of her past as an illegitimate coloured infant, Elizabeth is rejected by society and men as well. No man was interested in a woman like her as she describes her marriage as an act of despair when she starts to get old: "she was the sort of women men never said foolish, tender things to. Men just didn't get that close, and she really decided to marry because she was getting old, and tired of sitting in libraries with books"(A.Q.P 120). It is interesting to note that the man she chooses to marry is a gangster. It seems that the only man who accepts her, is a person who is equally rejected by society. The only positive thing Elizabeth finds in this man, is his interest in philosophy. He likes to read about Buddhism, a philosophy that will influence Elizabeth's life in the future. Her marriage is described as a sudden choice:

> She married a gangster just out of jail. He said to had thought deeply about life in prison?...Her choice was based on the fact that he was interested in Buddhism and she knew a little about it from her friendship with Asian people. It seemed perfectly all right, a week later, to marry someone interested in philosophies, especially those of India. (A.Q.P 18)

Elizabeth had a low self-esteem caused by the rejection of her family, and that explains this choice to marry someone by default. The stigma of the coloured is stamped on her forehead and she has to bear the consequences of her parents' union all her life. Marriage is again shown as a patriarchal institution in which men dominate women. Elizabeth is victim of her husband's brutality, adultery and humiliation. His violence towards her is supported by the norms of her society as an accepted act in marital relation. Like Adah, Elizabeth receives complaints from her women neighbours about the indecent behaviour of her husband and, to cap it all, Elizabeth discovers that her husband has a boyfriend.

After giving birth to a boy, Elizabeth decides to quit the South African society and her violent husband as she could not bear all these forms of domination. She experiences social alienation caused by a society that stigmatised her as a "coloured" and a patriarchal system that makes her an "insignificant" and subordinate woman. Not only does she divorced her husband, she also cuts her ties with the rest of her society when she decides to move to Botswana. It was a way to liberate herself from the social standards of her people to which she tries hard to conform. Head draws a parallel between Elizabeth's marriage and society:

> After a year, she picked up the small boy and walked out of the house, never to return. She read a newspaper advertisement about teachers being needed in Botswana. She was forced to take out an exit permit, which, like her marriage, held the 'never return' clause. She did not care. (A.Q.P 19)

This parallel stresses the link between marriage and patriarchy for both contribute to the enslavement of women. Men's domination does not cease in Elizabeth's life. In fact, other figures of power appear in Botswana. Two imaginary characters named Sello and Dan will haunt Elizabeth's dreams and perpetuate men's need to dominate women. Indeed, Elizabeth falls into a severe psychological breakdown caused mainly by the racism she has experienced in South Africa and Botswana as well.

The theme of psychological breakdown resulting from alienation is to be dealt with in the next chapters and the two characters Dan and Sello will be thoroughly analysed to see how men's power is dramatized by Bessie Head. The use of mythic images of women like the Medusa, Hysteric, the mad woman or the Nymphomaniac are to be explored as gender myths that constantly shape the psychological torments of Elizabeth.

To sum up, we can notice that the 'bad woman', 'the prostitute', 'the illegitimate', 'the mad', and 'the coloured' are all stamps given by the traditional social groups to our female characters to make them conform. It is interesting to explore the reaction of Elizabeth, Mouse, Adah and Gwendolen to the pressure exercised by society on them to make them conform to social norms. In other words, after the study of social alienation as a process and the strategies used to enforce it, it is equally important to understand social alienation as a state.

The socio-psychologist Melvin Seeman studies alienation in terms of state and not as a process. Instead of exploring the strategies used by society to alienate its members, Seeman studied the psychological reactions of individuals to it or what is known as syndromes of alienation. He relates social alienation to psychological states experienced subjectively by individuals including "isolation" and "withdrawal" from society (Seeman 753-754). In fact, a common state that is found in *The Cardinals, A Question of Power, Gwendolen* and *Second Class Citizen* is isolation. Socially, all the female characters react similarly to the different forms of alienation be it social, racial, sexual. They all take distance from people around them and adopt an introvert behaviour. In the case of Gwendolen and Elizabeth, the reaction exceeds social isolation to fall into psychological breakdown. Isolation and withdrawal are the primary external signs of alienation opposite to the psychological breakdown which represents the deeper internal reaction which will be studied in the next chapters.

Social psychology explains how "Social isolation occurs when members of a social species have complete or near complete lack of contact with society. Social isolation is usually imposed involuntarily, not chosen" (Social Isolation). This definition of social isolation unfolds two important elements: the lack of contact with others and the involuntary imposition of isolation on individuals. We can see that the characters' isolation is the outcome of their rejection by society because of their non-conformism. In fact, the characters did not choose to retreat from their social groups since their isolation came as a result of their alienation.

The second element in our definition is the absence of contact between the individual and the external world. It is worth noting that isolation is not to be mistaken for loneliness:

> Social isolation is not the same as loneliness rooted in temporary lack of contact with other humans…while loneliness is often fleeting, true social isolation often lasts for years and tends to be a chronic condition that affects all aspects of a person's existence and can have serious consequences for health and well-being.(Social Isolation)

In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah shows signs of isolation from her childhood. Adah never mentions friends or close relatives with whom she shares her pains and thoughts. Her eager attempt to educate herself made her a different girl who finds difficulties to tie links with others. Later, Adah fails to identify herself with the women of her entourage that she finds submissive. The feminist critic Ashley Dawson comments on Adah's isolation:

> Her animosity towards her mother is an attitude that is repeated frequently in *Second-Class Citizen*, contributing to pattern of hostility towards other women that leaves Adah isolated and consequently far more easily subjected to whims of her increasingly tyrannical husband.(Dawson 102)

We never see Adah making confessions or sharing her problems with her mother or with other women, be it in Nigeria or in England and this affects her well-being. She cannot articulate her oppression and suffers silently. In this respect, Joya Uraizee observes:

> As a result of all this abuse, Adah remains lonely and isolated, unable to completely articulate her oppression. For example, even though she knows that she is valued only as a commodity in her community, she still feels an intense loneliness when she leaves her home. Only she and Boy remained of that life which she had known. Yet, this life she had known was almost exclusively one of isolation because she was orphaned young, and was later forced to marry a selfish man in order to continue with her studies. Later, this yearning loneliness is worsened by the deliberated and cruel abuse she is subjected to from Francis.(Uraizee 99)

In fact, Adah's isolation is evident as soon as she sets foot in Britain. Her education builds barriers between her and the Nigerian immigrant community. Joya Uraizee further shows how Adah's success hardens her sense of isolation: "Adah's successful application ironically leaves her isolated from other black women both at home and at work"(103). Her 'white man's job in a library deepens the gap with the other women and "her classicism forces her into self-imposed exile from the working-class Nigerian in proximity to whom she is forced to live"(104). In this sense, we can claim that Adah lives a dual exile first as an immigrant living in London and as an outcast from the Nigerian community. She has to stay apart as her husband advises her and she seems horrified at the idea of keeping contact with the others.

Adah is equally isolated at work, even if amongst educated people like her. She has a cordial relationship with her colleagues, but never builds any kind of intimate friendship with one of them. Omar Sougou comments on Emecheta's representation of Adah as an isolated character:

> Adah is represented as a lonely person, and her isolation exacerbates the compromising attitude she adopts. The few people she interacts with in the novel are her colleagues at the library where she works. The interaction is deprived of intimacy which does not lessen her isolation. (Sougou 44)

To qualify Adah's isolation, Emecheta uses a metaphor where she likens the main character's state of withdrawal from society to "a shell". This metaphor appears in both *Second-Class Citizen* and *Gwendolen* as an image of both characters' reclusion by society. "The shell" is a place where Adah has to live as Emecheta writes: "This was all too much for Adah, and she recoiled into her shell, telling it

all, as the protestants hymn book says, to God in prayers" (S.C.C. 36). This isolation has negative effects on Adah as the feminist critic Ashley Dawson states: "as a result of her isolation, Adah is ignorant not simply of her right to state income support for her children, but also of the state's provision of public housing to those in need"(Dawson 106). In fact, the protagonist loses contact with the external world which keeps her ignorant of her rights to social aids provided by the British welfare system.

Like Adah, Gwendolen hides in "the shell" whenever the whims of society become difficult to bear. Before falling into madness, she shows signs of alienation through her withdrawal from the outside world. After her rape in Jamaica, Gwendolen is silent. Like Adah, she cannot articulate her oppression because she is convinced that no one will believe her. Her isolation is thus imposed on her by her people who judged her as a "bad gal". She has no friends to talk with except her mother's best friend's daughter Shivorn who starts to blame Gwendolen for keeping her rape secret.

"The shell" is mentioned again when Gwendolen is raped by her father in England. The blame is put on her by the rapist who labels her "bitch", "wicked" and "devil". Gwendolen is voiceless and she fails to put words on her traumatic experience because she expects the same lack of understanding and misjudgement of her society, and she recoils into to her "shell":

> Gwendolen went back to the shell she had built around herself against the adults in Granville. She had been out of it the day her daddy came to pick her up at the airport and she had given him her hand to lead her to the future. Now she had to go back to it. (Gwendolen 146)

Emecheta demonstrates that isolation can have devastating effects on society members. Like Adah, Gwendolen does not claim her rights to justice and prefers to endure the suffering of rape and incest believing that it is the best attitude to adopt. However, while Adah keeps her sanity, Gwendolen falls into madness as she fails to keep herself isolated from others.

In *The Cardinals,* Mouse is the most silent character compared to the other protagonists. The only way to express herself is through writing as she hides behind written words when she fails to express orally her alienation. Commenting on her withdrawal, the critic Sisi Maquagi writes:

> Her multiple othering in terms of gender and class deprives her of her own sense of self as well as a voice that can articulate that self and its relation to the world around it. The severity of deprivation parallels the intensity of her withdrawal into herself to the extent that a rupture occurs between herself and the outside world.(Maquagi 167-168)

We can note that withdrawal and silence are the principal characteristics of Mouse. Bessie Head accentuates deliberately the social malaise of Mouse by drawing a character with a small and banal body. The aim of the writer is to make her unnoticeable and thus not approachable by the others. Mouse adopts also a technique of camouflage, and wears loose clothes to hide her thin body. The first meeting with Johnny and her colleagues conveys this strategy of hiding: “she looked back at them, impassive and aloof, unaware of the odd figure she cut in a dress too long and too big for her thin body”(*Cardinals* 14).

Her name is very symbolic of her insignificance. She is called Mouse, a way to emphasise her small body and the control of others over it. Accordingly, the critic Desiree Lewis observes that “Head turns repeatedly Mouse’s bodily signification to convey her domination or the limitations of her struggle against domination”(Lewis 96). Johnny keeps criticizing Mouse for her physical appearance and clothes. He describes her as a “screwball”, an “oddball crank”, and a freak whose “skirts are too long and the slip hangs out an inch all the way round”(*Cardinals* 22).

In addition, to her look, Mouse’s voice is almost unheard by her colleagues in the newspaper. She uses a “quite” and “inarticulate” voice with an expressionless face in the few occasions she communicates with the others. Mouse is not insane, but she clearly suffers from psychological problems because of her alienation as

a coloured woman in a racist context. Her isolation denotes her lack of confidence and feeling of rejection. In fact, Mouse often responds to her victimization through the non-verbal gestures of her body. When attacked with a stream of verbal abuse by Johnny, she displays a non-verbal bodily sign: “Her mouth quivered slightly and she could not control the look of mute, intense rage that darted out of her black eyes” (*Cardinals* 21). She is frozen by fear and uses her silence and malaise as self-defence mechanisms. We can see that Mouse’s withdrawal from the external world is suggested by her problem of self-expression for in addition to her lack of articulation, she uses non-verbal ways to communicate.

Like Emecheta, Bessie Head employs the metaphor of “the shell” to describe Mouse’s social isolation. “The shell” serves as a refuge to Adah, Gwendolen and Mouse where the three characters have to stay apart from the social norms and prejudices that kill their self-esteem. It is a wall that separates Mouse from the rest of society. Johnny asks her to go out of that “shell” and face her world for the more she hides inside it, the more suffering she will endure: “You dumb clot”. He said violently: “Are you a part of life or not? The more you try to retreat, the more life is going to bash at you. Why don’t you get out of your ***shell*** and live! Why don’t you start living, you dolt!’[emphasis added](*Cardinals* 43). It is a warning to Mouse against the drawbacks of her isolation on her mental health and on her future. Desiree Lewis exposes the impact of isolation on the main characters’ well-being: “Mouse’s alienation from her harsh environment and her seeming difference prevent her from fulfilling her potential. Her negative insertion into society ensures that her well-being is thoroughly destroyed”(170). Her isolation deprives her of love and friendships and makes her appear as a dead person.

In addition to “the shell”, “the mask of dead” is another image employed in the novel to describe Mouse’s withdrawal. Johnny asks: “what makes you conceal

this aliveness behind a mask of death"(C*ardinals* 42), and in another context, he describes her as "dumb woman who never says a word. To all appearances, she is completely dead"(*Cardinals* 27). Mouse's isolation makes her miss the very essence of human existence which is "to live". She does not belong to the world of the living, for as "a dead" person, she doesn't have any contact with the others. Head demonstrates how social exclusion of individuals deprives them from their vitality, and confines them in a life of shadows as Johnny implores Mouse to come back from her world of the dead:

> You're just living the wrong way. You creep along through life in the shadows like a cat, carefully avoiding human contact. It's bound to mess you up. You lose the ability to respond to the normal human relationships of friendships and love. The only thing I am asking you to do is to find your way back and come out of the shadows. (*Cardinals* 90)

To get out of the shadows, Mouse must find the strength to build a self that was baffled by years of struggles against a repressive socio-cultural context that excludes and discriminates her. Her experience with writing and her meeting with Johnny are turning points in the long self-healing journey she went through.

The last character we intend to study in relation to the social manifestation of alienation is Elizabeth. Together with Mouse, she shares the same past of social exclusion on the basis of colour discrimination. She faces the same years of deprivation, undernourishment and a complete lack of love as she passed from one family to the other. The result of this alienation is withdrawal from her people as a first sign that leads later to her insanity.

Elizabeth has the first confrontation with the discriminatory social order when she is informed by the principal of her missionary school that her white insane mother has been locked up. This incident is the precursor of the novels' events since from that moment, Elizabeth's isolation from the external world starts.

As a child, the stigma of her mother as a mad woman initiates Elizabeth's isolation. She is sent to the detention room for any trouble caused at the mission

school. Indeed, the principal inflicts long periods of isolation on Elizabeth, for she is believed insane like her mother. Once Elizabeth struck a child during a quarrel and she had to be isolated from other children for a week as the principal ordered. Even the other children noticed the particular treatment of Elizabeth:

> The other children soon noticed something unusual about Elizabeth's isolation periods. They could fight and scratch and bite each other, but if she did likewise she was locked up. They took to kicking at her with deliberate malice as she sat in a corner reading a book.(A.Q.P 16)

Elizabeth's childhood is marked by solitude, which enhances her isolation in the future. She becomes silent, distant from the others, and prefers to spend her time reading in the library. The stigma of the "insane" and "coloured" imposed on her by her conformist society contributes to her withdrawal because she feels rejected; as the feminist critic Carol Davison contends: "confronted on all sides with such overwhelming sense of limitation, Elizabeth avoids social interaction and withdraws into herself"(Davison 21). Even in Botswana, Elizabeth experiences this isolation.

Indeed, Elizabeth lacks friends or relatives who could have helped her overcome her sense of unbelonging. No one was there to advise her, for example not to marry a dangerous gangster. Elizabeth is alone when she faces physical abuse and when she decides to run away with her child. It is her isolation that makes her decide to become a refugee in Botswana because she feels socially exiled in her own country and among her own people.

In Botswana, Elizabeth's isolation is perpetuated as a result of her failed integration into the Motabeng village community. She faces problems of integration in the rural life since she is not accustomed to it, as Head writes: "it was not a part of her life, so many aspects of village life escaped her"(A.Q.P 60). The society of the Motabeng village is described as a close and large community of relatives and it was more difficult for Elizabeth to integrate that close circle.

Bessie Head accentuates Elizabeth's isolation by the darkness of the village at night:

> At first, she found the pitch-black darkness of the Motabeng night terrifying. She had always lived in a town with street light shining outside the window…After a while she became more accustomed to the extreme dark and quite enjoyed blowing out the light and being swallowed up by the billowing darkness. (A.Q.P 21)

Gradually, Elizabeth gets used to isolation in her new social environment for she has been accustomed to this kind of life from her early age. Eugene, one of the main characters of the novel, observed her isolation: "You don't seem to get along with the local people" and he further warns her against the bad consequences of her isolation on her health "too much isolation isn't a good thing for anyone"(A.Q.P 56). Eugene's warning proves insidious as Elizabeth starts to show signs of psychological pathology that begins with her appreciation of social isolation. She comes even to enjoy being alone and distant from society which is the first step of her downfall into madness. She explains: "I like the general atmosphere because I don't care whether people like me or not. I am used to isolation"(A.Q.P 56). Indeed, Elizabeth's isolation takes her into an insane journey in which she discovers the horrors of the evil side of the human beings. The hellish experience is the only way to reconstruct Elizabeth's alienated self in order to get out of her isolation and find at last a place for her own in society.

I have demonstrated in this section that the social environment in which the main characters live employs a set of strategies to make its members conform to its system of norms and conventions. Stigma, labelling, moral harassment and rejection are among the tools that have been analysed in this part to show the correlation between such strategies and the social alienation of the main characters. The next step was to throw light on social alienation as a state and we have focused mainly on isolation and withdrawal. After the study of the main characters' reaction to the process of conformism imposed by stigma and rejection, we reached the conclusion that the four protagonists suffer from

isolation from the rest of society which becomes with time a self-defence mechanism to protect themselves. Through the metaphor of the shell, the writers reflected the walls built by the socially alienated characters to shield themselves against the extremely abusive and rigid norm systems. In the next chapter, the focus will be directed to another factor that led to the alienation of the protagonists, that is racism.

Chapter 2:

Race and The Alienated Self

a-Immigration, Second-Class Citizenship and Racial Alienation

This chapter aims to study alienation from the perspective of race. The four protagonists of our novels face racial discrimination in the different contexts they are represented by the authors Buchi Emecheta and Bessie Head. Their identity as black women is undoubtedly affected by their contact with the white community they live in whether in Britain or South Africa. The first part of this chapter deals with Buchi Emecheta's depiction of immigrants' life in Britain during the 1970s since both Adah and Gwendolen left their native lands to have a better future overseas. The critic Christine Sizemore explains that Emecheta's two literary works belong to the London novels that portray life in the city, but she equally holds that the writer brought a new perspective to the city novel by offering a "multicultural reality of the contemporary 'cosmopolis'" with an "ethnic diversity that have been only recently recognized as part of the British tradition"(Sizemore 368). In this respect, the author Maureen Duffy in her novel, *Londoners* (1983) uses the new ethnic voices as the "true Londoners"(Duffy 28). In fact, black women writers living in Britain are said to draw a more realistic image of London as a city with a multicultural fabric including immigrants from different countries raising at the same time questions such as race, ethnicity, immigration and citizenship.

There is no doubt that our understanding of Adah and Gwendolen as female characters living in London can be better achieved through the exploration of such issues to explain their alienation. To that end, I will start by giving some information about the blacks' presence in Britain in addition to some facts about the history of Africans and West Indians' immigration.

In an essay on the history of Blacks in Britain, the historian Folarin Shyllon traces back the origins of the blacks' presence and experience in Britain as he writes:

> Blacks have been brought, bought, recruited and invited to Britain for many centuries. Whenever whites have needed or wanted blacks in Britain as slaves, to fight their wars or meet labour demand in their industries, they have never hesitated to import them. In the era of slavery and mercantilism, blacks were brought to Britain as backwash from the African slave trade and a colonial system in the Americas whose production and trading economy made vast fortunes out of slave labour. In Britain itself, the Afro-Asian seamen in the mercantilist era made an important contribution to the maritime work force.(Shyllon 217)

The skilled black craftsmen and labourers made contributions to sectors of production, while others were engaged as domestics. In fact, during the 17th and 18th centuries, having black domestics, was the indicator of wealth and social position of their masters (Shyllon 204). Subsequently, in the Twentieth century, most blacks became part of the reserve of labour of British capitalism.

In order to better understand the notion of immigration in Emecheta's novels, we are going to focus on the historical context of black immigrants starting from post Second World War since both Adah and Gwendolen can be considered as late-wave immigrants who came to England after the 1950s. During the Second World War, large numbers of blacks were brought to Britain to join the army or work in the war industries. In her fiction, Emecheta has represented the participation of blacks in the World War and how they were abandoned by the army. In *The Bride Price*, after fighting with the Allied forces in Burma, Akunna's father got health problems and died soon after he returned to Nigeria.

Indeed, when the War ended, the blacks were no more needed by Britain. Post 1945 War saw what is known as the backwash where blacks in America, the West Indies and Africa, started to demand their rights. Having fought for Britain for two World Wars to secure democracy and freedom, black people became aware of the necessity to militate for their freedom and get rid of colonial oppression. After years of violence and suffering, many countries including Nigeria got their independence from European invaders. In *Second Class Citizen*, Emecheta describes these early immigrants who came to England to study and who realized that colonialism was soon to end:

> This group of men came in the late forties, when Nigeria was still a colony. Even under colonialism, they were men in the middle class strata of Nigerian society…these were men who were conversant with the going on in world politics, who knew that colonialism like the slave trade, would soon become too expensive for the colonial masters; that the outcome would be independence in the same way the slaves were freed, when it became too expensive to keep them. The final nail in the coffin was the independence of India. It would soon be their turn. Nigeria would soon become independent. (S.C.C 68)

After the 1945 War, the immigration rates increased. In fact, Britain's ethnic minority communities had grown steadily between 1945 and 1965 because of the high shortage in labour. People from Britain's former colonies in Africa, India and the Caribbean found little hope for work in their countries and waves of immigrants arrived in England. In *Second Class Citizen*, Emecheta explains how her country was ironically sending students to England in order to prepare them to become political leaders. However, many stayed in Britain to seek a better life and never returned home.

Indeed, education is one of the most important factors that motivated young Nigerians to immigrate to England. Adah, who represents Buchi Emecheta in the novel is constantly dreaming of carrying out her studies in London and has to struggle with her conservative parents-in-law who refuse to let her leave Nigeria and join her husband Francis who was preparing an accountancy degree there. In addition to education, Adah believes that England is the "promised land of success" that her father has always talked about. With a lot of irony, the critic Neerja Chand calls this dream of coming to England "the myth of European education preparing happiness in the homeland"(Chand 78). Emecheta equally uses the term "been-to" to describe those who have been to England and the way her Nigerian society perceives them as successful persons.

Nweze in *Second Class Citizen* is a character that represents the 'been-to' who came back from England with a law degree. He was warmly welcomed by the Ibuza women and men living in Lagos because they were fascinated by this educated man who had been to England which was considered as "heaven" for

them. From her childhood, Adah like all Nigerians learns to think of the United Kingdom as an idealized place where all dreams come true:

> The title "United Kingdom" when pronounced by Adah's father sounded so heavy, like the type of noise associated with bombs. It was so deep, so mysterious, that Adah's father always voiced it in hushed tones, wearing such a respectful expression as if he were speaking of "God's" Holist of holies. Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like heaven. (S.C.C. 9-10).

Similarly, England appears as a sacred place at the beginning of *Gwendolen.* Ironically, Gwendolen's father Winston refers to England as the "Moder Kontry". Like Adah, Gwendolen discovers the fascination and over idealization of her people about the UK when she is a little girl. Britain is described by Jamaicans as a "good place" and they all agreed that "anybody could be anything in England" (*Gwendolen* 10-44). In this respect, the critic Omar Sougou comments on the colonized people's mystification of England as the promised land:

> The journey to England is the fulfilment of a childhood dream resting on the myth of the glossy metropolis nurtured by the colonized people like her father. It is a pursuit of better economic opportunities and a quest to enjoy matrimony away from the shifting customs of her mother-land.(Sougou 42)

In fact, according to Omar Sougou, Gwendolen's father Winston Brillianton represents "the archetypal immigrant in the wake of the Big Migration, he has left the lean shacks of Jamaica for the 'Moder Kontry'"(42). We can understand that unlike Adah, the main motivation of Winston's immigration to England is economic and his people envy him for this big opportunity. Gwendolen dreams to leave Jamaica and join her parents in England that she considers as a place "where she could be herself- happy, trusting"(*Gwendolen* 39). England is seen then as a new start for the little girl far from the loneliness and hardships she went through especially after her traumatic experience with rape.

It is very interesting to note that Buchi Emecheta starts both novels with the same over idealization of Great Britain in the minds of both Nigerians and Jamaicans. With this "perfect" image of their future home, the two protagonists

begin their journey to England where all their assumptions about their people's preconceived ideas about life there will be swept away.

Before exploring the author's representation of the main characters' contact with the white community, it is important to explain the reasons for the blacks' fascination with Europe and life there. To better understand this idea, the works of Frantz Fanon especially *Black Skins, White Masks* in which he explores the black/white relations from a psychological perspective, can provide possible clarifications of the black female characters' environment.

In fact, Emecheta uses the terms "God" and "Moder kontry" to describe the way Nigerians and Jamaicans view England. Frantz Fanon resorts to the same words to talk about the "been-to" as he observes: "the Negro who knows the mother country is a demigod…Many of them, after stays length in metropolitan France, go home to be deified"(Fanon, *Black Skin* 10). Europe then, is the object of all fantasies in the black's unconscious as Fanon further states: "there is a kind of magic vault of distance, and the man who is leaving next week for France creates around himself a magic circle"(13). Europe becomes for the black man the saver that would drag him out of the pit in which he thinks he lives:

> There is a psychological phenomenon that consists in the belief that the world will open to the extent to which frontiers are broken down. Imprisoned in his island, lost in an atmosphere that offers not the slightest outlet, the Negro breathes in this appeal of Europe like pure air.(11)

As stated earlier, many black immigrants moved to England to improve their financial situation as it is the case of Gwendolen's family. Adah, on the other hand, dreams of a better education and a certain freedom from the customs of her Nigerian society that controlled her life. According to Fanon, such motivations do not totally justify the black man's mystification of Europe. For him, the reason is much deeper than the mere desire to ameliorate one's living conditions. As a psychiatrist, Fanon made extensive studies of the black's psyche in relation to the way he perceives, identifies and relates himself to the whites.

Fanon relates the black man's over idealization of the European civilization to a long history of degradation, abuse, exploitation and humiliation conducted by the whites against the black race through different systems, including slavery, colonialism, Apartheid, and imperialism. The Westerners had always reduced the black culture and civilization to barbarism as Fanon states: “when it comes to the case of the Negro,…he has no culture, no civilisation, no ‘long historical past’”(21). He further explains how “this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivizing him, decivilizing him”(20) contributed to these stereotypes of the black man’s inferiority.

As opposed to the black man, the white embodies civilisation, progress, and refinement, creating thus a dichotomy of superior/inferior that would characterise the black/white relation. Therefore, according to Fanon, the black develops an inferiority complex that could explain his adulation of Western culture: “the feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the Europeans’ feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it out right: it is the racist who creates his inferior”(69). The myth of the white man’s superiority becomes part of the “black collective unconscious” that is constructed from the black’s early age. All that he sees around him from movies, cartoons, magazines, and newspaper (made by the whites for the whites) consecrate the inferiority of the black.

The black man then internalises the negative images preconceived by the whites and ends up believing in his own inferiority. This leads to what Fanon calls “cultural alienation” through which, the black despises his origins, his blackness, his language and identity when unconsciously, the white man becomes the model to follow. Hence, the black man wears the white mask and dreams not only to resemble white, but also to turn magically white.

For the main characters of Emecheta’s novels, this process of cultural alienation occurs in their childhood. In fact, unconsciously, the little girls

internalise the established myth that England is the place to be. Both novels describe their alienation which is revealed when they come into contact with the white community in England where many of their preconceived ideas about the bright life they would have proved to be false. In this respect, using Fanon's theory will help us throw light on the cultural alienation of the women protagonists and demonstrate the impact of racial discrimination on their identity.

With a lot of irony, Emecheta deconstructs the myth of the white's superiority from the very first moments of the protagonists' arrival to Britain. When she was in Jamaica, England symbolised for Gwendolen warmth and protection as she missed the love of her parents who left her with her grandmother. In contrast to most immigrants who dream to get a better life, Gwendolen's quest is not economic as Omar Sougou suggests when he evokes her journey to England:

> In *Gwendolen*, Emecheta constructs an eponymous heroine whose journey to and expectations in the mother country as asymmetrical to those of her parents, because, while their quest is economic hers is psychological and emotional. It is a search for home, security and warmth, guaranteed by reunion with both her parents.(Sougou 201)

Indeed, for Gwendolen England becomes "home" instead of her village, Granville, because for her the notion of home is related to the care and love of her family which she has lost in Jamaica. Her native country is rather associated with abandonment, solitude, sexual repressed feelings, but most importantly insecurity. This reversal of places creates in her a confused sense of belonging where she faces difficulties to define the notion of home: is it Jamaica, her country of birth where she spends her early childhood or England, the new parents' adopted home?

Gwendolen arrives in England on a "wild windy October morning" (*Gwendolen* 45) which contrasts with the warm shining weather in Jamaica. The choice of the writer for this specific weather is to reinforce an atmosphere of coldness that stands for the indifference and distance of the British people vis à vis immigrants.

Gwendolen confirms this attitude of the host country after she spends some days there: “everything and everybody has a clean, cold, greying air about them”(*Gwendolen* 48). Yet and in spite of this cold welcome that London offers to the little Gwendolen, she is happy to be there because the most important fact is the reunion with her parents

In *Second Class Citizen*, the main character’s arrival in England is more enhanced than in *Gwendolen* as Emecheta entitles the second chapter of her novel, “Cold Welcome” to convey the illusions that Adah has about this country. Emecheta writes:

> England gave Adah a cold welcome. The welcome was particularly cold because only a few days previously they had been enjoying bright and cheerful welcomes from ports like Takoradi, Free Town and Las Palmas… Liverpool was grey, smoky and looked inhabited by humans…But if, as people said, there was plenty of money in England, why then did the natives give their visitors this poor cold welcome?(S.C.C 32)

The same stylistic device used by Emecheta in *Gwendolen* is employed in *Second Class Citizen* to create a cold atmosphere reflecting the feeling of the whites’ distance as Adah states: “they looked remote, happy in an aloof way, but determined to keep their distance”(S.C.C 23). As immigrants, both Adah and Gwendolen have the same impression of being unwelcome in their dreamland and this feeling is suggestive of the life they will have there. Adah’s disillusion increases when she is taken by her husband to their new house. She is shocked at the way houses are attached to one another with no yards and the way they look like “monasteries”. Ironically, Adah uses the term monastery to describe the single room she has to share with her children and husband, a description that comes to confirm the first impression she has about her future in London which does not seem to be bright.

Adah then starts to realize that the élite status she enjoyed in Nigeria thanks to her job, is to disappear in a country like England. As an immigrant from Africa, she is allowed only a “second-class citizenship” no matter what degree of

education she has as her husband observes: “You must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos you may be a million publicity officers for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you have hundreds of servants; you may be living like an élite, but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen”(S.C.C. 35). This statement is very important for it introduces for the first time the notion of citizenship that constitutes the leading theme of the novel as the title suggests.

We should start by exploring the concept of citizenship and relate it to the notion of race in the novels in order to understand the real status of Gwendolen and Adah in the British society. In fact, it should be stressed that not only are Adah and Gwendolen foreigners coming from different countries, which makes their integration into the British society difficult, but also being black further complicates the situation because of the racism that characterized England at that time. For this reason, citizenship, immigration and racism are tightly linked to each other and have to be studied together to explain the protagonists’ alienation. In this respect, commenting on the concept of citizenship and its relation to immigration, Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson write:

> Becoming a citizen is clearly of crucial importance to an immigrant but gaining formal access to citizenship symbolized by getting the passport of the country of residence is only one aspect of this. Equally important is the extent to which people belonging to distinct groups of the population, actually achieve substantial citizenship, that is, equal chances of participation in various areas of society, such as politics, work, welfare systems and the cultural relations. (Castles and Davidson 84)

The passage above distinguishes between “citizenship” provided by the passport given to immigrants when they reside in a specific country and “substantial citizenship” that guarantees equal rights for immigrants with the rest of the society. This brings us to a crucial point which is the difficulty to define “citizenship”. In fact, citizenship is a slippery concept but one of the most common definitions is the one provided by the famous British sociologist Thomas Humphrey Marshall who states: “citizenship is a status bestowed on those who

are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed"(Marshall 28-29).

The key elements in Marshall's definition of citizenship are: full membership of a community, the rights, the duties of a citizen and finally equality between all citizens. In our analysis of this concept , we will apply the Marshall model by looking for these elements in Emecheta's representation of the female immigrant characters that is: whether Adah and Gwendolen are full members of the British society, whether they enjoy the same rights and perform the same duties then finally, if they are subject to equal treatment with the rest of the white community.

As demonstrated earlier, the white British community is described as a distant, closed and cold one by Emecheta. Both Gwendolen and Adah face difficulties to integrate the British society because of cultural differences. Gwendolen notices the indifference of the white mothers on her first school day when she is waiting with her mother for the gate to open:

> Gwendolen noticed that her mother did not speak to other mothers and they did not talk to her. They did not even give her a look. They all behaved as if the family was not there. Everybody seemed to be standing in their little vacant islands, not touching, not talking, just waiting for the gate to open.(*Gwendolen* 59)

We can observe that Gwendolen and her family who are not used to this social distance feel isolated by the rest of the white community because of their race. Gwendolen's mother Sonia has tried to build friendships with those mothers, but she was placated by the problem of language barrier: "even sometimes ago when Sonia used to go out of her way to say a breezy 'Go….marning all', they used to ask her what she meant. Sonia became wise now. She did not talk to them and they did not talk to her"(Gwendolen 61). Indeed, Sonia fails to feel part of the mothers' group because of their indifference, rejection and remoteness. The only friend Sonia has is Mrs. Odowis, a Nigerian woman living in London. It is worth

to note that in spite of her education and good mastery of English compared with Sonia, Mrs Odowis faces the same indifferent attitude of the whites who pretend not to see them as Emecheta observes:

> Though she'd lived in England for over four years, yet she still could not cope with the type of solid wall of indifference in which people look past you, or on top of your head, or stare at your shoes, actually look beyond you so as not to look at your face, all of which was to tell you that as far as they were concerned you were not there. (Gwendolen 60)

The "wall" of racial discrimination that separates the whites from the blacks hinders any kind of integration into the white community which prevents immigrants from full citizenship if we follow Marshall's definition. Sonia suffers from a problem of communication because she does not speak English. In fact, language is one of the problems that face immigrants when they try to tie links with the whites. Emecheta exposes this issue especially in *Gwendolen* where Winston, Sonia and the little Gwendolen are confronted to the language barrier that causes their humiliation whenever they communicate with others. Sonia, for example, is made to repeat herself several times by the white mothers so she clamped her lips whenever they were outside. The feeling of isolation is thus enhanced by the lack of mastery of the English language. If Sonia prefers to remain silent, Winston on the other hand stammers whenever he speaks to the whites. His stammering is a psychological reaction to his stress, shame and discomfort because he knows that he is constantly judged by the whites for not using English properly.

In a section entitled "The Colonized and Language" in *Black Skins, White Masks,* Fanon explains the importance of adopting the white man's language as a way for a better assimilation in the western world:

> [When the black] finds himself face to face with the language of the civilized nation; that is the culture of the mother country, the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounced his blackness, his jungle. (Fanon, *Black Skin* 9)

Language becomes an instrument that facilitates the black's integration into the white community. As stated earlier, "the been-to" is almost deified after being in contact with the western culture and his godlike position is measured by the extent to which he speaks the language of the whites. Fanon explains how the black who returns home pushes the snobbishness to the extreme by pretending that he forgets his mother tongue. He further explains how the black man understands the power that his mastery of the white language gives: "in any group of young men in the Antilles the one who expresses himself well, who has mastered the language, is ornately feared; keep an eye on that one, he is almost white. In France one says: 'He talks like a book'…'He talks like a white man'"(11). Sonia and Winston cannot talk "like a white man" or be "almost white" which means that they cannot feel part of the community. They prefer then to live on the margin of society and have friendships only with blacks they could communicate with. This creates in them a complex of being inferior to the whites and the stammering of Winston in addition to Sonia's social isolation are psychological states of alienation as explained in the first chapter.

Gwendolen's alienation from the British society is even more severe than that of her parents. If Sonia and Winston have the choice to withdraw from the community to avoid humiliation, Gwendolen is forced to interact daily with the whites at school. It should be noted also that Gwendolen is a little child and she may lack the adults' mechanisms of self-defence. First, she does not really understand the indifference of the white community towards immigrants and second, she does not know how to react to the racist attitudes of her classmates and teachers.

Gwendolen's first step towards alienation occurs even before she moves to England. In fact, Emecheta reflects Gwendolen's identity crisis through her name which suggests the liminal situation she will face. at the beginning of the novel, we learn that Gwendolen's Jamaican name is June-June, however, "she was christened. Gwendolen. But her Mammy could not pronounce it, neither her

Daddy nor his people"(Gwendolen 9). The ambiguity in Gwendolen's name is a sign that predicts the difficulty she will face to define herself. The western name is to replace her Jamaican name which suggests a duality in her identity that is intensified when she comes into contact with the western culture.

When Gwendolen arrives in London, the process of alienation is triggered as the little June-June hears different pronunciations given to her Christian Western name. Her mother Sonia calls her 'Grandalle' when she introduces her to Mr.Aliyu, the tenant of their house in London. In his turn, Mr.Aliyu names her 'Grandalew' and this adds confusion to June-June who does not know how to pronounce it. Gwendolen realizes that the first step to help her integrate the English community is to learn her name.

With a lot of irony, Gwendolen hears the right pronunciation of her name from her white teacher; this may suggest that Gwendolen's new identity is given to her by the whites and this fact reinforces the idea of an "imposed" self-definition according to the English cultural standards. June-June with its Jamaican origin has to disappear and leave place to the English Gwendolen as a condition for a possible integration in the new country. At the end of her first school day, Gwendolen at last takes hold of her new identity when she learns her name. She observes: "My name not June-June. My name is Gwendolen, or Gwen. Don't call me June-June no more"(*Gwendolen* 79). By changing her name, she is changing an identity which may suggest that one way for the immigrant to be part of the host society is to drop his/her original identity and adopt a new one forged by the white community. However, Emecheta demonstrates that this cut with the native culture is impossible because the immigrant lives in a state of in-betweeness in which he has to adopt the new cultural and social standards of the country and this often occurs at the expense of his native values. The liminal situation is responsible for the alienation of the immigrant as it is the case of Gwendolen and Adah.

For Adah, being part of the white community in London is much more complex than for Gwendolen. Indeed, Gwendolen arrives IN England as a child while Adah is already a mature woman with two children. Her identity is fully constructed by the customs, norms and values of her African culture while Gwendolen's is still in the shaping. Consequently, adaptation seems to be more difficult for Adah. Gwendolen can be considered as a second-generation immigrant that generally better integrates the host country.

Unlike Sonia and Winston, Adah does not have problems communicating properly in English. She is educated and soon after her arrival gets a job in a library. Paradoxically, Adah is a very lonely woman who fails to have friends at her work place. Commenting on her relationships at work, the critic Neerja Chand says: "Her colleagues at the Finchley library provide a limited friendship, but Adah recognizes too many differences between them and herself to find a real community. Adah always feels she is an outsider, holding back, listening and observing uncommittedly"(Chand 79). Similarly with Mrs. Odowis in *Gwendolen*, Adah feels the indifference of the whites around her and prefers to keep her problems for herself.

Language appears also in *Second Class Citizen* as a way of adjustment with the new English environment in which the characters evolve. Adah speaks correct English, yet once she opens her mouth, she is immediately recognized as a foreigner because of her accent and the academic way she uses. Language functions as an indicator of her black origins. Emecheta dramatizes the racist attitude of some whites towards Adah as a black woman in a very symbolic scene when she is looking for a house. Because of her colour, Adah fails to find a house. After she visits many houses with "No Coloured" sign, she figures out a trick to get an appointment with a white woman owning a decaying house. Adah finds a strategy to get accepted in the white community by changing her voice thinking that that would deceive the white lady. Adah hoped that the white tenant would change her mind when she will see that Adah is an educated woman with a

respected job: “Adah did not tell Francis that she had held her nose when talking to the woman, neither did she tell that she chose nine o’clock because it would be dark and the woman might not realize in time that they were black” (S.C.C 65). The couple gets an appointment with the old lady which suggests that Adah has to overcome the language obstacle to have contact with the whites by hiding her accent. In *Gwendolen*, Mrs. Odowis who realizes the whites’ distance, resorts to another strategy to interact with them:

> …And as a child begging to be noticed [Mrs. Odowis] had invariably caught herself talking in a rather exuberant way, a way which she hated herself for it afterwards and had to hold herself very tight to prevent her exploding and attacking those who with their uncaring attitude were reducing her to the level of a child begging for attention. (*Gwendolen* 60)

This passage suggests the feeling of alienation experienced by Mrs. Odowis because of her status as a black woman immigrant. She suffers from a complex of inferiority caused by the whites’ coldness and haughtiness which reduces her to a mere child trying to remain in the good grace of his/her parents. Fanon explains this psychological impact of racism on the black self as follows:

> When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If the psychic structure is weak one observes a collapse of the Ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person. The goal of his behaviour with the Other (in the guise of the white man, for the Other can give him worth. That is on the ethical level: self-esteem.(Fanon, *Black Skin* 119)

This statement is very important for it demonstrates how the alienation of black immigrants takes place once they lose their self-esteem as they are reduced by the whites. They are marginalized and remain total strangers to the white culture because “in Britain the coloured man is not seen as a different sort of being but as the furthest removed strangers- the archetypal stranger”(Banton 84). Mrs. Odowis is not the only character who shows “weak psychic structure” and loses her “self-esteem” in the presence of the whites. Adah has also ambiguous feelings about her inferior status as a black woman. She had a rather comfortable situation in Nigeria where she enjoyed middle-class status and this makes it more

difficult for her to accept the "second-class" position imposed on her by the British system.

Indeed, Adah's experience shows how the process of racial alienation occurs gradually, whereas Francis accepts straightway his inferiority as a fact. Using Fanon's words, we can state that Adah's "psychic structure" is stronger than the other black Nigerians who around her for she refuses to let her superego be destroyed by the whites' proclaimed superiority. She vacillates between acceptance of some discriminating practices for the sake of surviving, and claiming her equality with the rest of the white community. Emecheta describes her situation as follows:

> This was where she differed from Francis and the others. They believed that one had to start with the inferior and stay there, because being black meant being inferior. Well, Adah did not get believe that holly, but what she did know was that being regarded as inferior had a psychological effect on her. The result was that she started to act in the way expected of her because she was still new in England, but after a while, she was not going to accept it from anymore. She was going to regard herself as equal of any white. (S.C.C 61).

We may understand that Adah is aware of her inferior status as a black woman in London and one of her strategies to survive is to act in accordance with the position given to her by the white community. What makes her different is her awareness of the minor status she has as a black woman. However, she has never denied the devastating impact of this discrimination on her psyche although she tries hard to resist its humiliating and degrading effects.

Indeed, racial discrimination and lack of integration in the British society have a curious psychological effect on her. Whenever she goes into big clothes stores, she would automatically direct her attention to the soiled and discarded items even if she had enough money. Adah appears in this scene as a typical alienated character who is in conflict with herself. Adah's self-esteem is severely shaken to the extent that she comes to believe in her own inferiority as a second-class citizen. We may think that she internalizes the norms set by the white community that the blacks can afford only cheap and used clothes regardless of their financial

situation. However, scenes like this are to be contrasted with the passage mentioned above where Adah claims her rights to be treated as a full citizen and this reinforces the idea of the ambivalence Adah lives. The feminist critic Ashley Dawson comments on Adah's refusal of her low status in the British society: "…her refusal to internalize racist British attitudes is also a crucial factor in her solitude. If other black Britons are willing to settle for second-class citizenship, Adah kicks valiantly against this designation"(Dawson 63).

Because of the inherent racism in England, Adah cannot be part of the white community. In this sense, she is not considered as a British citizen following Marshall's model that sets the integration in the community as the first condition to have access to full citizenship. The term second-class citizen seems to correspond better to her situation which is equally the case of Gwendolen who has never felt that she belongs to the white people. This feeling of rejection leads to the cultural alienation from a society that marginalises them because they are black.

Like Adah, Gwendolen fails to find a place among the whites and her experience at school will enhance her feeling of alienation. She is a second-generation immigrant whose parents try to raise her according to the British standards in order to offer her a better chance to fit into her new environment. Sonia and Winston hope to make of Gwendolen a duplicate of white children and this desire to make her more "English" emanates from their feeling of inferiority as they believe that the more Gwendolen resembles the whites, the more likely she will have a better situation. This process starts by giving her an English name that she fails to pronounce and she is encouraged to change her clothes style by wearing dull colours like white girls of her age.

Gwendolen is also sent to school to acquire the English language and education in order to be better equipped to integrate her new society. However, her schooling turns out to be a traumatic experience where she comes face to face

with racism. This point will be developed in the next pages when dealing with immigrants' rights. In addition to schools, the church is another place where Gwendolen realizes her marginalized status as a black girl when she notices that her family is being looked down upon by most people there. She has great expectations when she first attends the church service as she hopes that religion will at last offer her the cheerful welcome in a place where all people are supposed to be equal regardless of their origin, colour or social status. To her disillusion, Gwendolen finds the same distance and discriminating gaze in the church with a slight difference which is hypocrisy: "After the church service the Preacher stood at the door and shook their hands and smiled only with his mouth, whilst the rest of his face remained rigid"(Gwendolen 68). The Preacher who is a white man embodies then the racist ideology of his society with his hypocritical smile.

Adah had the same impression of the cheerless and cold atmosphere of English churches which she describes as "big grey buildings…very cold, full of rows and rows of empty chairs." And it takes her years to "erase the image of the Nigerian church [that] usually had a festive air"(S.C.C 124). Going to the church on Sunday in Jamaica is a joyful, vivid and warm event that Gwendolen used to wait for with impatience. In England the experience is different; she finds it boring, cold and uncomfortable.

Religion is used in both novels to reflect the cultural differences between the black and white's approaches to Christianity. It confirms the lack of integration in the white community even in places like the church which is supposed to gather all origins and races of the same religion. Frantz Fanon comments on the racist beliefs of some western Christians who state it overtly: "We are the chosen people. Look at the colour of our skin, the others are black or yellow that is because of their sins"(Fanon, *Black Skins* 18). They believe that the segregation between whites and blacks on earth will be continued in heaven. Because of such discrimination, that is manifest even in the house of God, fear starts to creep into

the heart of Gwendolen. She apprehends the white world in which she lives now and feels isolated. Her dreams of security and warmth begin to fade away when she comes close to the English society.

In this sense, Emecheta's writings answer some feminists who work on the issue of immigration such as Pragna Patel, Nira Yuval-Davies and Anna Ward. They call for the urgent denunciation of the racist oppression that victimizes black women immigrants, in addition to the gender bias that characterises African culture. Pragna Patel, for example, explains how "in the 1970's, the discourses available with wider British feminist movement at that time were devoid of an understanding of race and racism as manifested in the lives of black people"(Patel 37-38). Emecheta then demonstrates that racial discrimination is a reality and it is woven together with gender inequality to oppress black women. Hence, there is a necessity to study race relations that have been ignored by western feminism as the feminist bell hooks observes:

> In addition to gender, women status should also be linked to class discrimination as racism abounds in the writings of white feminists, reinforcing that women will bound politically across ethnic and racial boundaries. Past feminists' refusal to draw attention to and attack racial hierarchies suppressed the link between race and class.(hooks 34)

Indeed, class hierarchies are tightly linked to the racist codes of Britain. As we can see in *Second Class Citizen* and *Gwendolen*, the black immigrants belong to the working poor class because of their race no matter what their competences, educational level or financial situations may be. They hold a second-class position in Britain and cannot be full citizens no matter how successful they are in their occupations. The class division here is more cultural and social than economic since Adah, for instance, has the criteria of a "first-class" citizen with her education and job, yet she remains in the "second-class" sphere due to her African origins.

We can further explore the main characters' second-class citizenship by considering Marshall's second condition which is the equal access to rights among

all the members of the same country. Marshall divides the rights of a citizen into three elements: civil, political and social. The civil rights include: the freedom and inviolability of the person, the freedom of expression and religion, the equality before the law and the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of gender, origins, race, language or beliefs. In this respect, Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson hold:

> These rights are in principle to every one present in the country, whatever their citizenship or residence status. Even visitors passing through a democratic country enjoy protection. However, things are not always as clear cut in practice; minorities often do not enjoy genuine equality before the law.(Castles and Davidson 106)

The main problems the characters face in the novels are inequality and discrimination regarding their rights. In fact, although all immigrants are supposed to share the same civil rights, we can notice that these rights are often violated by institutions.

As an example, we can mention Gwendolen's mother Sonia who is victim of the racism of an institution that represents the state. She is humiliated by the immigration officers when she returns to Britain after a long stay in Jamaica. Although Sonia has all the legal rights as a full citizen, she is victim of discrimination by the officers because of her black origins. The immigration officer noticing her vulnerability, asked her to wait.

In one of the most effective scenes, Emecheta subtly describes the racist attitude of a white woman officer who degrades Sonia and humiliates her by making wicked jokes on her stockings: "'You should not tie them with a string at the top of your knee. Your skirt is too short and it shows. You see, if you don't mind my saying so, I can't help seeing the string'. Her voice had that condescending candy tone used by the vulgar to address the afflicted"(*Gwendolen* 159). This episode demonstrates the psychological impact of racial discrimination on Sonia who is humiliated and her self-esteem is shuttered down by the white woman who represents the British authority. Her

alienation is manifest through her fear from the whites although she has equal rights with that officer. Sonia is paralysed and fails to react to such treatment. Instead, she laughs nervously at the jokes to hinder her degradation, Emecheta shows the harm this traumatizing experience did to Sonia which “makes her feel small and stupid; to make her retreat into greater sense of insecurity”(Gwendolen 160).

In this scene, we can see the gap between the official laws made by the state to protect the rights of all its citizens including immigrants and their loose application in every day experiences. After this abuse of power of the immigration officer, withdrawal seems to be the only refuge Sonia can resort to in order to protect herself from the harmful racist world in which she lives. Sonia is constructed by Emecheta as another example of the alienated character who fails to find a place for herself in a discriminatory community. She is reduced to a role of ignorance and stupidity, and this exemplifies this prejudiced view about the black community in the Europe of the 1950s.

As shown by Fanon, the blacks are seen as children by the whites. The latter observes: “I am not at all exaggerating. A white man addressing a Negro behaves exactly like an adult with a child and starts smirking, whispering, patronizing, and cozening. It is not one white man I have watched, but hundreds”(Fanon, Black Skin 19). In fact, this description of Fanon corresponds to Sonia’s interview with the white woman officer and adopts the latter’s patronizing attitude forwards her.

In addition to the civil rights which are violated in day to day experiences because of racial discrimination, the immigrants are supposed to enjoy political rights that include: the right to vote and to stand for office at the various levels of government, freedom of assembly and association and freedom of information. Although we are not going to deal with the political side of

citizenship as it is not reflected in the novels, it is evident that the immigrants are not as politically active as the white British citizens.

Our main concern, however, is to deal with the social rights of citizens since as a sociologist, Emecheta laid more emphasis on the aspect of immigrants' life in both novels. In fact, social rights are the most controversial facets of citizenship especially for ethnic minorities. Social rights may include vital sectors such as housing, work, healthcare and education which are essential to the well-being of citizens. This brings us to ask some questions about the minimum standards in education, housing and work, and who decides about these social standards. The difficulty comes also from the idea of equality since it contradicts with capitalist ideology of most European countries including Britain that is based on inequality of wealth and income.

Among the social rights we can mention are the right to work, equal opportunities (education, labour market…etc.,), an entitlement to health services, welfare benefits and social services in the case of unemployment or inability to work and an entitlement to a certain standard of education. These rights were presented in Britain as part of what is known as the Keynesian model that came in the post-1945 boom when large flows of immigrants were brought to England to answer the labour demand. It lasted from the 1940s to the mid-1970s to answer Marshall's call for minimum economic and social standards to secure citizenship. The Keynesian social model aimed at providing and asserting secure-working class loyalty during Second World War and the Cold War (Castles and Davidson 111). One of the most important outcomes of the model was the welfare system that can be defined as follows:

> Prior to the welfare system, large sections of the population lived in conditions of absolute poverty, their incomes being inadequate to meet basic survival needs and to provide for old age…the post war trend of full employment and improved welfare meant higher living standards for a great majority of the population. It was the task of the welfare state to provide income support, housing, health services and education to guarantee social citizenship for all.(111)

The welfare system is denounced by Buchi Emecheta as racist towards black immigrants. It did not secure the same social rights as it claims to minority ethnic groups. In fact, she demonstrates through her literary works that the black immigrants suffered from discrimination concerning their access to decent accommodation, good health care services and education. In this respect, the feminist critic Ashley Dawson holds that her novels "indicate the institutional structure of social citizenship in Britain by documenting the inequalities to access to welfare rights experienced by diasporic subjects"(Dawson 89). Indeed, Emecheta is eager to point out the clear disparity between the white population and immigrants in relation to social rights.

The first anomaly that Emecheta spots concerns her housing. In fact, one of the earliest disillusions of Adah when she reaches the "promised land" occurs after she sees the tiny room she has to live in with her family. She is horrified at the gloomy aspect of the building in which she has to share a room with other Nigerian families. Her husband Francis exposes the situation of diasporic immigrants who have to accept such miserable accommodation:

> You see accommodation is very short in London, especially for black people with children. Everybody is coming to London; the West Indians, the Pakistanis and even the Indians, so that African students are usually grouped together with them. We are all blacks, all coloureds, and the only houses we can get are horrors like these.(S.C.C 34)

It is important to note how Francis comes to accept the low status he has as an immigrant and feels lucky to live in such "horrors". It reflects also the realities of racism in relation to immigrants who can afford only low standard houses. Adah described the nightmare she had to go through when she was living in a building with steep stairs considered too dangerous for the children who were not allowed to go out. The room was so small that after a long day's work, the pregnant Adah did not even have enough space to sleep and she had to squeeze with her babies in the settee. For those reasons, Adah refuses to stay in that room among a Nigerian community that rejects her because of her education and "white man"

job at the library. She decides to move to a more convenient dwelling especially as her family is getting larger with the coming of her third child.

However, Adah is going to live one of the most traumatic experiences of her life when she starts her house hunting. She is placated by a severe racism that denies her the right to decent accommodation because she is black. As we have already mentioned, Adah has to disguise her voice to get an interview with an old lady who owns a decaying house. The feminist critic Ashley Dawson comments on this scene: “Her search for housing exposes her to the fear and bigotry with which many Britons reached to the postcolonial immigrants”(Dawson 105). In fact, this bigotry is expressed in the novel through the notice “Sorry, no coloureds” that Adah reads on almost all shop windows. This makes her come face to face with a new reality she has never considered before in Nigeria; to be black means something to be ashamed of in a country like England. Indeed, Adah has encountered whites before when she was at home, but for the first time in her life, she is not treated as a human being because of her colour.

Adah is doubly alienated; as we have seen in the last chapter, she is victim of gender norms of her traditional Nigerian society that rejects her because of her lack of conformity. She is educated, and has a good job and she dares to stand against her community both in Lagos and in London. Here again, she faces rejection and a severe sense of lack of integration not because of gender bias but rather because of her race. In this sense, we may claim that Adah represents Emecheta’s vision of feminism that denounces both gender and race as factors responsible for the low status of African women.

After a lot of attempts, Adah gets an appointment with the white lady in one of the most significant scenes of the novel. The meeting is at nine o’clock and Adah “hopes if only they could change their faces; just until the first rent had been paid”(S.C.C 65). This tragicomic scene reflects the deep alienation of the protagonist who has to repudiate her own race for the sake of getting a roof

overheaded. The high standards she has enjoyed in Lagos are revised to the lowest as she realizes that “the most insalubrious the place was, the more likely the landlady would be to take blacks”(S.C.C 65). Because of her new condition as an immigrant, Adah is now reduced to expect “inferior things” out of helplessness.

Indeed, the decaying house she goes to visit with Francis is situated in an area likened to an unkempt cemetery. This description contradicts the one made by Adah on her arrival about a white English neighbourhood with a cheerful set of well-kept Edwardian terraced houses with beautifully tended front gardens. The gap between the two races is made clear for such bright and tidy neighbourhood is for the well-off whites while black immigrants can afford only ruins.

In the same scope, and after many surveys conducted by the sociologist Micheal Banton about the issue of immigration and housing in Britain during the 1970s, the conclusion was that most Britons preferred not to be too closely involved with immigrants and opted for a separation in housing districts to avoid interaction with them. Their arguments were the following:

> Some people thought separate accommodation was in the immigrants’ own interest as they were happier together and were protected from some of the unfriendliness of the whites; whereas the majority favoured segregation in the interest of the white population as they thought it would avoid trouble, and because they would not have wished to have coloured lodgers in their home.(Banton 86)

Segregation in housing emanated then from the whites’ wish not to mix with the coloureds and this led to injustice regarding immigrants’ right for housing. Adah and Francis are victims of the white tenants’ refusal to lodge blacks represented by the old lady who is horrified when she discovers that the woman she has talked to on the phone is black. Emecheta builds up a very strong scene where the white lady’s reaction when she meets the couple summarizes the whites’ racism concerning black immigrants. The old woman is caught by an “epileptic seizure”

and almost falls down with horror at the sight of the two blacks in front of the door:

> At first Adah thought the woman was about to have an epileptic seizure. As she opened the door, the woman clutched at her throat with one hand, her little mouth opening and closing as if gasping for air, and her bright kitten like eyes dilated to her fullest extent…that voice telling them how she was very sorry, the rooms had just gone. (S.C.C 65)

The landlady corresponds to what Fanon calls the Negrophobic and her anxiety when she encounters the couple reflects her fear from the black race. Explaining such behaviour, Fanon writes: "The Negro is a negrophobic object, a stimulus of anxiety"(Fanon, *Black Skin* 151). He relates this fear of the black to the stereotypes vehicled by western thought about the jungle state and primitiveness of the blacks. Fanon gives the example of a white patient who develops Negrophobia after reading a book entitled *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes*:"I tried to demonstrate the irrationality of her position.., I added that, this was not a case of black vengeance, as the title of the book might seem to imply because the author was a white man,…The young woman did not want listening"(123). He further gives the example of a horrified little white girl sitting in the train in front of a black man. She clings to her mother out of fear screaming out at the sight of the "Negro". Fanon has himself experienced the negrophobic behaviour of the whites in the train when two seats were left empty near him because the whites refused to sit next to him. He writes: "It was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. In the train, I was given not one but two, three places"(84).

The white lady's fear from Adah makes her feel alienated for the first time from the world in which she lives. She has never experienced rejection in this manner and she finally confirms that "they were unsuitable for a half derelict and probably condemned house with creaky stairs. Just because they were blacks?"(S.C.C 66). Adah's self-esteem is wounded and this rejection is lived as a trauma, the trauma of being a stranger, an alien to a group on the basis of colour

difference. This experience is a turning point in the development of Adah's identity as she realizes that the society which she has dreamt to live in is governed by racism. Unconsciously, her defence mechanism is triggered as she withdraws to the shell she had built when she was living in Nigeria to face the injustice of her African patriarchal traditions. This aspect is to be examined in the last chapter.

Furthermore, the problem of integration Adah and Gwendolen face can be related to the very definition of the British community made by the British people themselves. As stated earlier, the coming of waves of immigrants to Britain after the Second World War altered the very fabric of society. The fact that the British community is no more exclusively made of white English people became a reality to be faced and there was a necessity to redefine and reconsider what is meant by a British community. The feminist Nira Yuval-Davis points out the problematic notion of community in Britain which is, according to her, used to "avoid identifying citizenship in its wide social definition". She claims that the definition of community as "an organic wholeness, a natural social unit where one can either belong to it or not" assumes "a given collectivity whose boundaries, structures and norms are the result of constant processes of struggles and negotiations or more general social developments"(Yuval-Davis 13). Yuval-Davis seems to denounce the rigid definition of a community that is frozen in a given historical period and fails to redefine its boundaries following the realities of the time; in such realities, racism and conservatism should be banned.

The white society described by Emecheta in the novels refuses to recognise the inevitable reality that its composition cannot stay static and it has to accept that immigrants from different regions and races of the world are becoming part and parcel of it. Yuval Davies further writes: "Any dynamic notion of citizenship must start the processes which construct the collectivity and not just assume it. It should address, for example, questions of race and immigration, the so-called

cultural needs of members of the collectivity and the national self-determination"(13-14).

The white lady in *Second Class Citizen* represents the white collectivity that lacks the lucidity to consider that the British society is changing and that the blacks cannot be left on its margin. Because of racist behaviours like that of the white tenant, the only accommodation Adah could afford after a long search is a two-room apartment in a decaying building owned by a Nigerian man, Mr.Noble. The description of the house given by Emecheta is very effective in that it conveys the second-class status of Adah. She compares it to houses of a white neighbourhood next to her future home as follows:

> As was expected, Mr.Noble's humble adobe was situated in the middle of the gloomy part…there was a mighty building curving right into the middle of the street, shuttering away the cheerful side from the gloomy one, as if it were determined to divide the poor from the rich, the houses from the ghetto, the whites from the blacks. (S.C.C 74)

Housing appears in this passage as a factor of division between the blacks and whites in London. It is an indicator of the second-class place attributed to immigrants to reflect their marginalised position and the same can be said about West Indian immigrants like Gwendolen and her family. Winston with his poor paid job could not buy his own house and has to rent a small flat in the house of a Nigerian tenant. Gwendolen and Adah experience the same problem of living in inadequate accommodation because of their race.

Gwendolen's living conditions are similar to those of Adah for she has to share her flat with two brothers and a baby sister, in addition to her parents. They are all cramped in two tiny rooms without even a private bathroom and kitchen. Describing the difficulties that faced the family, Emecheta writes: "having to wait for the tenant on the ground floor before using the toilet was no laughing matter…sometimes Sonia allowed Marcus to use the bucket inside their bedroom when he could not wait any longer, because he was young"(*Gwendolen* 96). This description shows how immigrants were deprived of the basic rights which is a

decent place to live in. Renting a room or two without bathrooms was the common practice that many immigrants resorted to as the only possibility to have a shelter. It is interesting to observe that in both novels, the owners of the houses are black: this confirms the idea that only blacks accepted to lodge immigrants. This reflects a certain categorisation of the British society in the 1970s that divided the society into white natives and black or coloured immigrants. Some tenants were even doing it in an illicit way like the Yoruba first tenant in *Second Class Citizen* and Mr.Aliyu in *Gwendolen*.

The dividing line between the whites and blacks is further stressed by Emecheta's novels through the welfare system that was adopted by the British government to provide housing and financial help to the poor classes. Emecheta unveils the way this system, whose apparent aim is the wellbeing of all the British citizens including ethnic minorities, contributed to the establishment of an unequal class system. The welfare system provided council houses that were given to those who fail to secure a roof because of poverty or unemployment. Single mothers, widows and divorced mothers were also lodged in this kind of houses as they had no source of income or someone to provide for them like Mrs. Odowis who is attributed a flat after she leaves her violent husband. Similarly, Adah has to find a council house when she divorced from Francis at the end of the novel. In *In The Ditch*, Emecheta recalls the hardships that Adah goes through in a council house called The Pussy Cat Mansions. Many feminists criticized the welfare system in Britain because it reinforced gender inequalities on one level and racial discriminations between on the other. In this respect, Ashley Dawson observes:

> The British state sought to regulate poor women through the provision of social welfare benefits in ways that exacerbated gender-and race-based inequalities. As feminist critics were to argue subsequently, the post-1945 welfare state has a two-tiered character, treating men as workers entitled to social insurance and women as "mothers" entitled to welfare benefits. This bifurcated structure reinscribed the dominant organization of gender, as well as the public-private split, in family community, and workforce. (Dawson 97)

In this respect, Adah is forced to quit her job from the library and later on from the British museum because of her pregnancies. Lacking support offered by the social safety net to full British citizens, she could not work and take care of her children simultaneously. Commenting on the racist aspect of the welfare system, the feminist Gary Mink explains: “Welfare racism splits society along racial lines, denying black families access even to meagre protection offered to the social safety net”(Mink 85). As a consequence, Adah has no choice but to ask for a council house. When she is living in the Pussy Cat Mansions, the social officer Carole warns her about leaving her children alone while she is trying to find a job. Adah is to lose all her social support that consists of an unsanitary council apartment, a meagre financial aid and some used clothes if she starts working. Adah is trapped in this welfare system that confines her to poverty and low-class status as it offers no possible perspectives for progress. Emecheta describes life in the Pussy Cat Mansions as living in the ditch.

It is true that the council houses were open to poor British whites, but we can clearly see that the majority of their residents were immigrants. It can be said that the welfare system may be considered as an institutionalized form of racism. The state exercises discriminatory treatment to blacks and Asian immigrants by confining them in the council houses which mark this dividing line between blacks and whites. The Critic Lloyd Brown describes the council houses as “the microcosm of a caste system based on race, sex, class and poverty” and the ditch dwellers are “an association of helpless people whose intimacy is based on the fact that they have accepted the helplessness of the situation”(Brown 42) The welfare system then turned out to be an instrument of stigmatization of immigrants as marginalized parasitical aliens living on the government support. Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson point out the ambivalence of the welfare system: “Such special regimes were ambivalent in character: they provide services that responded to the special needs of immigrants, but they kept immigrants separate from mainstream population, and helped to maintain the

myth that they were temporary residents" (Castles and Davidson 112). In other terms, while the system aims at providing help to the poor classes, it is actually by excluding them from the rest of the community.

Emecheta expresses this ambiguity concerning the welfare system when she portrays Adah's experience with the council house that is characterized by poverty and racism. Mrs. Odowis, on the other hand, enjoys living in her large apartment attributed to her by the social services. We learn also at the end of the novel that Gwendolen is given a small flat to live in with her little baby and thanks to that, she could reconstruct her life. What can be deduced is that the aim of the welfare system was to offer help to minorities, but it became problematic with time as it led to the establishment of racial stereotypes of immigrants' poverty, passivity and dependency on government aid. Adah is the best example of this stigmatization of the black immigrants. She has a good job and can afford a comfortable life, yet she is constantly placed in the category of poor immigrants.

In addition to housing, the welfare system included the health services offered by the government for the poor classes. Adah in *Second Class Citizen* is faced with discrimination against the black immigrants when her son Vicky has a health problem. She realizes that there are state hospitals for people who cannot pay for expensive health care or have no social insurance. Even the name of the hospital Vicky is taken to sounds bizarre to her:

> Why was the name of the hospital the Royal Free? Was it a hospital for the poor people, for second-class people? Why did they put the word "free" in it? Fear started to shroud her then were they sending her Vicky to a second-class hospital, a free one, just because they were blacks? (S.C.C 52).

Adah then relates second-class citizenship status to a second-class health service dedicated to the poor. What is surprising is that Adah is not asked what hospital she wants to take her child to when the ambulance came. As a black little boy, Vicky is automatically stigmatized as a poor child with poor parents who receive health care in free hospitals. Here again, we can see the ambivalence of the

Welfare system in which the intention of offering free health services is entangled with a certain categorisation and stereotyping of blacks as the automatic and "natural" beneficiary of free social aids.

Similarly, education appears in the novels as another important sector where the welfare system meant to help immigrants and poor segments of society to have access to learning. It is an asset for those who came to live in England as it can help them to better integrate society and opens a lot of job opportunities. In this sense, public schools were open to receive children of immigrants, but here again the dividing line between the whites and blacks can be noticed. Emecheta shows how special programmes of education set to help ethnic minorities access learning proved to be rather mechanisms of exclusion. Emecheta noticed this when she was working for the Inner London Educational Authority on a community project (a youth club). She found out that black youth are marginalized through a policy of social containment consisting in "packing them into large comprehensive camps or dumping them in places like in the seventies"(Emecheta, *Head Above Water* 180).

In *Gwendolen*, schooling constituted one of the most traumatizing experiences as the little girl comes face to face with a racist system that considers her as an outcast. Gwendolen's first schooling day gives the reader some hints about the difficulties she will have to undergo into her mostly white class. The teacher's cold welcome and the confusion about her name makes her uncomfortable with the idea of spending all her days at school. Her inability to speak English, and her skin colour are sufficient reasons to stigmatize her as a stupid girl.

Here Emecheta is reflecting on the stereotypes attributed to black people as ignorant and stupid simply because they cannot speak English. In his book *Colour Prejudice in Britain*, the sociologist and historian Anthony Richmond explains the importance of these stereotypes about blacks in the formation of racial prejudice: "Without stereotypes, there can be no prejudice, for prejudice is differentiated

from mere prejudgment by the rigidity with which the individual maintains his preconceived interpretations"(Richmond 34). The white teachers who represent the British educational system and by extension the British society hold "rigid" images of blacks and this prevents them from trying to really help them improve their level since they are believed to be "stupid" with no possibility of progress. In the perspective of a syllogistic categorisation of blacks as automatically poor people, Gwendolen is listed as a free dinner student without even asking her whether her parents can pay for her. Like for Vicky, Gwendolen is judged on the basis of her colour as someone who needs state support.

For a child-like Gwendolen, to see that she is put aside because she does not conform to the white community's standard of speaking English is traumatic. She feels alienated and fails to find a place for her among the white children. The effect of this categorization and segregation on Gwendolen was dramatic so that she came to hate school and refused to make any efforts to improve her performance. She decided to conform to this image of stupidity that most teachers have about her as school failure became characteristic of black school children because of the racist aspect of the educational system in the 1970s.

While Adah resorts to withdrawal after her traumatic incident with the white tenant, Gwendolen's self-defence mechanism reacts differently to the racism she meets at school. Gwendolen is rather violent and she does not hesitate to verbalise her aggressivity towards her teachers, feeling humiliated when the latter ask her to write or read. Gwendolen's sense of degradation is transformed into aggression to protect herself from suffering. According to Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, aggression is the natural outcome of a failed attempt at adaptation with the external environment and its norms: "all compensatory efforts fail and terminate in a reinforcement of the originally low-self-esteem with which he started. No course of compensation leads to any adequate outcome. All lead to aggression"(Kardiner and Ovesey 178-179). In this sense, the only kind of

compensation Gwendolen can get from a world that degrades her is to show violence.

To reflect Gwendolen's malaise with the English educational system, Emecheta draws a parallel between her rape in Jamaica and her schooling experience. She is so devastated, tortured and humiliated by the racist attitudes of her teachers that she feels she is living the same moments of rape: "the thoughts of going there every day were not dissimilar to the thoughts she sometimes experienced when she recalled the fact that an older man had invaded the privacy of her body when she was still not nine"(*Gwendolen* 111). This image drawn by Emecheta goes along with the black and African feminists' attempt to denounce racism as a powerful weapon against women as much as sexism. Gwendolen feels the same degree of oppression as a victim of the male sexism of her society which gives a man the right to assault her as much as the racist behaviour of the English society which devastates her morally.

In addition to education, employment is another important issue in relation to immigration. The stereotype of immigrants like Gwendolen as poor people results from a certain reality which is the unequal access to job opportunities with the rest of the community. In fact, the majority of immigrants had menial jobs with incomes that did not allow them to have active participation in social life. Karen St Jean Kufour explains how Jamaicans from the post 1950s boom until the 1990s were employed in sectors that did not require education or specific skills:

> Employment undermines one of the cardinal aspirations of the immigrants to find and to keep in employment. For those in work, then location in the economy has remained unchanged for five decades. A report from the Department Employment in 1990 found a heavy concentration of "ethnic minorities" in manufacturing, manual work and public sector work (the health service, London transport,…), the same sectors immigrants were originally recruited into the 1950's and 1960's.(Kufour 325)

The new comers then found themselves attributed low-paid jobs in factories, in the building sectors, or as bus or train drivers. Gwendolen 's father is an example of the first wave of immigrants who worked in the building sector. He is

constantly threatened by the fear of unemployment for his job depends on the needs of the market. Emecheta describes Winston and his friend Mr.Illochina's daily battle for survival because of the difficult working conditions as a battle with the devil.

The financial situation of immigrants was difficult compared with that of the whites for although they worked hard, they did not have the same living standards as them. It is clear that the welfare system does not concern Winston and his colleague; actually, they lack a security net that should provide them with financial help in periods when labour is scarce for outdoors workers.

Another problem that created unemployment among the Caribbean immigrants is their residential location. In fact, this concentration comes from the over-idealization of the London life which makes almost all immigrants dream to settle in the city. Poverty then is another characteristic of ethnic minority groups which results from unemployment or under- paid jobs. It is clear that Gwendolen and her family are second-class citizens because their financial situation does not allow them to buy a house or rent a better one. They shop for cheap food and Sonia uses her sewing skills to make clothes for all her children.

In *Second Class Citizen,* poverty and low paid jobs are equally reflected by Emecheta through the Nigerian immigrant community in London. When Adah moves there, she is surprised to see that almost all her Nigerian counterparts had menial factory jobs. It should be stated that many of the men were educated with degrees from Nigeria, but it seems that their qualifications did not open job perspectives in London. Commenting on this decline in the Nigerian middle-class status in Britain, Francis observes:

> I remember at one of your Old Girl's Association meetings where that white lady…yes, I remember, she was from Oxford, wasn't she? I remember her telling you all that young women with your background should never in all your lives talk to bus conductors. Well, my darling, in England the middle-class black is the one that is lucky enough to get the post of bus conductor. So you'd better start respecting them. (S.C.C 35)

As shown earlier, specific sectors were open to black immigrants including factory work and transportation. Adah is expected by her Nigerian community to have a "second-class" job as her husband was pressing her to join a shirt factory. It is again linked to the stigma that blacks are stupid and cannot perform jobs that require some degree of intellect. When Adah refuses this stigmatisation and gets a "first-class" post in a library, she breaks the racial codes established by the British working system. However, Adah's experience with the American Embassy in Lagos constitutes an asset for her recruitment in the so called "white-man"'s job.

Adah fails to secure a first-class status although she is well paid compared with her Nigerian compatriots. Her money is spent on the rent of her room, the studies of her husband, the food and clothes of her family and at the end of the month, nothing is left. As a black immigrant, she does not get a social security net that provides her with a decent house although she is given a "white-man" job. Adah realizes the duality of her situation through which she feels as a first-class person when she is at work, but her status changes when she goes back home and faces the bad living conditions. The warm atmosphere of the library is broken when Adah feels the aches of hunger in her stomach because she cannot afford to bring lunch. In addition to hunger, Adah experiences another ambiguity in relation to her status as a worker in the library and a black immigrant which concerns the nursing of her children. Adah fails to send her children to a nursery not because she cannot pay for it, but due to her colour. Adah and her counterparts are subject to injustice since they do not have equal rights in sending their children to nurseries. The norm was rather to pay a "child minder" that should be white and English to take care of the black children and teach them the English language and culture. After a lot of hesitation, Adah is resigned to let her children with Trudy, the white woman who does not really take care of them and to top it all, has a sexual affair with Adah's husband.

With those difficult living conditions, Emecheta demonstrates how many young Nigerian students dropped their dreams of pursuing a higher education as they needed to work hard to survive. In *Gwendolen*, we have the example of Mr. Illochina who turned into a simple worker in the building sector like the illiterate Winston. However, he continues to have the illusion of coming back to Nigeria and making a lot of money as a politician. But nothing of the sort happened, for he was plagued by poverty and had to work hard to provide for two wives and numerous children living with him in London.

In this sense, citizenship is achieved only through the acquisition of a set of rights that immigrants did not have access to. Emecheta, shows that immigrants' life in Britain during the 1970s was characterized by deprivation and disillusions about their dreams to improve their economic and social conditions. But, we should highlight the position of women immigrants who suffered more than men from racism. In fact, most theories about race and immigration ignore the fact that male/female experiences with immigration can differ as Nora Rathzel explains: "Although women are affected in special ways by racism and the interaction between racism and sexism, there is a great silence about women as migrants in migration theories. It is true even though they form a large proportion of migrant workers"(Rathzel 29). The feminist Pragna Patel equally observes how "the anti-racist movements remained, for the most part unable to accept a gendered analysis of race"(Patel 37-38). Approaching the issue of immigration from a feminist perspective reveals another angle of the discriminatory British racist system that brought the deterioration of African women's status. In this sense, It is very interesting to explore the male/female relations of our characters when they come into contact with the western culture

Women immigrants' right of residence in Britain is one of the main gender biased practices that Emecheta depicts in her novels. In fact, immigration laws passed by the British government after 1945 were even more discriminatory to women than to men who were considered as the principal immigrants while

women and children were dependents. In this respect, the sociologist Heinz Klug explains how “the authorities also sought to prevent Afro-Caribbean and Asian women bringing in husbands from overseas, on the ground that women entered as dependents in the first place, and that the ‘natural place of residence’ of the family is the adobe of the husband”(Klug 27-28).

In *Second Class Citizen,* it seems that black women who were already suffering from their oppressive patriarchal traditional society that constructs them as appendages to men, saw their status becoming worse with the British laws that were gender biased. As stated earlier, women immigrants were dependent on their husbands and thus had no right of residence in Britain without their men. Accordingly, Pragna Patel writes: “the racially influenced changes in British immigration laws during the 1960s thus had a particularly adverse impact on women, who became dependent on their husbands for continued residence in Britain”(Patel 261). This law is reflected in the novel when we learn that Adah cannot leave her abusive husband because as an immigrant woman, she can be deported to Nigeria if she is divorced.

In addition to the right of residence, Adah lives a double oppression of sexism and racism when she learns that according to British institutional laws, she is not considered as an independent citizen who can take decisions about her life without the consent of her husband. Among these laws, Emecheta refers to the birth control issue. Indeed, to her stupefaction, Adah discovers that she cannot have “stuff” for the birth control without the approbation signature of Francis.

Emecheta demonstrates how women’s right over their bodies is further usurped by institutional laws. Although this measure was taken to implicate both men and women in the procreation process, it turned out to be an obstacle for some women who depended on their husbands' consent to have access to contraception. To the consternation of Adah who thought that coming to England would at last free her from African gender constraints, we can see that the

oppression remained. Worse, her husband's control is even institutionalized through a set of laws that she should abide by as an immigrant.

In addition to restriction on residence and birth control, the feminist Yuval-Davis points out the sexist character of the welfare system and Marshall model of citizenship. She observes: “the right to employment as the one of citizenship rights, just at a time when architects of the welfare state were constantly men as bread-winner-workers and women as dependent wives”(Yuval Davis 90). In this sense, the idea of women’s dependency on men was reinforced and consecrated by the British laws. However, Adah finds difficult to bear this status of dependency on her husband especially as she lives a reversal in gender roles. In fact, she is the bread-winner of the family since her husband fails to combine study and work. We can see the absurdity of the situation experienced by Adah; if the welfare state privileges men because they are providers of their families, she should have the same rights and not be treated as an appendage to her husband. As a woman, Adah is assuming the responsibilities of her husband without gaining any kind of recognition or benefits, worse she risks deportation if she leaves him. The concept of gender reversal is very important in the novel as one of the results of immigration conditions.

Emecheta explores the impact of this change in the traditional conception of men as bread winners and women as dependent wives. Francis is the best example of the black African man who experiences a reversal of gender roles and finds himself living an identity crisis. In fact, Francis is completely dependent on his wife’s income and this puts into question his masculinity. He is placated by a society that places him on the margin as a failed black student on one hand, and he sees his position as the patriarch of the family threatened by a successful educated wife who earns money

This situation leads to Francis’s alienation because on one hand, he does not play his traditional role as the leader of the family, and on the other he could not

find a place in the new western environment. He is so lost and morally devastated that the only way for him to regain his masculinity is to put the blame on his wife for his problems.

Life in England produces a negative impact on Francis who loses the African values of manhood when he refuses to endorse his role as a husband and father protecting and caring for his family. Adah notices this deterioration of her husband from the first day in England when she realizes that he has changed; he is sophisticated and quarrelsome.

Francis' mental health is affected by all the changes that occurred in his life from his arrival in England. Using the works of Abraham Kardiner and Lionel Oversey, we will try to throw light on the psychological side of Francis's alienation. He suffers from an inferiority complex as a black Nigerian immigrant who wanted to educate himself to obtain one of the "poshy jobs" in the newly independent Nigeria. His failure to get through his exams, and the difficulty to secure a good job with decent accommodation are all factors that destroy his self-esteem as a man. He accepts the second class position and reacts with absolute passivity about this status. Adah is worried when she realizes that her husband has not only accepted his situation on the margin of society, but he also internalizes it and comes even to enjoy it: "what worried her most was the description "second-class"- Francis had become so conditioned by this phrase that he was not only living up to it but enjoying it, too" (S.C.C 37). Instead of trying to improve his living conditions by working hard, Francis gives up and prefers to remain a second-class citizen relying on his wife to support him.

Francis suffers from what is known as "success phobia" through which a person is satisfied with his low status and prefers to stay safe rather than take the risk of improving his position. This concept was proposed by Kardiner and Ovesey who observe: "he (the black) feared advancement, although he was constantly striving for it"(Kardiner and Ovesey 172). Like Adah's Nigerian neighbours,

Francis is afraid of nullifying his second-class status and this could explain the aggressive behaviour they have towards Adah who represents the white ideal by her education and "first-class" or "white-man" job. Commenting on Adah's status, the feminist critic Tommie lee Jackson writes: "the intra-racial rivalry in *Second Class Citizen* stems in part from the adaptation by Adah of white prototypes, such as her decision to rear their children similar to the Britons rather than to have them fostered out, as ideals to be emulated"(Lee Jackson 365). In addition to the fear at the idea of changing his status, Francis starts to feel hatred to Adah who takes from him his role as the leader of the family. The reversal of gender roles swept away the patriarchal system that posits man as dominating male and this created a revision of all assumed ideologies that had shaped Francis's way of thinking. In other words, a disintegration of the black ideal of the family occurs with this gender reversal as Kardiner and Ovesey observe:

> Their roles are reversed since those values are just the opposite from what they in the white society, and since the values of white society are inescapable, the male fears and hates the female; the female mistrusts and has contempt for the male because he cannot validate his nominal masculinity in practice.(Kardiner and Ovesey 349)

Francis is emasculated by the new norms of the white community and even Adah fails to respect him because both of them keep the African image of the family. To compensate this loss of manhood, Francis goes to find comfort in the arms of different mistresses and by showing aggression to Adah. In fact, Adah is depicted in the novel as a victim of what is called "displaced aggression" as proposed by Kardiner and Ovesey: "(the black) was passive in the major situation of life and permitted himself aggression mainly with his equals or subordinates. These displaced aggression upon his equals or inferiors had some expression and tension-releasing function"(177). Violence allows Francis to regain control over his wife because if he can never equal her financially, he can physically abuse her and reduce her to the subordinate position she should have. When he tries to hit her, she thinks that "he would not have dreamt of hitting her at home because his mother and father would not have allowed it…It seemed that in England,

Francis didn't care whether she laid the golden egg or not. He was free at last from his parents, he was free to do what he liked"(S.C.C 35).

According to the critic Omar Sougou, Francis appears in the novel as "the archetypal male chauvinist desperately salvaging his ego at the expense of his female partner"(Sougou 43). Adah is the scapegoat on which Francis exercises all sorts of harassment: physical, sexual and moral as she states: "But he was a dangerous man to live with. Like all such men, he needed victims"(S.C.C 102). Adah's suffering is further accentuated by her isolation since she lacks the support of her family left in Nigeria. She cannot find comfort in the library colleagues with whom she shares but a little. Moreover, Adah is silenced by the fear to be expelled from the country if her husband gets troubles with the law. Indeed, black immigrant women tended to protect their male counterparts a fact, swhich encouraged abusive practices such as domestic violence and rape.

The feminist activist Pragna Patel warns against the orthodoxies of the anti-racist movements that used to ignore oppression and violence within the family. She holds that not all black communities are united, homogenous with no internal divisions that should be considered as "heaven" just for the sake of fighting racism and discrimination. She observes:

> Restriction of movement, denial of education, forced marriage, domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, and so on. Yet within the dominant anti-racist discourse, the family is a heaven, a bulwark against the worst excesses of racist harassment of blacks and migrants.(Patel 38)

In spite of all the hardship and abuse Adah went through, she tried hard to keep her marriage. The notion of the community is so important to her as she comes from a culture where family ties are very strong and the idea of divorce banished. Gwendolen's mother Sonia, similarly refuses to see the truth that her husband is a rapist because she unconsciously cannot conceive the idea of breaking the family apart. This over-idealisation of the family unity in the racial context of England engendered more suffering.

Another point that is equally stressed in the novels is the contradictory situation immigrant women may face when they are victims of domestic violence. It is commonly assumed that the intervention of the authorities to stop such practices against women is what should be done, but in the case of immigrants, the state itself is practicing discrimination against them. Women are trapped in a conflicting position between denouncing the abuse they undergo and the fear of betraying their own community through the implication of the state in their affairs as Patel explains:

> We invite the state to intervene in our families to criminalize activities such as domestic violence, while at the same time we understand the role of the same state in criminalizing and marginalizing our communities as a whole…We have often been accused of "washing our dirty linen in public", of fuelling racism in the media, and of reinforcing racist stereotypes about black people and their life style.(38)

Indeed, feminist activists and female authors writing about women immigrants experienced the same dilemma between their loyalties to their communities in the face of racism in the host countries and their commitment to the denunciation of all sorts of oppression engendered by traditions and native patriarchal values. This led, for example, to an ambivalence in the writing of Emecheta who reflects this complex situation for African women writers.

In *Second Class Citizen*, this ambivalence is embodied by Adah who is afraid to denounce her husband when in one of the most violent scenes, beats her heavily because she secretly tries the birth control pills:

> Francis called the other tenant to come and see and hear about this great issue- how the innocent Adah who came to London only a year previously had become so clear. Adah was happy when Pa Noble came, because at least it made Francis stop hitting her. She was dizzy with pain and her head throbbed. Her mouth was bleeding. And once or twice during the proceedings the felt-tempted to run out and call the police. (S.C.C 121)

It is interesting to note in this passage that domestic violence is seen as an internal matter that the community should solve. Pa Noble, the Nigerian tenant is called to settle the conflict as he represents the Nigerian community. Emecheta stresses also the fear of Adah to call the police although she is "tempted" to do

so. This exemplifies the situation of abused immigrant women who were silenced and ordered to adhere to the norms of their traditional communities. According to such norms, any woman who resorts to the white authorities to solve a private matter is condemned. Women were in this sense victims of violence that they should bear for the sake of protecting their men from the British laws. Emecheta brings to light here, the community/individual dichotomy that constitutes one of the most important issues for feminists, that is to say the dilemma between the individual's self-assertion and his commitment to communal ties and responsibilities. Adah prefers to sacrifice herself and her rights under the pressure of the community.

Adah is a helpless victim who has to accept the mistreatment of Francis because as stated earlier, her presence in England depends on him. Francis knows that Adah has no choice but accept his abuse and in a last attempt to control her, he burns her passport and birth certificate. He uses the British laws as a weapon to further oppress his wife and threatens her: "You keep forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black. The white man can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who called think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby"(S.C.C 138).

Emecheta' portrayal of Adah's entrapment can be read as a denunciation of institutionalized gender oppression. In fact, the status of black immigrant women is conceived as the other's other. If a black man is considered as the white man's other and is attributed an inferior status, a black woman is reduced to an even lower status, as an appendage to the black man. Emecheta tries to give then a new perspective about immigration by approaching it from a feminist scope to show how it is experienced through women's eyes.

In *Gwendolen,* Emecheta depicts another picture of domestic violence among Nigerian Immigrants through Mrs. Odowis who is victim of her husband's violence. Not only is she severely beaten by her husband, but he also called the

police claiming that his wife has turned mad and is dangerous. Tunde and Francis understood how to use the British system in order to further oppress their wives. As a victim, Mrs. Odowis is supposed to be the one who calls the police, but instead, Tunde wants to get rid of her by accusing her of madness. It is clear that the British legal institution fails to protect immigrant women and becomes a tool in the hands of men to further control them. Mrs. Odowis is silent about her abuse because she does not have faith in British authority, but most importantly she is afraid of her family-in-law's reaction when they will discover that she has denounced her husband. Her friend Sonia observes that "men like that should be sent to prison" (*Gwendolen* 65), However, Gladis Odowis explains that she will be stamped a "bad woman" if this comes to happen.

In this sense, along the anti-racist movement, it is important to demystify the notion of the community as a perfect unit and denounce its shortcomings especially in relation to gender discrimination, domestic violence and all males' abusive practices against women. Fighting racism should not be achieved at the expense of revealing the subordinate status of women and correcting it.

Emecheta deals with another case of cultural alienation represented by the coloureds or half castes. Fay in *Second Class Citizen* and the social worker in *Gwendolen* are examples of the alienated coloured who repudiates his/her black origin and tries all artifice to look whiter. Describing Fay, Emecheta writes:

> There was another girl, a half caste West Indian, one of the people who found it difficult to claim to be black…Fay did not like to associate herself with the black people because she was too white, a mulatto. So, to press more point, when she qualified as a librarian, she got engaged to this English man who was away in Cambridge reading Law.(S.C.C 125)

Fay reminds us of Mayotte, a Martinican woman in Fanon's work who marries a white man to reach the white ideal. Mayotte and Fay are examples of women of colour who dream of a "form of salvation that consists of magically turning white"[60] by being in contact with a white man. They represent also the black's despise for his own race and strong belief that being white is the only way to

embrace civilization: “It is because the Negro feels inferior that she aspires to win acceptance in the white world.” Fanon describes the reaction of the mullato when she is called Negress: “Me? A Negress? Can’t you see I’m practically white? I despise Negroes. Niggers stink. They’re dirty and lazy. Don’t ever mention Nigger to me”(Fanon 30).

In addition to Fay, Emecheta constructs another character who lives in a state of alienation from her black origin. The social worker who comes to help Gwendolen is a Jamaican half caste who tries hard to change her appearance to be “whiter”. She is that black woman wearing “the white” mask that Fanon describes because of her attempt to shed her black colour behind whitening cosmetics. Using cosmetics to change her skin colour is a sign of alienation for she does not accept the black side of her origins. She is ashamed of her blackness that should be hidden through what Fanon calls a “process of lactification” or “whitening the race” as he writes about Mayotte:

> We are thus put to notice that what Mayotte wants is a kind of lactification. For, in a word, the race must be whitened, every woman in Martinique knows this, says it, repeats it whiten the race, save the race, but not in the sense that one might think: not “preserve the uniqueness of that part of the world in which they grew up” but make sure that it will be white. (35)

Blackness is seen then as the source of backwardness, a punishment from God. Worse, it is considered as an illness to be eradicated instead of celebrating it as a gift that the coloureds have. This state of alienation is clear in the social worker for although she tries hard to whiten her skin, she uses “patois” which is a Jamaican dialect that Gwendolen knows very well. The social worker’s behaviour shows an ambiguity in her self-definition because she denies her blackness on one hand, and keeps her cultural traits such as language on the other. This confirms the alienation in which she lives for no matter how hard she attempts to hide her origins, they will always remain part of her identity. Instead of accepting them and celebrating this richness in her, she despises them. Gwendolen comments on this woman that she calls pejoratively “yellow Nigger”:

> She had mixed through school into this society more than her parents and had learned from Amanda and the other "yellow Niggers" what it was like to fake black women when the occasion called. What was bad in their just being themselves of being white one day and black the other? Anyway, she would not trust this one, not one bit. She was too beautiful and too artificial. (*Gwendolen*169).

This passage highlights the identity crisis that coloureds go through when they appear one day black and white the other. The word "artificial" used by Gwendolen is symbolic of these women's loss of authenticity. It is interesting to notice that the two female characters who represent this form of alienation are West Indians. Emecheta demonstrates how the Jamaican community whose origin is black since they were the product of the slave trade conducted by the British in the 17th century, consider themselves superior to black Africans whom they associate with barbarism and primitiveness. The writer treats then another form of racism of which African immigrants are victims, for not only the whites allocate them second-class status, they are also looked down upon by other minorities who ironically share the same cultural and biological identity.

We can draw a parallel between the West Indian community in England and the Martinicans whom Fanon describes since they show the same degree of alienation by negating their African origins and considering blackness as a flaw. Fanon writes: "I have known and still know, Antilles Negro who are annoyed when they are suspected of being Senegalese. This is because the Antilles Negro is more "civilized" than the African, that is, he is closer to the white man"(33). This idea of racism among ethnic minorities is clearly reflected in *Gwendolen* when at points in the novel Emecheta shows the way they behave vis à vis Nigerians. Winston, for example, repeatedly describes his Nigerian neighbour Mr. Aliyu as "an uncivilised African man"(*Gwendolen* 115) and refers to Africa as "a stupid culture"(*Gwendolen* 119). Mr. Aliyu is an educated man who owns a house while Winston is an illiterate worker who faces difficulties in securing a constant income.

It should be stated that not only some West Indians had prejudiced attitudes towards black Africans, but also Nigerians had the same opinion about their Jamaican counterparts. Mr. Aliyu also considers Winston as an illiterate and stupid man who comes from “a tribe of kitchen carriers”(G*wendolen* 120). These prejudices each community has about the other is justified according to Emecheta by slavery which separated people from the same origins; hence, it is the western institution of slavery that created this gap between “the brothers”.

Jamaicans fail to see and acknowledge the bond that tightly links them to Africa, but Emecheta has shown that when they move to live in a European context where they are faced with the so-called superiority of western culture, they understand that they are exactly like the black Africans. Fanon has captured this idea as follows: “The Negro lives in Africa. Subjectively, intellectually, the Antillean conducts himself like a white man. But he is a Negro. That he will learn when he goes to Europe and when he hears Negroes mentioned, he will recognise that the word includes himself”(Fanon 15). Indeed, as we have demonstrated throughout this chapter, Emecheta draws a lot of similarities concerning the Nigerian and Jamaican communities’ status and living conditions in England as they both face the same degree of discrimination.

To conclude, we can state that the first part of this chapter was dedicated to the study of the concept of alienation in relation to racial prejudice faced by the main characters when they have moved to live in England. We have thrown light on their second-class status, attributed to them by a racist British system. Following the Marshall model, we have proved that Gwendolen and Adah cannot be considered full British citizens because they were not accepted as members of the British white community that rejected them on the base of their black origins. They did not enjoy the same rights as the rest of the society in sectors including housing, health service, education and job opportunities. Even the welfare system that was set by the British government after 1945 to secure good living conditions to all citizens including immigrants turned out to be a discriminatory

system that stigmatized blacks as poor and parasitical members who become a burden to the state. The system led to the categorization of the British society into rich whites and poor ethnic minorities which enhanced the discrimination between the classes.

From a feminist perspective, we have demonstrated that the status of black women had deteriorated when they came to England. They became even more dependent on their men because of the British immigration laws that denied them residence in the country without their husbands. The gender discrimination to which they were victims in their respective countries is transformed from social informal conventions to become institutionalised laws. In addition to experiencing all the hardships and bad living conditions, black immigrant women were often silent about different forms of men's abuse and domestic violence because they were threatened by the risk of deportation. In this sense, we have demonstrated that Adah and Gwendolen's self-esteem is devastated by an institutionalised racism represented by the British laws and systems that discriminate them in different fields, in addition to the racism of white individuals they meet throughout the novels. Their alienation emanates from their feeling of inferiority as human beings judged outcasts by the British just because they are black. In the next part, we will deal with the theme of racial alienation engendered by the Apartheid system. Elizabeth and Mouse experience racial discrimination as coloureds living in their own country and it will be interesting to explore the impact of racism on their identity, in addition to their reaction to various forms of racial oppression.

b- Racial Alienation under the Apartheid System

After the study of racial alienation in Emecheta's novels, we move in this section to explore this theme in Bessie Head's writings. Both Mouse and Elizabeth are victims of racial discrimination under the Apartheid system in South Africa as they live an identity crisis that emanates from their feeling maladjusted since they belong neither to the white community, nor to the black one. As Coloureds, Mouse and Elizabeth are doomed to a liminal space between two races and the novels are about the long process they went through to resist racism and reach self-definition. Head's treatment of racial alienation is quite different from Buchi Emecheta's as she insists more on exploring the psychological impact of racism on the main characters especially Elizabeth who experiences madness, and is interned in an asylum. Moreover, while Emecheta's characters' alienation results from their status as immigrants living in Britain, Head relates Mouse and Elizabeth's alienation to Apartheid. However, it is interesting to note that both Head and Emecheta explore race through the eyes of female characters in an attempt to offer a different perspective that reflects the way women have experienced racial discrimination. In fact, sexism is not to be separated from racism when representing the female characters in African literary works dealing with forms of oppression against women.

Mouse and Elizabeth's life appears to be tightly linked to the Apartheid system that prevailed in South Africa from the 1940's to the late 1990's. This system aimed at the separation of races though institutionalized laws that promoted segregation and the supremacy of the whites who came to South Africa as early as the 17th century. Both novels highlight the discrimination to which the blacks and coloureds of South Africa experienced as Bessie Head gives a fictional treatment of some historical facts that prove the racist nature of the Apartheid

ideology. We can mention for example: the poor living conditions of native Africans, the slums or townships, the poor education system, and some laws against cross-racial relations especially The Immorality Act (1950).

By throwing light on these elements in both novels, our aim is to show the impact of such forms of racial segregation on the shaping of our main characters' identity in order to study the state of alienation in which they live. However, we should stress that the case of Mouse and Elizabeth is further complicated by the fact of being women and coloureds, and this position in between two races is to add another problem to overcome that is a difficulty of identification with one race over the other.

In *The Wretched of The Earth*, Frantz Fanon defines Apartheid as a system where "The native is being hemmed in; Apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartment of the colonial world. The first thing which a native learns is to stay in his place, and not go beyond certain limits"(Fanon, *The Wretched* 52). The idea of division of South Africans into two separate poles, black and white, is represented in the novel by the urban organization of the city where the delimiting line between the two races is clear. A parallel is made between this separation of the urban zones into black and white and the actual segregation between the native South Africans and the whites. Each is supposed to evolve in its sphere and not mingle with the other race in order to preserve, according to the whites, "the purity" of the race:

> The idealist visionaries of Apartheid realized that total segregation in the cities required the building up of putatively viable economies and political units for their African populations away from the urban centres which would now be for whites only. Apartheid policies of 'separate development' clearly demarcated black homelands from the rest of South Africa and created urban impoverished black townships and informal settlements on the outskirts.(Swilling et al.136)

Two geographic areas emerged out of the white policies of urbanization for the blacks which are the homelands or what is known as "reserves" in the rural areas and "townships" or "slums" in the cities of South Africa. Head has herself

experienced life in the slums for after she was taken from her white mother, she was given to be fostered by a black woman living in one of the townships. Elizabeth and Mouse spent their childhood in slums and through these characters, Head draws a picture of the precarious conditions undergone by blacks and coloureds during the Apartheid era. *The Cardinals* opens with the description of the slum in which Mouse grows up: "It was a large slum area of tin shacks, bounded on the one side by a mile long grave yard and on the other by the city refuse dump and the sea" (*Cardinals* 1). Through this statement, Head puts the reader in the atmosphere of poverty, and desolation where the blacks were overcrowded in unsanitary dwellings between the grave yard and the refuse dump. The feminist critic Sisi Maquagi explains how from her early age, Mouse's sense of alienation arouses from the racist discriminatory treatment of blacks and coloureds as she has to live amid the 'rubbish' of the whites:

> The borders of the slum are not located at the periphery of the city of Cape Town but also demarcate the sites of disposal, the graveyard, and the refuse dump. In effect, the slum dwellers have been thrown away and this reinforces her marginal status as an illegitimate child.(Maquagi 167)

The critic is making a link between the Apartheid policy of zoning (distinct areas for blacks and whites) and the development of the character. Being part of the marginalized race, Mouse has to understand that she does not belong to the privileged whites although she is the daughter of a white woman. The slum becomes according to Sisi Maquagi "the site of her rejection from the white race"(167). The childhood of Mouse in the slum is a traumatic experience that makes of her an introvert person with personality disorder. Her colleague in the newspaper, Johnny considers Mouse as an "abnormal" person, but when he gets to know her better, he comes to understand that the period spent among the slum dwellers, makes her lose her self-esteem as a woman: "the terrible thing about that slum is that it marks the people who have lived there, and bred and intermarried with a facial structure and mentality that is like something inhuman. It's just an oozing, indiscriminate mixture of muck incest and hell fine" (C*ardinals*

28). As explained in chapter one, the childhood of the main characters is a determinant phase in the building of their identity and these living conditions participate to a great extent to the making of Mouse's persona.

In order to survive the poverty of the slums, many Africans turned to informal or illegal economic activities like alcohol trafficking. We learn for example that Elizabeth's foster mother used to sell beer illegally to earn a living. Similarly, In *The Cardinals*, Johnny describes the illicit liquor business in the slums as follows: "those who try to supplement their income by illicit liquor and other shady deals are constantly hounded out by the caps. A cap can enter a home by anytime the mood gets him" (*Cardinals* 28). Those who had formal jobs as factory workers or serving the whites were also suffering from low salaries and high living costs. In fact, Apartheid worked to the benefits of employers of unskilled, and undifferentiated labour. This point is equally suggested in *The Cardinals*: "what chances are there of raising the wages and standards of living when the economy of this country is based on cheap labour?"(*Cardinals* 28).

Moreover, because factories were located far away from the slums where they were living, workers had to pay expensive bus fares to get to work. Equally, because the deficient infrastructures in the slums were connected to no electricity grid, black people were forced to spend most of their meagre wages on energy. To solve the problem of the slums and the bad image it gives to the city, the government built new townships for the black and coloured population. However, these townships turn to be other traps for poor people who could hardly afford the rents and charges imposed on them. They lived under the fear of expulsion. Johnny criticises fiercely the townships where black people lived:

> The new townships are just another hell from hell, PK they're organized prison camps. On the average, incomes are so low that the people can hardly afford to pay these so-called sub-economic rentals…… it used to cost a man nothing to live in a shack slum. Now it costs him more than he can afford on his income to live in a township. The townships were built to remove the eye-sores, as the foreign tourists

> like to say. And accidently to deprive those non-whites, who were financially able, of their freehold rights and estates. The economists worked out that it would provide exploited - that's my word- people with a minimum standard of decent living but they never figured out what a human standard of living should be like. (*Cardinals* 28)

Because of all these bad conditions, Mouse had to fly away from the slum where she was almost raped by her father-in law, but she soon realized that there was no way out. In spite of the absence of a "refuse dump" and "reeking stagnant water" in the new slum where she moved, the pattern of life was the same with "weekends of drunkenness and violence and crude, animal, purposeless, crushing world of poverty" (*Cardinals* 10).

In fact, in addition to the illegal business of alcohol, many resorted to violence to get a living. In one of her stories for *The African Beat* newspaper, Mouse writes about Sammy who is savagely killed by Five, a gang leader who makes the law in the slum. We learn later that Sammy is the fictional name that Johnny gives to himself when he asks Mouse to write this story which is based on his own experience as he was living in a slum. Actually, Johnny escaped from his slum because he was threatened by Five and joined a group of fishermen who lived a wild and hazardous life. This story shows the absence of security in the slums that became fertile lands for prostitution, drugs dealers and violent gangs terrorising the populations. It is equally interesting to note that Head denounces the Apartheid through various stories Johnny and Mouse write to be published in the newspaper in an attempt to raise awareness about black South Africans' suffering.

In addition to the depiction of life in the slums, Head treats another aspect that confirms the domination of the white government in South Africa that is the use of "passes" to regulate and limit the blacks' mobility. The historian Roger Omond explains that "the Pass Law dates back to 1760, when all slaves of the Cape had to carry passes"(Omond 107). Subsequently, other acts were passed by the white government to enforce the pass law especially the Passes and Documents Act of 1952 that required "all Africans to carry a 'reference book' which noted their

employment history and residence rights. It authorized any officer to order at any time an African to produce his pass"(107). According to Bessie Head, the Pass law's aim was to "prohibit black people from wandering about with a proper pass"(Head, *A Woman Alone* 80).

In *The Cardinals*, Head makes a reference to the Pass as the "humiliating little book" (*Cardinals* 80). Similarly, in *A Question of Power*, she describes a scene through which we can see how "passes" reduced the black Africans and stripped them from their manhood as Dan, one of the characters comments: "How can a man be a man when he is called a boy, I can barely retain my own manhood. I was walking down the road the other day with my girl, and the Boer policeman said to me. 'Hey, boy, where's your pass'" (A.Q.P 45).

The Pass law stipulated that there were certain Africans who had permanent residence in the city. A man had for example to "have been born in the town or to have worked for fifteen years"(Omond 108). For the case of women, the right of residence was acquired through marriage to a man who held this right. In fact, until the 1950's, women were not asked to carry a pass. In *The Cardinals*, Head describes the blacks' reaction against the Pass Act through riots during the 1960's. On March 21, 1960, large numbers of people marched to the local police stations where they burned their passes. The historian Robert Ross explained how "the demonstrations were dispersed by baton charges and the threat given by low-flying jet artefact. Violent contact between the police and the demonstrators ended up with eight persons killed and 180 were wounded in the region of Vaal"(Ross 129). Similar riots are represented in *The Cardinals* when Johnny describes a violent scene with people revolting against the police when some men fail to show their passes as Bessie Head writes:

> The riot had broken out in a small town about fifty-six miles from Cape Town. This town had known many such riots, each riot apparently sparked off by a slight incident like a man being arrested for not being in possession of a humiliating little book. But each day, year in and year out, men and men and men were arrested for not being in possession of this humiliating little book, while the people stood by

> watching silently. Then, the day would come when their silent supressed rage would burst and they would go on a brief rampage. A garage or two would be burnt down. A shop or two looted, but because it was like an enraged blind man striking out in his darkness, it could not balance the cost of the persecution it merely created more shackles. (*Cardinals* 80)

This passage demonstrates the inefficiency of the blacks' actions in the face of an overwhelming authoritative government which riposted with hostility to any sign of revolt. The black demonstrators were subsequently sent to "detention camps" that reminds Head of the "German Concentration Camps" (*Cardinal*s 80). This parallel drawn by the writer between South African government and Nazism, is symbolic of the abuse that blacks and coloureds experienced in their country.

In addition to the Pass Act, Head is critical of The Immorality Act that accentuated the segregation between blacks and whites in South Africa by forbidding interracial sexual relations. The writer herself has been victim of this act that made of her an illegitimate child born of an "illegal" relation between a white woman and a black man. In fact, Apartheid as explained earlier means the separation of specific groups of people on the basis of race. Ethnicity was very important for the ideologists of the Apartheid who used to consider "various nations of South Africa as God-created entities, on the model of their own self-image of Afrikandom. These had to be preserved in all their 'purity'". It was then the responsibility of the state to reach this ideal by "assigning everyone to one of the national categories within South Africa"(Ross 129). This was achieved through the issuing of various acts such The Population Registration Act of 1950, The Group Areas Act of 1950, The Mixed Marriage Act of 1949 and The Immorality Act that Head criticizes in most of her writings.

In addition to Bessie Head's writings, the Immorality Act has roused fictional imagination in many literary works by South African writers such as Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1987) where he denounces the state's repression of cross-racial relationships. The Immorality Act was first amended in 1927 and stipulated that any sexual intercourse between the whites and blacks was illegal. The sanction for contravening this law was five years of imprisonment. The Act was reissued in

1950 to extend the prohibition to include all “non-whites” that is not only blacks, but also Indians and coloureds. Commenting on The Immorality Act, Brian Bunting observes: “No act has done more injure to the reputation of South Africa in the eyes of the world, for thousands of people, ranging from visiting seamen to Dutch reformed church nominees and private secretary to a Prime Minister, have fallen foul of its provision and had been sent to jail"(Bunting 161).

Elizabeth’s mother’s transgression of the Immorality Act was condemned by her entourage. If she had not been admitted to the mental hospital, she would have been imprisoned for going against the law. The feminist critic Hershini Bhana describes how Elizabeth’s mother's act was considered as a crime against the white race:

> The mulatto is birthed from crime-scene of racial betrayal, and miscegenation. Elizabeth’s mother has betrayed the metonymic signifier of the nation-state, the racial biological family with sexual acts that were illegal in South Africa. Her mother’s sexual acts also opposed the most fundamental tenet of Apartheid, the maintenance/adherence to the supposedly impermeable boundaries of racial classification. (Bhana 40)

Elizabeth’s existence is then made illegal by the Apartheid constitutional laws that aimed to mark and maintain a dividing line between races to avoid the “contamination” of the white race by other groups who were considered inferior. Fanon explains that this superiority complex of the white man had governed western thought for a long time. He observes: “But on certain points the white man remained intractable. Under no conditions did he wish any intimacy between the races”(Fanon, *Black Skin* 90). He mentions their reluctance to cross-racing relations believing that it may “lower” the white race: “crossing between widely different races can lower the physical and mental level…Until we have more definite knowledge of the effect of race-crossing we shall certainly do best to avoid crossings between widely different races”(90).

In *The Cardinals*, The fear of inter-racial sexual relations is depicted through different cases of The Immorality Act’s transgression starting by Johnny who had a love story with a white woman called Ruby who is believed to be Mouse’s

mother. Her pregnancy is considered as a disgrace by her mother who "kept her a prisoner in her room, anxious to conceal her state of pregnancy from friends and neighbours"(*Cardinals* 57). Ruby remained silent about the identity of her lover Johnny because she feared the reaction of her family should they discover that she was bearing the child of a black man. Because of the pressure that Ruby undergoes, she finally commits suicide like Elisabeth's mother who was sent to a mental hospital to keep her away from society. Ruby and Elizabeth's mother's suicides result from the white society's intolerance vis à vis inter-racial relations which were condemned by norms and conventions on one hand and institutional laws on the other.

As a reporter, Mouse writes about a case of Immorality Act for her newspaper. She attends the trial of a Norwegian sailor who broke this act when he came to Cape Town and had an affair with a black girl. Mouse writes: "Did he not receive instructions from his captain that it is forbidden for a white man to attempt to have, or have relations with a non-white woman"(*Cardinals* 70). The sailor was not aware of the racial and sexual segregation in South Africa as he claims, "I was only looking for a bit of fun. I did not know about the country's race laws" (*Cardinals* 70). Similarly, later in the novel, we hear that even PK, the chief editor of the newspaper was one day victim of the Immorality Act. Even as a white man, he realizes the absurdity of this law that prohibits sexual relations between blacks and whites as he confesses:

> Of all the crazy charges under The Immorality Act, this one beats them all. I haven't a clue to what happened. I was pissed drunk. I just thought I'd do a bit of bar hopping last night and ended up seeing everything double. Apparently, what really happened is that a sixteen-year-old coloured kid passed by and saw me clinging to a lamp post and on an impulse decided to give me a hand to a bench nearby. Unfortunately for her kindness, a Cape van happened to patrol but just then and it was enough for them to see her with her brown arm around a so-called white man. (*Cardinals* 125).

PK is released the next morning while the girl is kept in the police office. This passage demonstrates how ridiculous The Immorality Act could be as it gave authorities the right to arrest anyone just because of a physical contact with

someone of a different race. The innocent girl risks imprisonment for helping the drunken man. In *Too Late the Phalarope*, Alan Paton writes about the rigidity of Immorality Act enforcement:

> The police have had institutions to enforce the Immorality Act without fear or favour. Whether you're old or young, rich or poor, respected or nobody, whether you're a Cabinet Minister or a predikant (church man), a headmaster or a tramp. If you touch a black woman and you're discovered nothing'll save you.(Paton 15)

The Immorality Act justified the government's abuse of power and limited the freedom of South Africans since they could not choose the partners they wanted to be with. To overcome the Immorality Act, Pk organizes parties where blacks and whites could have sex relations. It should be stated that these encounters were done in an illicit way which shows the rejection of such laws by both blacks and whites.

In the same context, the Mixed Marriage Act, which was passed in 1949, which stipulated that "only man and woman of the same race may enter into a civil or church marriage." Africans could choose to be married under "customary law and enter into what is known as 'customary union', that is a union according to the native African traditions without a civil ceremony". However, such unions in South Africa "were not recognized as legally binding relationships and received no recognition in any court in public or civil matters"(Taylor and Francis 12-13). These acts and measures show the different levels of racist policies adopted by the South African government to subordinate the black people. It is equally important to explore the impact of such discriminatory practices and deprivation of rights on the main characters as they led to their alienation.

The state separates Mouse from both the white and black communities through acts that leave her rootless between two worlds. She lives constantly under the threat of being rejected from an entire race as she is told by her fostering white parents: "work hard, do not answer back no matter what we do to you. Be satisfied with the scraps we give you, you cannot have what our children have. Remember we are unpredictable; when the mood gets us we can

throw you out"(*Cardinals* 10). In fact, the fear of rejection creates in Mouse a sense of alienation from the world in which she lives. She resorts to isolation to protect herself from the racism surrounding her as stated earlier. Most of the novella's criticism of racism is conducted by Johnny, yet she plays an important role as she embodies all the discrimination and injustice the Apartheid enclosed. Johnny points to the residues of racism affecting her and makes her aware of the necessity to fight back in order to create a place for her somewhere between the two races. Mouse is then the vivid example of the victim of Apartheid segregating institutions and racist policies.

Johnny detects in Mouse an inferiority complex that she expresses through her fear of communicating with the external world as he concludes: "Damn you! Damn all your dollish inferiority complexes"(C*ardinals* 123). Her complex comes from the traumatic experiences she went through as a child. defining trauma, Frantz Fanon writes: "In almost every case, we could see that the symptoms were, so to speak, like residues of emotional experiences, to which for this reason we later gave the name psychic trauma"(Fanon, *Black Skin* 111). In this sense, all the rejection, poverty, sexual molestation, and racism faced by Mouse constitute "the emotional experiences" that Fanon describes and which are responsible for shaking her self-esteem and the development of an inferiority complex.

Johnny tries to make her face the ghosts of her traumatic past, name them and defeat them by writing about people suffering like her, but this process of self-writing will prove difficult to achieve as she is constantly watched and censored by Pk. Mouse works for *The African Beat*, a sensational tabloid run by a white reporter called Pk. In fact, the newspaper can be seen as a microcosm representing the South African society with a white man at its head exercising all sorts of manipulation and authority on his workers including blacks as Johnny and coloureds like Mouse. PK dictates the rules, and keeps threatening Johnny and Mouse with firing them if they refuse to distort and reformulate the stories,

they write in order to go along with the government's policies. Johnny points out to the racism that reaches the Media and newspapers of the 1960s South Africa: "I'm thinking white man threw black man out of window. No News. Black man threw white man out of window. Plenty of News"(C*ardinals* 18-19). After Johnny makes this remark about the unworthiness of a black man's life, PK threatens to fire him because he considers him "bad for the moral of the staff" (*Cardinals* 19).

Johnny is seen as a dangerous person for the stability of the Apartheid regime because he dares to denounce the discrimination undergone by the blacks. Using his power, PK puts pressure on his reporters to reflect a positive image of the Apartheid system. Mouse, for example, is asked to reformulate the first story she writes about a man named Mogamet Abdul to portray him as a dangerous criminal rather than as a victim. In this respect, the critic Collette Guldimann states: "PK's commands (write it this way, Get it?) frame the actual newspaper copy, suggesting that all copy was framed by these commands. The manipulation of information to suit the 'filthy tabloid' is clear, as is the way in which this style constructs the reader's attitudes towards issues it reports"(Guldimann 102).

Abdul Mogamat was driven to "peddle dope" because he could not find work and had twelve children to support. Like many blacks at that time, illicit trafficking like alcohol and drugs was the only alternative they had to survive. Instead of denouncing the poverty in which the black community in South Africa was living because of the Apartheid system, no excuse is to be given to Abdul's behaviour. Pk asks Mouse to portray him as "a hardened animal" that threatens the safety of other blacks or coloured citizens. The version he approves gives a positive image of a false benevolence of a concerned government protecting "Law abiding non-white citizens"(*Cardinals* 87).

Fake news appear here as a tool used by the South African government to convince the public opinion including the blacks about the Apartheid beneficent intentions offering them protection and preserving order. Here we can notice

also the stereotypes of the black man as evil while the white is associated with virtue as Fanon comments: “the black man is the symbol of Evil and ugliness”(Fanon, *Black Skin* 139). In another scene, we can see Pk working on elaborating a false benevolent image of the newspaper when he asks Mouse to find a wheelchair for an old woman. In her search for the wheelchair, Mouse makes a very interesting encounter with a black man who suffers from racism. He is a brilliant atomic researcher and dreams to become a scientist. Although his family could afford sending him to study abroad, his father could not accept the idea that a black man may become a famous scientist: “My father was terrified at the thought that a black man wanting to reach out beyond his blackness or so it was for him”(*Cardinals* 119). The father’s attitude is described by Fanon as the blacks’ “Success Phobia”, a complex that we have already mentioned when we dealt with the Nigerian community living in Britain. The latter indeed could not imagine it possible for a black woman like Adah to have an education and a “white man”’s job. It emanates from an inferiority complex through which the black man constructs a low self-esteem and lacks confidence in his capacities to be as successful as the white man.

The black man in Head’s story internalised the defeatist attitude of his father and drops his dreams as he did not want to spend the rest of his life “fighting [his] blackness”(*Cardinals* 119). In fact, the racism of the country in which he lives will allow little room for a black man like him to be successful. He resigns to work in a hotel where he has become the manager, because he has never been treated or acknowledged as such: “I am manager in everything but name? All the management of the hotel is under my control, but I am not called a manager. I am called a store keeper. I am also paid a store keeper’s wages” (*Cardinal*s 119-120).

Mouse wants to write about the case of the wheelchair fellow and the dreams he has, but PK rejects her article and asks her to make sure a picture is taken once

the chair is given to the old lady and insists on the newspaper's participation in getting it although it was a donation from the man she meets. Commenting on the hypocritical attitude of PK, the critic Sisi Maquagi writes: "the blatant lie about *The African Beat* securing a wheelchair for an elderly woman gives it a false humanitarian image. The fact that PK ignores and supresses the genuine concern of both Mouse and her helper shows up his real indifference"(Maquagi 169). Johnny is also compelled to reformulate an article he wrote about the new townships policy instored by the Apartheid system to place the black population in new homes described by him as "ghettoes":

> Dominating the scene is a large police station and barracks to maintain the 'efficient management' of the township. The township has a stark, naked look. The roads are dirt roads. The houses are like those square boxes you see at the loading-zone, empty of imagination or style. The only soft, light, colourful touches in this atmosphere of doom are the pink, yellow and red dahlias outside the police station.(*Cardinals* 20).

This realistic description of the townships that were built to get rid of the slums surrounding cities like Cape Town does not please PK who immediately reacts. He orders Johnny to rewrite the article and give a glittering picture of these towns as dream houses to blacks like Mrs. Kumato who "never knew what it was like to have a kitchen, privacy…etc,."(C*ardinals* 20).

Unlike Mouse who remains passive, Johnny rejects Pk's orders and adopts an anti-racist discourse through which he accuses him of being a racist, serving Apartheid ideologies. He calls PK "white leftist and sympathiser" who is supporting a "status quo in South Africa" (*Cardinals* 20). The problem of South Africa according to Johnny is not only a strong white government that abuses the other races, but also a passive black community that accepts to be dominated. Mouse stands in the novella for the passive part of society who prefers to surrender rather than react against abuse and discrimination. In one of the most important passages in the novella, Johnny writes:

> Do you know what's wrong with this country? We've got twelve million meek, inarticulate, dumb people like you walking around. What do you think the whites are doing? They're fixing the clamps in tighter. Anyone who has a mind to change the system would have to change you first. (*Cardinals* 21).

Mouse then has a symbolic role and Johnny accepts the challenge to change her into a successful, self-confident and strong woman who is perfectly aware of her rights as a South African citizen regardless of her race and origin. If Johnny fails with Mouse, it would symbolically imply the failure of black people in South Africa to regain their freedom and dignity. Mouse is represented as "the living symbol of freedom", hence a parallel is drawn between her ability to become a true writer and the blacks' liberation. Mouse should first break all the shackles put on her by the white editorial board that stands for the Apartheid system to become an accomplished writer. Similarly, the black South Africans have to revolt against all restrictions imposed on them by the white government, as Johnny explains:

> I say what I like. I do what I like and I think what I like. That's what I call inner Freedom. It's absolutely necessary for anyone who calls himself, or thinks himself, a writer. You won't be able to think straight in that tight bunched up state you're in now. You've got to break off the bolts that are keeping you locked up. (*Cardinals* 85).

Mouse's resignation and refusal to fight back is conveyed by Head through the construction of a female character who is always spoken for or about. She is denied the authority to express her own identity, and this is reflected through the the different names she holds. Head raises here a problem of self-affirmation in a country where a white authoritarian government imposed its discriminatory laws on blacks and "non-whites". The critic Collette Guldimann draws a parallel between the personal and the political in *The Cardinals* where she describes Mouse's journey through life as a "trope to South Africa" (Guldimann 102). She further comments on Mouse's renaming as follows:

> The difference between Johnny's naming and her other namings seem to offer a comment on the political naming current in apartheid South Africa, where people were arbitrary assigned names and racial identities by an 'illegitimate' government authority representing only a small (white) percentage of the country.(103)

In fact, beyond the names given to Mouse, is the racial identity imposed on her for she is given white and black names depending on the people who named her. This suggests her liminal position and the little control she has over her life which is also the case of most blacks and coloureds who had to undergo imposed racial definitions as inferior, subordinate and second-class citizens in South Africa. Johnny then took the paternalistic role of a father and teacher who would teach Mouse how to articulate her thoughts and construct her own identity, not the one thrust upon her by her government or surroundings. As a reporter, he initiates and constantly supervises her writing which is, according to him, the best way to reach self-realization.

The feminist critic Neerja Chand explains that Johnny is the best person to lead Mouse to name or build an identity of her own thanks to the critical and clairvoyant look he has about the ills of South Africa: “Although he is cynical and prescriptive, although often violent, he proves to be the character whose views about his society and other characters are most reliable”(Chand 75). Johnny starts his work on Mouse by pointing out the racism and discrimination that pervaded South Africa. He encouraged her to write about the hardships and abuse to which blacks and coloureds are subjects. In fact, far from PK’s reserves on what she writes, Johnny holds an anti-colonial discourse through which he denounces the inferior position of blacks: “I don’t care admit it but historians may say we were a conquered race. Any way, we were made to feel like the underdog. You cannot feel like the underdog and at the same time feel you belong to a country”(*Cardinals* 72).

Johnny puts into question the concept of “nationality” of blacks living in South Africa. The need of belonging to a country which is basic and instinctive in every being is undermined by the discrimination that blacks faced. Their feeling of being part of South Africa is shaken by the disparity in rights that exists between them and the “superior” dominating the white race. The black man’s feeling of

alienation is caused by the oppressor's exclusion of non-whites from active participation in the economic, social and political life and from enjoying the same rights as whites.

The superior/inferior dichotomy that governs the black/ white relation is responsible for the estrangement Johnny and Mouse feel as Head writes: "It is the duty of the conqueror to abuse you, and treat you like an outcast and alien, and to impose false standards on you. Maybe we can help throw some of these imported standards overboard" (*Cardinals* 72). Fanon explains that the problem of a nation like South Africa does not lie in the coexistence of two races, but rather in the black man being "exploited, enslaved, and despised by a colonist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white"(Fanon, *Black Skin* 157). Johnny also realizes that the Apartheid system is the source of all the abuse and injustice in South Africa. He believes that as writers, he and Mouse have the duty to denounce this system in order to establish equality and harmony between the blacks and whites: "the kind of writing I am concentrating on is going to get rid of governments and systems for good. There is nothing wrong with mankind. It's the system mankind is forced to live under that causes all the mess. I am going to fix these systems"(*Cardinals* 31).

Johnny warns Mouse about the role politics play to maintain the "slave system" implemented by Apartheid and he considers politicians as the most dangerous people. For him, power is not always expressed with violence, but it has other subtle ways that politicians use to exercise their domination on people. Even the black parties are according to him corrupt and useless in the quest for freedom and justice. In this sense, relying on politicians will not bring freedom to the blacks; hence, it is the role of writers like Mouse to fight for it. Intellectuals can play an effective role for raising awareness and making black Africans react against injustice. For Johnny, Mouse could be a "Mahatma Ghandi" whose quietness and apparent weakness hide a strong revolutionist who can and will

change things. In fact, Johnny and Mouse represent the agents of change that Head employs to raise consciousness among South Africans about the necessity to abolish systems like Apartheid. They are the cardinals who can lead to a better South Africa. As a coloured, Mouse's liminal position is in itself the proof of a possible harmonious coexistence between the two races. She could symbolically be seen as the mediator between the whites and the blacks, the bridge that could link the two separate races in order to end the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy that characterises their relation.

However, pulling Mouse from her alienation into this awareness of the realities of her conditions as a coloured proves to be a very difficult process. Her isolation and lack of self-confidence stand as barriers in the face of Johnny who very often has to brutalise her to make her react and show the slightest emotions as he realises that she is afraid of everything. At the beginning of their relation, Johnny uses verbal harassment to provoke anger in her. Words such as "insane", "witch", "freak", "defeatist", and "half crazy" are among the insults he utters to describe Mouse which operate like an electric shock to awaken her dead spirit that has been brutalised by traumatic experiences of abandonment and exclusion.

Gradually, Mouse starts to react to Johnny's continuous harassment that she thought was deliberately done to harm her. After one of his numerous rebuke scenes, she slightly shows some signs of anger as "her mouth quivered slightly and she could not control the look of mute, intense, hatred that darted out of her black eyes"(*Cardinals* 21). Although her reaction remains minor since she does not even speak out her anger to stop Johnny from bullying her, yet the fact of having face expressions of a given feeling is the first step on the road to her self-expression. Johnny is surprised to see her reacting as he claims that he has never expected her to have such feeling as she looks "dead".

This gives hope to Johnny about the possibility of changing Mouse and delivering her from the sense of alienation in which she lives. In addition to

writing, Johnny realizes that love must be the most healing remedy to Mouse's wounded self. By urging her to have sex with him, Johnny is faced by Mouse's rejection of all forms of physical relations with men. The professional relation then develops into a complex love story that will help the progression of Mouse into self-knowledge. This aspect of Mouse and Johnny's relation will be discussed in the following chapter that is concerned with the sexuality of the main characters. It must be stated that the traumatic effects of racial alienation are expressed more forcefully in *A Question of Power* than in *The Cardinals*. If Mouse is depicted as an isolated and weak character because of racial discrimination in South Africa, Elizabeth's alienation leads to madness and admission in a mental hospital.

Commenting on the novel's double concern, the feminist critic Lloyd Brown writes: "In her fiction, the marginalisation of women and the historical uprooting of 'non-white' people seem to be the very essence of a pervasive social malaise"(Brown 159). Head explores racism in *A Question of Power* through the psychological breakdown of the protagonist whose hallucinations serve to unravel the political and social realities of her country and denounce all forms of abuse against blacks and coloureds.

As a girl born out of a forbidden union between a black man and a white woman, Elizabeth starts feeling alienation in childhood and this particular state is going to have an impact on her whole life. It may also be a foreshadowing of the kind of suffering and prejudice she will face for like her mother, she will experience a psychological breakdown at the end of the novel. Elizabeth grows up with the scares of rejection and abandonment from her white family. Although she finds care with a coloured lady who adopts her, she could never recover from the trauma of being unwanted. As a coloured, she has to undergo the bad living conditions allocated to "non-whites" in South Africa. Her foster mother sells beer to survive the poverty of the slums where Elizabeth grows up amid this

atmosphere of financial deprivation and social evils. In addition to her rejection from the white race at birth, Elizabeth faces an identity crisis as she fails to identify herself with the whites at the missionary school. Her life in South Africa is a succession of discriminatory and degrading experiences which make her seek exile in Botswana. Her journey is then an attempt to find a self that was torn between two races in a country that she hopes will offer her an identity and finally a sense of belonging when she moves to Botswana with a non-return visa.

After her arrival in the Motabeng village, Elizabeth starts to have hallucinations and Head uses three main figures who came to haunt her and reveal the repressed pain she feels after her experience in South Africa. Through Dan, Sello and the mythical figure of Medusa, Elizabeth is confronted to existential questions about who she is and the place she holds in the world. The three imaginary characters also serve Head to question the evils of her society and the universality of the theme of power abuse. In this concern, the feminist critic Natasha Vaubel writes:

> By descending into the pit of her own personal hell, Elizabeth (who clearly represents Head herself) is able to confront these aspects of her own identity which deeply trouble her and make her an 'other'; as a South African 'coloured', a woman, bastard, refugee, and social outsider. And while this journey is, intensely personal and private, it is at the same time a tense evaluation of the social hells and injustices of Southern Africa and the modern world which produced her.(Vaubel 83)

Hence, Elizabeth's journey in Botswana though introspective, can be read as an allegory of her nation. Her descent to hell starts with her first hallucination after a short time of her arrival. Sello who is a cattle breeder who lives in the village appears in Elizabeth's first nightmare as a monk wearing a large white dress. Head describes that first moment in Elizabeth's breakdown as follows:

> She had first blown the light when she had the sudden feeling that someone had entered the room. The full impact of it seemed to come from the roof, and was so strong that she jerked up in bed. There was a swift flow of air through the room and whatever it was moved and sat down on the chair …Alarmed, she swung around and lit the candle. The chair was empty. (A.Q.P 22)

Elizabeth begins to feel the presence of someone with her in the room, but after she lights a candle, Sello appears to her as a man wearing a “white flowing robe of a monk” and for the first time she starts to hear a voice that tells her with affection “My Friend”. Elizabeth is definitely suffering from a psychological disorder known as paranoid schizophrenia through which the patient “has an alteration of his/her world perception manifested mainly by hallucinations and the strong certitude of external forces controlling his/her will”(Saha et al.31). Indeed, Elizabeth’s perception of reality is altered as her subconscious transforms an existing real inhabitant of the Motabeng village into an imaginary character who will take different forms in her hallucinations. The feminist critic Elizabeth Evasdaughter explains how these moments of hallucination are very important as she states: “Elizabeth’s consciously insistent naming of her own reality and telling her own story are an act which had been denied to her all her life until her ‘madness’”(Evasdaughter 72).

In fact, Elizabeth’s subconscious has created these imaginary characters to express herself in a parallel world because in the real one she faced only rejection and discrimination. Madness should be read then as a means of self-expression of repressed feelings where the personal and the national meet: we can see that Elizabeth is a victim of a racist Apartheid system that left devastating effects on her psyche. Madness is the only space where she can take back the control over herself and her world.

As stated earlier, Elizabeth’s conversations with Sello that she considers as a friend provides her with comfort against the solitude, she experiences in the new Botswana environment. He is also described as a teacher with religion as his favourite discipline and he represents virtue, goodness and hope for humanity. Subsequently, Sello starts to show Elizabeth the suffering experienced by African people during centuries of colonialism and exploitation. Three hallucinations through which the poor people of Africa are represented appear in front of

Elizabeth. The first one consists of a man wearing khaki pants and boots who presents himself as the king of the underworld. Sello calls him the “father” who hands Elizabeth a pile of papers and on the top of the first page was the word: “Poverty”. Then he picks from under her bed “dirty rags”, the kind of “garments usually worn by the poor man in Africa” and he finally drags a crown glittering with “intense white light” (A.Q.P 30). This scene is very symbolic as it demonstrates the position of black Africans who used to be kings in their lands, but with colonialism and the coming of whites, they become poor people wearing dirty rags.

In another scene, a group of people with “still, sad, fire-washed faces” entered the room. Again, Sello presents them to Elizabeth by explaining that “it was the expression of people who had been killed and killed again in one cause after the other for the liberation of mankind” (A.Q.P 31). This second scene represents the impact of abuse on populations. A parallel can be drawn here with South Africans and the price to pay for the sake of regaining their freedom since many blacks were dying to liberate themselves.

The third hallucination also points to the effect of power control and oppression on the weak as she sees an Asian man walking towards her and he said, “You have never really made identification with the poor and humble. This time you’re going to really learn how” (A.Q.P 31). A group of people described as “the poor of Africa” placed their bare cut bleeding feet on her bed. One old lady turned to her and said: ‘Will you help us? We are a people who have suffered’”(A.Q.P 31). The crowd turned to Sello whom they called “our king” and Elizabeth imagined him as the Indian Krishna or Rama.

The three scenes bring Elizabeth face to face with the situation of African people denouncing the evils of colonialism that were responsible for the pain and poverty she saw. The impact of such hallucinations is devastating on her psyche

as she finds more and more difficulties to continue having an ordinary daily life with the horrors her mind projects, as Head writes:

> One day her head simply exploded into a sea of pale, blue light. It was the sensation which accompanied it which was so final and absolute: here is the end of all life; here is nothing. It did correspond to the energy needed for the tasks of life: making tea, cooking for a small boy, eating, washing, working. She had to struggle to live…(A.Q.P 36).

In fact, like most schizophrenic patients, Elizabeth faces "alternation of social and cognitive functioning that is the inability to regulate their emotions, cleanliness and planification of daily actions" (Hoeksema 375). This shows also the impact on her body that was weakened day after day by her psychological breakdown and hallucinations. Maintaining her home and taking care of her child become more and more difficult for Elizabeth.

Before living her, the mob of African people with bleeding feet warns her against Sello whom she considers as a saint: "there is an evil in your relationship with Sello. He knows he is controlling your life in the wrong way, and he does not want you to give it up"(A.Q.P 32). This warning raises Elizabeth's suspicions about the real face of Sello who has represented until now a source of comfort and goodness for her. In fact, through Sello, Head depicts the insidious aspect of power that manipulates people's minds without necessarily resorting to violence. Sello controls Elizabeth by controlling her spiritually while Dan, the other imaginary male figure will represent the direct and violent aspect of power. Head uses Sello as a symbol of the abusive South African regime that controls people by implanting and spreading ideologies that consecrate the whites' superiority. By internalizing these ideas, blacks and coloureds are indoctrinated to accept their position in the Apartheid scheme with its abuse and discrimination against them. Elizabeth for example, internalizes her outcast status as a coloured and she has never reacted against the racism she experienced.

In spite of the old lady's warning, Elizabeth trusts Sello and absorbs his words without questioning as the writer explains that Elizabeth "seemed to have no face of her own…she seemed to have been only aside attachment to Sello"(A.Q.P 25). This lack of an independent identity from Sello is understandable if we consider her liminal position as a coloured. Her lack of self-definition is exposed by the critic Natacha Vaubel who points out "the passivity and identity crisis as the root to her madness". She further describes the lack of self-affirmation as:

> A merely one step away from her previous ambiguity with social reality. Indeed, the story of her origin in South Africa is really a non-story in which Elizabeth is defined in terms of what she lacked; whiteness or blackness. Throughout the beginning of the novel Elizabeth repeatedly asks, But who she was?. In her childhood Elizabeth was forcibly prevented from developing any coherent sense of self.(Vaubel 84)

Her experience with Sello and the other figures of her nightmares will help her find answers to these questions about where she belongs and put an end to her sense of alienation as a coloured. Madness serves as an outlet for her to place words on the pain she feels because of the Apartheid system. In this sense, the text corresponds to Fanon's claim that madness is the systematic mental oppression of the colonized. Elizabeth's liminal position between the blacks and whites is responsible for the deterioration of her mental health as we have stated before. In fact, Elizabeth is an example of the native intellectual who, according to Fanon, "will very often fall back upon irrational attitudes and will develop a psychology which is dominated by exceptional sensitivity and susceptibility"(Fanon, *The Wretched* 200). Elizabeth's "sensitivity" made her predisposed to fall into paranoid schizophrenia through which she tells not only her story, but also that of her nation. Elizabeth's nervous system that is described in the novel as "shaking under the strain"(A.Q.P 116) corresponds to what Fanon calls the "nervous conditions of the native" in *Black Skins, White Masks* that is described not only as an individualized mental psychological disorder that affects the black, but also as a collective disease resulting from imperial racism. Head also demonstrates that Elizabeth's mental status is shared by the rest of her

community as she writes: “Elizabeth lived the back-breaking life of all people in South Africa. It was like living with a permanent nervous tension ”(A.Q.P 35)

Indeed, throughout the novel, black people who had been victims of Apartheid and fled to Botswana, had experienced the same mental disorders. The correlation between racial discrimination and psychological breakdown is expressed by the writer through Eugene, a South African refugee who was working on “the theory that South Africans usually suffered from some form of mental aberration”(A.Q.P 58). Madness can be read as a trope to the South African society where the whites’ supremacy made of it a “deranged” society. Madness is also seen as a condition of trespassing for Elizabeth that allows her to break the boundaries of race set by the Apartheid system between the blacks and whites. According to Fanon, “the native’s response to the psychological limits” imposed by the colonial division of the world into two distinct poles for blacks and whites is “to dream of motion”(Fanon, *The Wretched* 200), that is to imagine moving across Apartheid’s borders and going out of its compartments. In this respect, the critic Helen Kapstein comments on the use of madness in the novel: “the trope of madness opens a range of transgressive border-crossings and allows her [Head] to shuttle between various identities, genders, sexualities and nation-sates”(Kapstein 71). By letting her imagination free during her episodes of delirium, Elizabeth could embody the identity she wants and break all barriers that she could not have overcome in real life.

Elizabeth’s madness is generated by her lack of belonging and sense of rejection. Unfortunately, coming to Botswana did not bring any relief for her as she expected because she fails to integrate the village community mainly because she lacks knowledge of African culture. This state of isolation accentuated her psychological problems. Sello uses her sense of non-adequacy as a coloured to torture her and break her strength. Using the mythical figure of Medusa, he makes Elizabeth realise her pariah state in an African culture. Medusa represents

the typical black woman with her “pitch-black” skin colour and “broad lips” at the opposite of Elizabeth. Medusa stands in the novel for the black community that rejects Elizabeth because of her origins: “she looked at Elizabeth like a wild-eyed Medusa. She started shouting in a shrill, high voice: we don’t want you here. This is my land. These are my people. We keep our things to ourselves”(A.Q.P 38). In fact, Medusa embodies the negative social attitudes of the black community that has prejudice about Elizabeth as a coloured educated woman. The feminist critic Shivalik Katoch Pathania comments on Medusa’s attempt to destroy Elizabeth: “Medusa is linked with the ethnic tribes and ‘the poor of Africa’... She constantly reminds her of her status as an educated coloured woman that becomes a means of excluding her from the African community. She accuses Elizabeth of not being a genuine African”(Pathania 94). Medusa uses all sorts of verbal and physical assaults to torture Elizabeth and eliminate her and “each time Elizabeth is hit by the thunder bolt of the Medusa, she has to collapse and remain in bed for two days to end”(A.Q.P 62).

Elizabeth is accused of not being a genuine African by Medusa as she lacks knowledge of African languages. In fact, most of Head’s writings lack native black cultural references as she resorts to universal myths and images in the novel. She uses for example Buddah, Krishna, Caligula, Medusa, Hitler and many other mythical and historical figures compared to other African women writers like Buchi Emecheta whose texts reflect strongly the Nigerian culture and traditional songs, images and myths. Lewis Nkozi, for example, has been very critical of Head’s ignorance of African culture. He declares the novel to be a “disastrous failure” due mainly to “an unassimilated use of religious mysticism and the classical symbols which inhibit our sympathies”(Nkozi 101). This statement brings us again to Head's literary nationality that was difficult to classify. Critics and readers differed in identifying her art (black or white, South African, western or Botswanan). However, it should be noted that Head is not to blame for the absence of African elements in her writings because she simply could not use a

culture that she did not know. It is her past as a coloured orphan that is responsible for her exclusion from African culture. When she moved to Botswana, the writer also faced problems of integration that were complicated by her lack of mastery of Tswana language. This lack of belonging and identification with a given culture helped Head reflect the characters' sense of alienation since she has experienced that feeling.

Like her heroine, Head experiences a problem of identification and fails to define herself according to Botswana cultural standards. In other words, she is according to Hersham Bhana "detribalized as a coloured"(Bhana 39) as Elizabeth claims: "It wasn't my fault…I'm not a tribal African. If I had been, I would have known the exact truth…there aren't secrets among tribal Africans. I was shut out from the everyday affairs of the world"(A.Q.P 145). Here again, Elizabeth relates her "detribalization" to Apartheid that condemns her parents' relation as illegal. Her father who could have transmitted to her African tribal traditions had to disappear because he was running the risk of imprisonment for contraventing the Immorality Act. Elizabeth's liminal situation led to her ambivalence towards the question of race. She has internalized Apartheid ideologies based on the stigmatization of racial difference and this stigma conditioned her not to see herself in kinship with black Africans. According to Brighton Vledi-Kamanga, for a long time,"Elizabeth feels her social difference in the form of an inferiority complex whereby she views herself as a half-breed, and a mixed-breed"(Vledi - Kamanga 170) which participated in her alienation.

In addition to Medusa's work to degrade Elizabeth as an outcast from the African tribal life, she is tortured by another imaginary character who as stated earlier embodies the visible, violent and direct aspect of power. The real Dan is a handsome black millionaire living in the Motabeng village who is projected in her hallucinations as a seductive man with "dazzling enchantment". Dan has a

different strategy to destroy Elizabeth; their relation is rather physical contrary to Sello who is connected to her spiritually.

After their first encounter, Dan starts his work to destroy Elizabeth by displaying his hypersexuality as a way to show his power and control. He makes her realise her inadequacy as a black woman by displaying his numerous female conquests with physical assets that she lacks. His plan is to seduce her and then make her jealous of his women to destroy her self-esteem as a woman. The aim is to transform her into a sexual object in his collection. The theme of sexual objectification and its relation to Elizabeth's alienation will be explored in the following chapter.

Dan's obsession with his sexual performance may be read as a stereotypic representation of the black man as sexually hyperactive. Elizabeth's projection of Dan a sex addict reflects a preconceived internalization of the white man's vision of the black man described by Frantz Fanon:

> The civilized white man retains an irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest. In one way, these fantasies respond to Freud's life instincts. Projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man behaves as if the Negro had them…the Negro is fixated at the genital…the Negro symbolises the biological danger. (Fanon, *Black Skin* 128)

This view of the black man stigmatizes him as purely biological and denies him any form of intelligence. Elizabeth is perpetuating this stigma by conceiving Dan as an obscene figure who criticizes her for her sexual impotence. He shares Medusa's racist ideology that excludes Elizabeth as a coloured and refuses to touch her fearing to be contaminated by a "half-breed". Like Medusa, he started a moral harassment through which he reminds her of her "tainted blood" as he kept turning a recorder in her head with degrading words and statements such as "Dog, filthy, the African will eat you to death"(A.Q.P 45) or "you're an inferior as a coloured" (A.Q.P 127). Described as "a Nationalist in a country where people were only concerned about tribal affairs" (A.Q.P 104), Dan represents the black

power in South Africa. Head employs this character to criticise the Nationalist movement and Black Consciousness Movement with their fanatical members. The critic Stephani Newell describes this aspect of the novel:

> Dan's leprosy like fear of coloureds or "half-breeds" echoing Medusa, is an expression against inter-cultural and sexual dialogism, a horror that they might "contaminate" his pure black skin as manifestation of racial syncretism- "coloureds" appear to cloud the "specular" struggle between moral positions commonly associated with South African Nationalist Movements.(Newell 68)

As a black racist, Dan convinces Elizabeth that she is hated and rejected by all the people around her be they black or white. After keeping the record saying: "Die Die, die you dog! I hate you!" in her head, she decides to react to this hatred by killing someone and Mrs. Jones's house was the nearest. She hits the lady on her head and after that violent act, Elizabeth decides to return home and kill her son and commit suicide.

This scene demonstrates that the paranoia of Elizabeth has reached its peak when reality and hallucinations merged into one. In fact, in Paranoid schizophrenia "the voices can continuously formulate critics about what you think or make cruel comments on your real or imaginary mistakes. The voices can also command you to make things that can be harmful for you or the others"(*Medical Education and Research*). Thus, it is not surprising then that Elizabeth obeys Dan's voice that commands her to harm Mrs. Jones, her son and kill herself.

Among the persons she tries to hurt also is the real Sello who lives in the village. After Dan convinces her that Sello has an incestuous relation with his daughter, she confuses reality with delirium and posts on the wall of the post office a note with the inscription: "Sello is a filthy pervert who sleeps with his daughter"(A.Q.P 175). At this level, Elizabeth has hatred for both blacks and whites as she attacks persons from both communities because she realizes that she cannot belong to any of them. She is first abandoned by her white family and

now she fails to integrate the black society of Botswana. She finally explodes: “I am not the dog of the Africans, I ‘m not the dog of these bloody bastard of Botswana ”(A.Q.P 175). When Elizabeth comes to consider Africans as pervert and filthy, Dan’s work was completed.

After these incidents, Elizabeth is finally admitted to the mental hospital that she describes as “a terrible stench” where “the patients washed out the whole ward in the early morning, swept the grounds, washed out linen and they had no soap for batting or towels to dry the body”(A.Q.P 171). This description of the place reflects the racist treatment Elizabeth is subject to as a refugee from South Africa. She only has access to poor health care on the basis of her origins. She is labelled “wild animal” by the nurses there because of her uncontrolled anger and hysterical behaviour. Her alienation from both races is reflected by her aggressive behaviour towards the persons she attacks when she was out and the mistreatment of the nurses inside the hospital. One of the nurses makes a very salient comment that points to the cause of Elizabeth’s madness: “you are mad…you hate black people, you hate white people”(A.Q.P 182). This statement explains clearly that Elizabeth’s alienation is the consequence of her inability to identify with any of the races which led to her madness. In other words, the racism and discrimination she met in South Africa and Botswana as a coloured woman creates in her a loss of identity.

She refuses to talk to the only psychiatrist of the hospital who was indifferent to her. Fanon comments on the doctor’s attitude when dealing with Elizabeth who stands for the black patient: “The doctor quickly gave up the hope of obtaining information from the colonized patient and fell back on the clinical examination, thinking that nobody would be more eloquent”(Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* 139).

The asylum holds a symbolic significance in the novel as an instrument of governments to implement control over its citizens. Michel Foucault captures this

intention claiming that “confinement is a police matter that provides a new homeland for madness”(Foucault 46). Indeed, Bessie Head was worried to be deported by Botswana government if she is proved mentally ill. In a letter sent to a friend, she writes about her fear to be deported: “If I’d gone to a doctor they’d have certified me insane, and deported me back to a mental asylum in South Africa”(Head, *Gesture of Belonging* 14). Head has to report weekly to the police camp for thirteen years after she went out of the mental hospital (219), and this limiting act of being policed confirms the correlation between psychiatry and politics that Head stresses in her novel. Elizabeth is also asked by the school administration where she used to work to bring a certificate of sanity from a medical officer. Madness then is used by the Botswana government as a pretext to get rid of the numerous refugees who came from South Africa which confirms the state’s use of mental hospitals to reach political ends.

In the hospital, Elizabeth’s health worsened with the repeated hallucinations she continued to have and the recorder that Dan kept turning in her mind about the blacks’ desire to kill her. In the hospital, Elizabeth meets a psychiatrist and their relation is very symbolic in the novel. In fact, after being indifferent to her as a coloured patient, he suddenly becomes interested in her case because he learned that like him, she comes from South Africa. He is depicted as someone who really hates black people and believes that the independence of South Africa will not change the supremacy of the white government. He gradually starts to see in Elizabeth a friend or “comrade racialist”. Her aggressive behaviour with the black nurses is interpreted by the doctor as a proof of her hatred for the black race. The critic Hershini Bhana comments on the false diagnosis made by the psychiatrist:

> The doctor regards her performance of hatred of black people, particularly Dan, as real due to her hybridity. She is not one of them and thus her repetition of linguistic violence against ‘pure’ blacks is not seen as internalized self-hate or any other neuroses. Simply put, the doctor thinks Elizabeth is well informed in her opinion about them. He sees in her outbursts, not her nervous conditions, but a fellow racist.(Bhana 41)

Elizabeth is not even recognized mad by the doctor who considers her case as a "normal" reaction of a coloured woman who hates blacks. She is not treated for her paranoid schizophrenia and asked after a while to leave the hospital. In this sense, the description of the racist psychiatrist corresponds to Fanon's view that the doctor under colonialism is associated with authority. Fanon conflates the doctor with the policeman and the colonial landowner when he observes: "In the colonial situation, going to see the doctor, the administrator, the constable, or the mayor are identical moves"(Fanon, A Dying Colonialism 139). The psychiatrist then has the power to tag the label "insane" on any refugee that can be deported; hence, he endorsed the role of the magistrate or policeman who holds authority over blacks and coloureds living there. Elizabeth understands the power that the doctor has over her and she has no choice but accept being associated with him because she knows the risk she runs if she is declared insane.

After some months spent at the mental hospital taking sedatives, Elizabeth is released and she returns home. Her depression not being healed, she continues to have hallucinations which become so overwhelming that she starts to have suicidal drives following the path of her mother. Elizabeth tries hard to cling to life by trying to find a job after she was fired from the school because of her stay in the mental hospital. With the help of Eugene, who will become one of her friends, she starts work in a collective garden with some women of the village. There she faces racism from the Danes who were supervising a programme called Peace Corp to promote development in the Motabeng village. In the garden, Elizabeth meets Camilla, the Danish woman who considers black people as illiterate idiots; Head writes:

> All of a sudden, the vegetable garden was the most miserable place on earth. The students had simply become humiliated like boys shoved around by a hysterical white woman who never saw black people as people but as objects of permanent idiocy. She could not even begin to see the extreme delicacy and, precariousness of the experiment, that they were young men who had had no future and were suddenly being given one, and that they took Eugene's offer very seriously.(A.Q.P 76)

Camilla looks down at Botswana students and holds a typical colonialist and patronizing attitude towards them. She embodies Fanon's representation of the white who sees himself superior to blacks. Her attitude reflects also the so called "white man's burden" to bring civilisation and light to the "primitive" natives who are believed to lack any kind of intellect and progress. Head has described in her letters the extreme racism of the whites she met in Botswana who, according to her, were more hurtful than those in South Africa:

> I lived in South Africa for twenty-seven years. I noticed that whites, all of them would stare silently at a brown or dark brown skin with hate. They never talked to black people…I had a few strained conversations with white liberals. But no South African white had the power to invade my mind nor to arrange of a wide range of hisses and obscenities for me day after day, for fourteen years, as I have experienced in Botswana.(qtd.in Olaussen 177)

In spite of her education, Elizabeth faces the same hatred when she starts working with Camilla who tries to humiliate her by mentioning her "low intellectual level". She asks her to take notes, but she deliberately flung information at her to make them incomprehensible. Elizabeth can see clearly hatred in Camilla's blue eyes as she reduces her to the level of the other illiterate students by claiming that her western culture is so complex and developed that "it takes a certain level of education to understand it "(A.Q.P 79)

The black is classified inferior according to the white man's standards of culture and refinement negating then the native's cultural heritage that should leave place to the western world. Elizabeth asks about the reason why Camilla "takes the inferiority of the black man so much for granted that she thinks nothing of telling us straight to our faces we are stupid"(A.Q.P 82). The answer to her questioning may be found in Fanon's explanation of the white's hatred to the black race:

> I was hated, despised, detested not by the neighbour across the street or my cousin on my mother's side, but by an entire race. I was up against something unreasoned. The psychoanalysts say that nothing is more traumatizing for the young child than his encounter with what is rational. I would personally say that for a man whose

> only weapon is reason, there is nothing more neurotic than contact with unreason.(Fanon, *Black Skin* 89)

In this passage, Fanon explains that there is no "logical" or "reasonable" justification for hatred expressed by the whites towards the black race. This hatred is traumatic for the black man because he is degraded on the basis of skin colour, a fact, he has no control over. This could explain Elizabeth's neurosis since she suffers from rejection from the white and black races without a rational explanation. She observes that Camilla's despise for black students prevents her from seeing the suffering of these people that was responsible for their illiteracy. They are not illiterate because they are black, but because of the conditions they went through as Head writes: "she's never stopped a minute, passed, stood back and watched the serious, concentrated expression of the farm students. There's a dismal life behind them of starvation and years and years of drought when there was no food, no hope, no anything"(A.Q.P 82).

Elizabeth's analysis of the oppressor/oppressed relation is very interesting to note. The liminal situation in between two races gives her insight into the ills of each. Blacks who suffer from oppression and discrimination turn themselves to be racist towards coloureds reproducing the whites' attitudes. Coloureds also may consider blacks as inferior as they identify more with the whites. We can conclude that through her experience, Elizabeth understands that racism is not restricted to a given race over the others. Elizabeth's contact with the Botswanan people brings her to realize that even the black community has its evils. Dan and Medusa who represent "the surface reality of African society"(A.Q.P 35) embody the vice that is part of it. Her meeting with Camilla and the psychiatrist allows her to see the racial hatred of the whites in relation to the black people. However, Head equally represents very positive black and white characters in Elizabeth's life who had supportive and caring roles. They even helped her in her healing process.

Eugene, for example, is constructed in the novel as a white man who gives hope for blacks and refugees in his village. He believes in the importance of education and entrepreneurship to change things and bring welfare to black people in South Africa and Rhodesia. These were inserted in youth development work-groups to learn skills in building, and carpeting. He also sets local industries for the poor villagers. His aim was to blur the line between the élite and illiterate people who had no means for education. In addition to Eugene, Tom is another supportive character who plays an important role in the process of Elizabeth's recovery from her psychological breakdown. Tom is an American white volunteer who came to help in Botswana. He becomes one of the closest friends of Elizabeth who shares with him her thoughts and secrets.

Finally, even among the racialist Danes who supervised the garden, Birgette, a young white lady denounces the racist behaviour of her counterparts and completely assumes equal status with Elizabeth. She even suffered from the rejection of her friends at home who did not understand her devotion to volunteer in places like Africa: "I first volunteered to teach in Algeria, then I went home for a while. Friends I'd had refused to talk to me as though I had acquired some contamination. I expect to lose a few more friends when I go back again"(A.Q.P 83). In spite of her people's prejudice about the African people, Birgette becomes one of the closest friends of Elizabeth sharing garden work.

This insight about the human being's essence in relation to good/evil, racism/tolerance and love/hatred dichotomies that govern Man comes as an outcome of the hellish journey Elizabeth went through when she fell deep down the pits of paranoid schizophrenia. She comes up with the enlightening conclusion that the human being is too complex to be considered exclusively bad or entirely good. Oppression has no colour for she realises that both races can be corrupt when given access to power. She has been victim of both black and white

people's rejection and stigmatisation as a coloured who is seen unfit according to racial standards of both African and western cultures.

This part has been dedicated to the study of various forms of racial oppression in South Africa. It has been demonstrated that Apartheid ideologies based on whites' superiority went hand in hand with abusive laws and measures taken by the white government to control the other races. In fact, segregation was seen everywhere in education, schooling, housing, job opportunities, in addition to institutionalized laws that reflect clear disparities between the whites and the blacks living in South Africa. Mouse and Elizabeth have been victims of all these forms of oppression as coloureds which led to their alienation. Mouse becomes a weak, introvert, isolated woman who finds difficulties to express herself. Her experience with writing and encounter with Johnny helped her question her status and finally put words on her suffering. Elizabeth's alienation was more severe for her traumatic experience of rejection as a coloured led to her psychological breakdown. Madness seems to be the only outlet for her to articulate her trauma and her psychological journey allows the writer to reveal the evils of oppression and abuse under the Apartheid system.

This chapter was meant to throw light on the link between racism and the protagonists' alienation. Whether as immigrants living in Britain or as citizens under the Apartheid system, it has been proved that any form of power abuse on the base of racial differences can have devastating effects on the human being's self-esteem and even mental health. The four characters fail to belong to their social entourage because they were judged unfit according to standards established by racist institutions whether in Britain or South Africa and Bostwana as demonstrated earlier. Stigmatized as inferior individuals, the female characters felt estranged and faced difficulties to identify with both black and white communities. The next chapter will deal with the sexual alienation of the main characters and the way their bodies were treated as sexual commodities.

Chapter 3 :

Sexuality and Women's Alienation

a-Women's Objectification and Sexual Commodification

The third type of alienation under study in our research concerns sexuality. In fact, when dealing with identity building, we cannot escape talking about women's perceptions of their bodies and the way they physically relate to men. Sexuality is a thorny topic to explore as it had remained, for a long time, a taboo that people prefer to avoid talking or writing about. This silence of most societies about sexuality has encouraged different forms of abuse to take place and persist such as rape, incest and marital rape. Many feminists dedicated their works to study women's sexuality and throw light on this essential aspect in men/women's relations. Toril Moi's *Sex*, *Gender and The Body*, Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex,* Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Mothering* and Raewyn Connell's *Gender and Power: Sexuality, the Person and Sexual Politics* are some of the most important works that help better grasp sexuality and the role it plays in identity construction.

In their novels, Buchi Emecheta and Bessie Head have also broken the taboos around sexuality especially in relation to the themes of incest and rape that were rarely voiced in early African literature. In fact, after the independence of their countries, most African male writers considered that the treatment of such realities of sexual abuse was disadvantageous to the picture of the African culture. Within the process of correcting the false and devaluating representations of the black continent that were reflected in the writings of westerners, post-independence African writers were rather supposed to give a positive image about Africa. However, this eager praise and celebration of the African culture was at the expense of denouncing some oppressive traditions and practices that harmed women. We can give the example of Sembene Ousmane who wrote about the criticism he faced when he was to write a story about incest in his society:

> The story I am going to tell you is as old as the world itself…over the years, I have often discussed it with you, my fellow Africans. Your reasoning has never convinced me. However, one point we agreed: I must not write this story. You argued that it should bring dishonour to us, the black race. Worse still, you insisted, the detractors of the Negro African civilisation would latch into it and […] use it to cover us with shame […]. But when will we stop acknowledging and approving our actions in terms of the other man's colour, instead in terms of our humanity?(Sembene 5)

The consequence of this intentional ignorance of sexual abuse against women was to worsen the situation since victims could not denounce such crimes. The fear of being judged by society that prefers to ignore rape and incest made women experience a double alienation. They are physically alienated from their bodies that are assaulted and violated by men and psychologically silenced by their entourage. Sexuality then becomes a salient topic in many African women's writings such as Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1971), Nawel El Sadawi's *Women at Point Zero* (1983), Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982), *The Rape of Shavi* (1983) and *Gwendolen* (1989), and Lindsey Collen's *The Rape of Sita* (1994). In these works, African women writers depict sexuality within the patriarchal order to show how it was used as a means to subdue women via the control of their bodies. In this sense, sexuality is approached from the scope of power as it allows men to objectify women and perpetuate the patriarchal ideology of men's superiority.

In this respect, we intend to explore the way sexuality is treated in the four works and its contribution to the main characters' alienation. The protagonists have a special relation with sexuality as they are represented as victims of different forms of sexual abuses including incest, rape, spouse rape, and sexual objectification. The aim is to study these sexual practices and explain their devastating effects on the main characters. To approach sexual alienation in our novels, the theory of sexual objectification can help study how women are turned into sexual objects within the patriarchal system. This theory is developed by Barbara Fredrikson and Tomi-Ann Roberts in *Objectification Theory: Towards Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks* (1997) where

they set the tenets of their theory including the reasons for women's objectification, the way they are objectified by both men and institutions, women's internalisation of sexual objectification, and its consequence on their physical and mental health.

Objectification theory emanates from the works of feminists who rejected the reductionist view of woman as a "body" or as an object that should be looked at, evaluated and controlled. Simone de Beauvoir captured this limiting definition of women as follows:

> Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female. This word is sufficient to define her…the term female is derogatory not because it emphasizes woman's animality, but because it imprisons her in her sex.(De Beauvoir 34)

The problem of defining a woman as exclusively "female" does not lie in her biological attributes that allow her to procreate, but rather when biology becomes the sole definition that imprisons her in these roles. Feminists have been understandably suspicious of such perspectives that explore the body as anatomical. They rather moved the focus to the socio-cultural influences that define the body or what is better known as the sex versus gender debate. Fredrickson and Roberts explains this view: "the common thread running through all forms of sexual objectification is the experience of being treated as a Body (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others"(Fredrickson and Roberts 174). They further explain that the sexual objectification of women takes place when a "woman's body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person. She is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire"(174). In fact, in addition to biology, the body is socially and culturally constructed since it depends on the environment in which it evolves. This idea is reflected in De Beauvoir's famous statement using the term "becoming" rather than "being" a woman since one is not born, but

rather becomes a woman. Hence, gender identity is continuously shaped and not fixed in the biological fact of being a woman or a man.

Objectification theory works against such biological determinism to prove that women have internalised a vision of themselves that reduces them to bodies. Although sexual objectification is just one part of gender oppression, it leads to other forms of abuse such as discrimination at work in addition to many forms of sexual victimisation. We can assume then that there is a strong link between the social environment and women's objectification.

After clarifying what sexual objectification implies, we should turn to explore the process by which women are objectified. Szymanski, Moffit and Carr explain that sexual objectification occurs at two levels: the first is direct (interpersonal) and the second is indirect or subtle (cultural or immersed). In the direct category, objectification takes place during women's lived experiences and interpersonal interactions with men. Research indicates that being sexually objectified is a regular occurrence for most women who experience sexual comments, sexualized gazing, ogling, leering, catcalling and various forms of harassment. Everywhere, a woman can be subject to such objectifying attitudes. In addition to every day or "common place" forms of sexual visual or verbal objectification: "many women may be victims of more extreme forms of sexual objectification through actual sexual victimisation that may take the form of rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment"(Szymanski et al.11-12). These forms will be the focus of the second part of this chapter that is going to treat the themes of rape and incest in the novels since Gwendolen, Mouse and Adah are victims of these forms of sexual abuse.

The second category of sexual objectification can be subtle or indirect. It is by far the most complex form of women's objectification because it is induced everywhere and women very often do not even realize that they are objectified. The first tenet of subtle sexual objectification is cultural, especially through

media. Studies have demonstrated that media has contributed the most to the enforcement of the idea that a woman is an object to be looked at, evaluated and appropriated.

The depiction of women in media including video games, commercials, television shows, movies, videos, and magazines reveals that women more often than men are depicted in sexualized and objectified manners. They appear "wearing revealing and provocative clothing, portrayed in ways that emphasize their body parts and sexual readiness, serving as decorative effects and sometimes their bodies are displayed headless"(10). These images are internalized by men who come to see women as mere sexual objects and these women are often victims of men's sexist comments. Gwendolen is seen by the Jamaican community of Granville as "seductive" girl who uses her body to attract men.

Women generally internalize such objectifying representations, such as Elizabeth who develops a distorted image of sexuality. She gradually accepts to be seen as a commodity that is constantly under men's observation mainly Dan and Sello. In addition to media, women are also indirectly objectified by immersed forms known as environment or intuition forms. It occurs when women find themselves in environments where sexual objectification is promoted such as beauty contests, and modelling. At a more general level, many women suffer from sexual objectification at the professional level where career advance is dependent on physical attributes. This is the case of Mouse who suffers from sexual harassment as a journalist.

The internalization of these forms of objectification whether direct or indirect leads women to accept this view of themselves, that is to say, to adopt the observer's perspective on their physical self. This process is known as self-objectification through which a woman tries to fit the other's perception about herself. this can lead, according to Fredrickson and Roberts, to what is known as

“habitual body monitoring, which in turn can increase body shame, low self-esteem and anxiety”(Fredrickson and Roberts 173). When a woman fails to meet the standards imposed by the observer, the inevitable consequence of self-objectification is women’s alienation from their bodies.

In the novels at hand, the four female protagonists are objectified at different levels by men and this sexual objectification has contributed to their oppression and alienation. Adah in *Second Class Citizen* is reduced by her husband, Francis to a sexual machine to produce children. Elizabeth’s body is equally objectified by Dan who devalues her as she does not meet the African standards of sexual readiness and black women’s attractiveness. In *Gwendolen*, the sexual objectification belongs to the extreme form where violence is used to sexually assault the little girl who is victim of rape and incest. Similarly, Mouse becomes a sexual object in the hands of Johnny who exercises a total control over her body leading at the end of the novel to incest.

It is clear that there are two forms of objectification in the novels. It goes from indirect objectification expressed by the protagonists’ lack of control over their bodies to more extreme levels of sexual victimisation by incest and rape. This part is dedicated to the first form of sexual objectification undergone mainly by Adah and Elizabeth. Sexuality appears as a means to impose patriarchal men’s dominance over women and a link will be drawn between power and sexuality to show the impact of this form of oppression on women’s physical and psychological state.

In *Second Class Citizen,* Emecheta explores women’s sexual objectification through the theme of birth control. In fact, birth control and abortion are among the most controversial aspects of feminist ideology that defends women’s rights to control their bodies especially in relation to procreation. The feminist activist Deborah Madsen explains how feminism fights patriarchal regimes that deny women’s access to contraception and medical assisted abortion:

> The control of feminine sexuality is achieved through restrictions upon the right to contraception and abortion, control of reproductive technologies including sterilisation and male sexual violence; all which ensure masculine control of feminine sexuality.(Madsen 155)

Adah represents this situation in the novel as she faces problems to have access to contraception. There is no doubt that Emecheta celebrates motherhood in her writings as a way for women to reach self-fulfilment, but when it becomes a source of misery and a threat to the mother's health, she definitely rejects it. In fact, after giving birth to three children, Adah decides to resort to a birth control device in order to prevent a future pregnancy. She got serious health complications during her last baby delivery and she was afraid of having health problems. Their financial situation also made it difficult to raise their three children who were cramped in a two-room apartment without a kitchen, bathroom and toilet. Adding to that, Adah could not afford another maternity leave because Francis was jobless and the only salary they had, came from the library where she worked.

All these reasons made it logical to stop having more children at least until their situation gets better. However, Francis who stands for the traditional African values, refuses categorically the idea of birth control. For Francis who defines a woman as a "bearer of children", contraception is seen as an abominable sin. As a man representing the patriarchal order, Francis has complete control over Adah's body which is there to satisfy his sexual desires and bear a lot of children. Her body is then an object, a property that depends on its owners' will. Adah cannot take decisions concerning her body because following traditions, it belongs to her husband after he has paid her bride price. What is ironic in Adah's case is that Francis did not even pay her dowry when he married her, but he treats her as his property.

When Adah decides to transgress her husband's rejection of contraception, she is terrified by his reaction. The only solution she finds, is to do it secretly as

Emecheta writes: “the fear of what Francis would say and what he would write to his mother and her relations loomed, full of doom, in her subconscious” (S.C.C 120). It is interesting to note that Adah is not only scared by her husband, but she is also terrorised by the family-in-law’s reaction about her decision. This fear suggests how her Nigerian patriarchal traditional society objectified women’s bodies. Everyone, except Adah has a say about her right to use birth control means as she desperately asks: “Could not the woman be given the opportunity of exercising her own will”(S.C.C 117).

In spite of all these apprehensions, Adah decides to visit a Family Planning Clinic to get a means to prevent future pregnancies. She is surprised to discover that nothing can be given to her without the consent of her husband who is supposed to sign a form provided by the nurse. She is then devastated because she knows that Francis would never accept to sign such a document.

Hence, not only Adah’s traditional Nigerian values prevent her from controlling her body, but she is also faced by British legislations that helped Francis further objectify her. From a feminist perspective, we can claim that Emecheta uses Adah to raise issues of women’s access to contraception as many women in Africa were dying because of repeated pregnancies and non-medically assisted abortions. Adah is afraid of dying as she got a haemorrhage when she was delivering her last baby which she considers as a danger signal. Francis prefers to take the risk of losing his wife when he insists on having more children. Subsequently, Adah forges her husband’s signature on the form and she decides to get birth gear.

Adah has to lie to her husband for it is the only option she gets to avoid another “traumatic birth” (S.C.C 118). However, her sense of guilt makes her so nervous that she reveals to Francis the truth about going to the clinic and forging his signature. The reaction of Francis was more violent than what Adah expected as he savagely beat her and accused her of bringing dishonour to him and his

family. He called her names and threatened her to write to his mother and tell her about what Adah had done: “she, a married woman…came to London and became clever enough within a year to go behind his back and equip herself with a cap which he, Francis was sure had been invented for harlots and single women”(S.C.C 121).

Adah is then labelled “whore” and accused of taking men behind her husband’s back just because she tried to protect herself from an unwanted pregnancy that could have killed her. Adah’s thoughts go to her mother-in-law’s reaction when she learns that she has equipped herself with something that “would allow her to sleep around and not have any children” (S.C.C 117). The critic Mureeza Iram comments on Adah’s passivity as being “partially the product of stigma attached to perceptions of inadequate comportment by married women who are often perceived as holders of community honor”(Iram 2). In fact, her fear of society’s reaction although she is now living in London reflects Adah’s inadequate and absurd desire to respect Nigerian traditions in a different environment with different realities.

However, it should be stated that this incident of domestic violence is a turning point in Adah’s life, after which she realises that her marriage with Francis cannot last for a long time. After Francis savagely beat her, all the tenants with Pa Noble at their head, came to rescue her. He told them about the birth control gear and Adah was so ashamed that she understood at last that she could not live with him anymore. However, her decision to leave him is soon aborted by a new unexpected pregnancy to the bewilderment of Adah. Not wanting the baby, she secretly tried to get rid of the foetus by taking abortion pills prescribed to her by an Indian doctor, but the medication did not work, and this added to the despair of Adah who lost hope to quit her abusive husband with the coming child. Adah is also afraid of her family-in-law’s reaction for after Francis tells them about the

birth control stuff she was taking, she is now pregnant; they would probably think that the child is not her husband's.

We can deduce that the hold of traditional patriarchal society is still tight on Adah whose misery with her abusive husband is being further amplified by the community codes and expectations. Despite the distance, Adah is not free because she remains psychologically objectified by her community in Nigeria. Her body is the place where patriarchy is inscribed since this body should fit the reductionist definition of a woman as sexual object and producer of off spring.

In *A Question of Power* Elizabeth's body is assaulted by Medusa and Dan who use their sexual potency to denigrate her as a coloured woman. Head uses the Greek mythical figure of Medusa that is the epitome of feminine power as she represents a combination of sexuality and danger to men. Sent by Sello to torment Elizabeth, Medusa plays the role of revealing to her the repressed side of her identity that is sexuality. She is the opposite of Elizabeth because of her excessive display of sexual desires, breaking the laws of "decencies" as Head describes her:

> Medusa was smiling. She had some top-secret information to impart to Elizabeth. It was about her vagina, without any bother for decencies, she sprawled her long black legs in the air, and the most exquisite sensation travelled out of her towards Elisabeth. It enveloped Elizabeth from head to toe like a slow, deep, sensuous bomb. It was like falling into deep, warm waters, lazily raising one hand and resting in a heaven of bliss. Then she looked at Elizabeth and smiled, a mocking superior smile: 'you haven't got anything near that, have you?'(A.Q.P 44)

Surprisingly enough, Elizabeth takes pleasure in this scene which suggests that she is not used to considering her intimate body parts as a "pleasant area" (A.Q.P 44). This repression of sexual desire results from Elizabeth's internalized devalued image of her body as a woman and as a coloured. Medusa appears as a stereotype of African women's sexuality. These stereotypes were promoted and propagated by a white South African government that aimed at prohibiting sexual intercourse between the whites and blacks as David Kerr observes: "Elizabeth as a result of

her childhood exposure to the problem of inter-racial taboos about sex, has introjected some of the most virulent apartheid stereotypes about African sexuality"(Kerr 169). Black women are, in this sense, considered as responsible for seducing white men in case of contraventing the Immorality Act due to their "concupiscence". The creation of Medusa and other female figures that would be discussed later in this chapter by Elizabeth's psyche is an indicator of the social conception of females' sexuality. Black women's stigmatisation as "prostitutes" with hyper sexuality goes hand in hand with the ideology of women's sexual objectification turning them into instruments serving men's desire. It is an immersed sexual objectification since it is part of a larger political scheme that aims at separating the races under the Apartheid system.

Portraying Medusa as a woman who takes control and assumes her sexuality may also be disturbing for readers who according to Helen Cixous are rather used to expecting only female "objectivity" and supressing their subjectivity and desire (Cixous 888). Medusa overtly expresses her sexual desires and even orchestrates the sexual act which implies a reversal of power control with men. Medusa shakes Elizabeth and confronts her with her own erotic desires since after all, this mythical character is a creation of her subconscious. Hence, we can deduce that Elizabeth is afraid of her own sexuality.

We need to dig into Elizabeth's past in order to understand this fear of sexuality. Indeed, she internalises enforced taboos by Apartheid about illegal and socially condemned sexual relations that her parents went through. In her mind, sexuality is associated with abomination and obscenity as it has led to the destruction of her parents that is her mother's suicide. But most importantly, it makes of her an illegitimate child. The other experience Elizabeth had with sexuality in her adulthood is not brighter. She married a man who took mistresses and proves to be homosexual, a fact that reinforces Elizabeth's low feeling of her body's sexual appeal. This traumatic experience with sexuality creates in her a

distorted image of a sexually potent woman that takes form in the exaggerated Medusa figure. It was a projection of her desire to take power back from men who sexually reduced her. The scene when Medusa shows Elizabeth her vagina is suggestive of this sexually grotesque empowered image of women:

> [Sello] seemed to be desperately attracted to that thing the Medusa had which no woman had. And even this was a mockery. It was abnormally constructed, like seven thousand vaginas in one, turned up and operating at white heat. And an atmosphere of brutal desire pervaded everything. (A.Q.P 64)

Overpowering Medusa is then an attempt to gain control back over women's bodies. It is a reversal of power where Sello loses control, hence, men are sexually objectified by Medusa who uses her body to change gender roles. She confirms the link between sexuality and power since women are objectified because of their lack of body control as Head describes her new position: "who's running the show around here? I do. Who's wearing the pants in this house? I am'. She seemed to fill the requirements' (A.Q.P 43).

However, it should be noted that Sello who was orchestrating all these hallucinations, sends Medusa to taunt Elizabeth and wake her repressed erotic drives. He allows Medusa to dominate him as part of the show he sets, but once her role was finished, she was to leave room to the next character who will further denigrate Elizabeth. Indeed, Medusa is defeated by Dan, a man whose sexual power seems to overpass hers by far. Sello's eviction of Medusa by a man seems to confirm the male's dominance in the patriarchal system where sexuality is an instrument of control; as Suzan Gardner writes:

> The Medusa myth makes discernible society's control over the threat of female sexuality. Her falsity corresponds to that of fetish; she exposes the fictional about herself so as to make way for reality for male dominance. Medusa's banishment is the price she must pay for her exposure of what must remain hidden. Thus her hyper sexuality cannot survive in light of masculine control, which renders women absent and invisible.(Gardner 51)

We can conclude that Head's choice of portraying this hypersexual powerful woman through the myth of Medusa is a symbolic way to reflect the sexual

subordination of women. It is after all just a myth to have a woman who sexually objectifies men and Medusa in Greek mythology is after all, victim of rape by Poseidon and betrayal by Athena. Hence, her rapacious sexuality can be seen as a form of revenge for her. Like the Greek mythical Medusa who is killed by Perseus, the character of Medusa in the novel is defeated by Dan. She turns then into a victim of patriarchal laws, so her use in the novel is very symbolic.

In addition to Sello's project of destroying Elizabeth through Medusa, Dan uses female figures to sexually reduce her. According to the feminist critic Nancy Topping Bazin, Dan and Sello embody the patriarchal order that alienates women from their bodies by setting exaggerated standards difficult if not impossible to meet. As part of the objectification scheme, Sello displays his own attraction to Medusa who seems to have something no other woman has "seven thousands of vaginas in one"(A.Q.P 64). Although in her case they are inhuman feminine attributes, they seem to be the standards set by Sello to define an attractive woman. Elizabeth, of course, has no chance to compete with Medusa, but she internalizes these standards and feels both jealousy for Medusa and contempt for her own body. Nancy Topping Bazin writes:

> Dan and Sello try to kill Elizabeth's spirit. They do this primarily through manipulating her feelings about sexuality and through using sexuality to degrade her. to undermine Elizabeth's sense of herself as a woman, Sello uses Medusa and Dan uses his seventy-one-nice-time girls.(Bazin 52)

In the same perspective, the feminist Tucker Margaret relates the sexual objectification of Elizabeth to the foundation of patriarchy: "*A Question of Power* is about finding freedom from amidst oppression; by exposing hierarchies of power, in particular the objectification of woman as the foundation of patriarchy"(Tucker 181). In fact, Elizabeth's body becomes the terrain on which patriarchal male power is inscribed.

After seducing Elizabeth, Dan starts to sexually degrade her by displaying in front of her a large number of women that represent according to his standards,

how a woman should be. Many of these women are, in fact, pornographic figures including The Womb, Miss Wriggling-Bottom, Madam Squelch-Squelch, Miss Body Beautiful and Miss Pelican-Beak. Their main role is to taunt Elizabeth and make her feel her "failure to line up to a socially accepted image of womanhood"(Lewis 212). We can claim that Pornography is one of the indirect forms of women's sexual objectification. Indeed, the projection of pornographic pictures and videos in media today helps to maintain an image of women as fetishized objects of masculine desire (Fredrickson and Roberts 178). Pornography, in this sense, participates in presenting a distorted image of sexuality where women are reduced to sexual objects to feed the myth of masculine control.

Before displaying the pornographic scenes with his girlfriends, Dan starts by wooing Elizabeth. He makes her feel as "an ancient knowledgeable queen of love"(A.Q.P 106) and Elizabeth falls easily in his trap and even enjoys Dan's seduction. This can be explained by her immense desire to belong to someone and by extension to a community. It is described by Ibrahim Huma as "a desperate gesture of belonging":

> For someone to belong at last, to even a stereotypical sexual image of herself, projected by an 'African man', is extremely alluring.it is through the acceptance of this African man that she hopes to be 'African', and for a long time does not realize that he is also instrumental in her losing ground completely in order to regain it.(Huma 139)

Elizabeth is shocked when Dan starts to appear in her room in the company of other women that he proudly introduces as his "seventy-one-nice-time girls. He reveals then his real face; that of a man "overwhelmed by an obsessive need to live through dominating others" and Elizabeth becomes his "coveted object, a figure he needs to control and possess as part of his own myth of superiority"(Lewis 210). Dan expresses his superiority by calling himself "king of sex" whose "penis was always erected"(A.Q.P 168). In addition to pornographic figures that Dan has in his "harem", Head includes other female sexual

stereotypes such as Miss Sewing Machine, Sugar-Plum Fairy and Miss Pink Sugar Icing who represent the docile woman. Miss Pink Sugar Icing, for example, stands for the naïve subordinate wife who performs domestic tasks while Miss Sugar-Plum Fairy defends him in spite of his infidelities.

Elizabeth then becomes spectator of Dan's sexual relations which take the form of stage acts in front of her. His ultimate aim is to expose his control over his nice-time girls which was expressed through the symbolic power of naming the girls and sex power. The girls are paraded as sexual objects happy to be under the control of Dan to constitute a sexual collection that Elizabeth has to join.

Head's portrayal of the seventy-one-nice-time girls is referred to by Anette Horn as "slave-girl behaviour', a strategy which makes the concept of "memory-work" in relation to female sexualisation. It is "a process of subjectification where by women subordinate themselves to the patriarchal discourse in order to be able to speak as subjects"(Horn 258). She further explains that under the patriarchal system, women are conditioned to perpetuate their conception as objects to stimulate masculine desire:

> Posture, external appearance and movement are adjusted by women themselves in their attempt to confirm to and reinforce the status quo. There is a name for this female participation in the reinforcement of women's subordinate status…slave girl behaviour. (258)

The nice-time girls act as perpetuators of the status quo by conforming to the beauty ideal set by Dan, especially as he is an extension of the patriarchal order. Another name for this "memory work" described by Horn is self-objectification that we have already explained which consists in the internalization of the observer's (Dan) perception of these women and which Elizabeth has to fit.

Dan's aim to make Elizabeth part of his sex object collection reflects his vision of men/women power relation in the patriarchal discourse through which "the nice-time girls appear at some stage or another to have fallen prostrate at his feet,

never to rise again"(A.Q.P 163). However, there is one condition for Elizabeth to integrate his harem; she must become a nice-time girl like the others. Elizabeth has to become a sex object because this is the only way, a woman may exist in Dan's world. His objectification of Elizabeth is completed when he produces a model, or a "master chief" that reshapes Elizabeth into a nice-time girl:

> The model stood up and turned to face Elizabeth. They were identical replicas except that what stood before Elizabeth was a demon of sensuousness. She had thick, swollen sensual lips. She rolled her eyes with mock innocence. Her legs were so weak she could hardly stand on them. She oozed horror and slime. Dan did not waste his energies on imagery. He had spent a year giving Elizabeth unsought inside information on sex. The result of this lengthy training was the model in front of her. (A.Q.P 193)

This passage is very important to the understanding of the way women's sexual objectification operates. Dan who stands for "the masculine power" in her nightmarish hallucinations sets the standards that Elizabeth must follow to be "approved" as a woman. As a man, he creates a model to give her a concrete image of the expected feminine attributes she must have. This is called by Fredrickson and Roberts, "body-monitoring" which means that Elizabeth has to reshape her body to meet the norms of femininity set by Dan. The process starts by "body shame" because this body lacks what the other nice-time girls have and the next step is to change her appearance to resemble them. Fredrickson and Roberts explain the process of body-monitoring as follows:

> A critical repercussion of being viewed by others in sexually objectifies ways is that, over time, individuals may coaxed to internalize an observer's perception on self…This can lead to a form of self-consciousness characterized by habitual monitoring of the body's outward appearance, a strategy many women develop to help determine how other people will treat them.(Fredrickson and Roberts 180)

In spite of her efforts, Elizabeth fails to meet Dan's expectation of beauty ideal and her self-esteem is shuffled. It is interesting to note Elizabeth's reaction to the Nice-time girls and Dan's model. In fact, there is an ambivalence surrounding her behaviour. On one hand, she envies them and wants to be desired by Dan, but on the other, she feels contempt for this dehumanizing representation of sexuality

that both Medusa and Dan vehicle since she will never become a Nice-time girl. However, this resistance devastated Elizabeth psychologically since she has to endure Dan's constant assaults to make her surrender to his sexual objectification. He tortured her by degrading her, haunting her sleepless nights and manipulating her mind. Dan's action represents Elizabeth's internal struggle with herself between subduing to a world governed by evil represented by sexual and racial oppression and the existence of a world of tenderness and justice where human beings may coexist without necessarily abusing power.

This dilemma is so difficult to bear that Elizabeth succumbs to a psychological breakdown after which she is admitted to a mental hospital as she desperately concludes: "there's nothing I can do to top it. I'm going insane" (A.Q.P 161). The internal conflict took the symbolic form of Dan's torture by exploding her mind "into a thousand fragments of fiery darkness" (A.Q.P 14). The most symbolic scene of this assault takes place in the hospital where Dan opens her skull and talked right into it. He realizes that he fails to make of Elizabeth fall into his evil vision of the world based on sexual power abuse and the only thing left for him is to push her to suicide. Dan takes completely possession of her and manipulates her by keeping a record in her mind to raise suicidal drives in her: "'You're going to end it', he said. 'you are going to commit suicide. There is no point in your staying alive'. 'You've no self-control left. The only read for you is prostitution'"(A.Q.P 186-187). At this moment of the novel, Elizabeth has lost all strains of sanity and she wants to kill her son and commit suicide by taking an over dose of medicine.

We can say that Elizabeth's psychological breakdown is the result of Dan and Medusa's sexual obscenities as we have already demonstrated. In addition to Dan and Medusa's sexual perversion, homosexuality is another theme used by Head as a symbol of deviance that reflects a "deranged" society under the Apartheid system. In fact, Elizabeth's first experience with homosexuality occurs in District

Six where she was living in South Africa. At that time, people described homosexuality as a disease that was so common to so many coloured men in their town. They are dressed in women's clothes with turbans, wear lipstick, and talk in "high falsetto voices…they and people in general accepted it as a disease one had to live with" (A.Q.P 45). Head further writes that they were accepted as the "oddities of life".

The use of terms such as "disease" and "oddities" suggests the society's position in relation to homosexuality. It is considered as a deviation. However, it should be stressed that there is sympathy towards the homosexuals who are portrayed as victims of the Apartheid system since Elizabeth projects them as "the weak, homosexual coloured men who were dying before her eyes" (A.Q.P 47). We can understand that the Apartheid system with its reductive and oppressive laws left no room for tolerance. These homosexual men are alienated and their lack of a definite status as coloureds affects their sexual identities. They find difficulties to define themselves racially and sexually. In fact, the state of in-betweeness they experience between the races (black/white) is reflected by Head in the novel through their liminal position between the sexes (male/female). They fail to identify and belong the both races and both sexes.

Homosexuality is used again in Elizabeth's hallucination when Sello appears in front of her in the company of his boyfriend. Here homosexuality is exposed in relation to moral degradation. Elizabeth's world is invaded not only by the Nice-time girls whose role is to devalue her about her sexual inadequacy, but even men make her appear as un wanted sexual partner. She is not good enough for her husband who starts to have sexual relations with other women, but she is mostly devastated when she discovers that even a man attracts him more than she does. After her husband's homosexuality is revealed, Elizabeth decides to take her baby and break her marriage.

These traumatic experiences that led to Elizabeth's sexual alienation could explain her fear of her own sexuality after she went through degradation and betrayal. It could explain also the distorted representations that she projects in her nightmares and hallucinations where sexuality is associated with vice, deviation and obscenity. Homosexuality, rape, and child molestation are the images Elizabeth has about sexuality that is seen as a means of power control and abuse rather than an act of intimacy emanating from love between partners. Her sexual objectification has been successfully orchestrated by a society that lost its values under Apartheid: she grows up in a beer-house frequented by prostitutes and violent men, and married later to a promiscuous man who turns to homosexuality and women's molestation.

In *The Cardinals*, a similar association is made between the sexist and racist bias of the oppression machinery in South Africa. Mouse is sexually objectified by Johnny who uses her to regain some of the masculinity that was taken from him by the abusive Apartheid system. Their incestuous relation will be discussed in the next part that deals with extreme levels of sexual objectification. However, Mouse is not the only female character who is depicted as victim of men and society's objectification in the novel. Ruby who is believed to be Mouse's mother has committed suicide when her family discovered her pregnancy. She is afraid to reveal the identity of her child's father because he is black. Johnny who was then a poor fisherman who fled the violent gang of Five, met Ruby and a nice romance was born. Head portrays Ruby as an unconventional woman who breaks the norms of her society where the exhibition of sexual desire by women was seen as something evil especially at the period of the 1950's and 1960's when *The Cardinals* was written. Even Johnny is shocked by Ruby's sexual emancipation as he finds her "bold and daring".

Ruby's assertion of her sexuality emanates from her strong character since she assumes it as an act that reflects her love for Johnny and refuses to hide it.

There is no hint in the novel about Ruby's origin, but relying on the autobiographical aspect of the work, and the condemnation of her relation with a black man by her society, we may deduce that Ruby is a white woman who breaks the laws that prohibited inter-racial sexual relations. However, here again Head demonstrates that a woman like Ruby and despite her strength, has little chance to live her romance with a black man under the Apartheid ideology. In fact, once she gets pregnant, Ruby's mother severely opposes her union with a black man and tries to organise her marriage with Paddy who obviously corresponds to the family's expectations.

Alone, Ruby has to bear the consequences of breaking the society's conventions because as Paddy observes: "a man can have fun but the woman has to bear everything"(*Cardinals* 59). Sexuality is then depicted as a means by which society oppresses Ruby who is forced into an arranged wedding with a man she does not love and has to abandon her baby. The conclusion of her story must be bleak as Colette Guldimann explains: "Ruby cannot escape her class bias yet, nor can she fit into the role of the 'feminine' as it occurs in her social class"(Guldimann 109). Suicide is the path Ruby chooses to put an end to the imposed rules of her society. It is symbolically suggesting that a sexually assertive woman who defies racial rigid categorisation is overwhelmed by forces that doomed her to fail. Her suicide can also be seen as an act of rebellion through which Ruby takes back control of her body as she refuses to give it to another man she does not love.

In this section, we have tried to demonstrate the writer's representation of the female protagonist as objects in the patriarchal world of Elizabeth mainly. Both Dan and Sello, the power maniacs of the novel, are dominated by an obsessive desire to control others particularly women. Each of them has used a different strategy to dehumanize her and turn her into an object. Dan employs his sexual potency to accumulate "flesh" (women) to affirm his masculinity and

destroy her self-esteem as a woman. Sello on the other hand, tries through her to reach spiritual perfection that can be achieved by the destruction of strong feminine figures like Medusa or innocent women like Elizabeth. Elizabeth is expected to be one of the docile women who have spiritually submitted to Sello and sexually objectified by Dan. For Sello, the human beings' historical evolution towards perfection can be reached only through the maintaining of the patriarchal order where men are sure to be the holders of power at least over women.

Although she is not victim of concrete sexual assaults like rape or incest as it is the case of the other female protagonists, Elizabeth is psychologically weakened by the effects of sexual objectification as a woman. In the next part of this research, we will examine the extreme forms of the protagonists' sexual victimization through the works of Fredrickson and Roberts. Sexual abuse figures as the highest level of female objectification where their bodies are not only looked at and evaluated by an observer, but also physically violated. Rape, incest and marital or spouse rape are the forms of sexual abuse that will be studied in the next section.

b-Extreme foms of Sexual Objectification: Rape and Incest

This part deals with extreme forms of sexual objectification defined by Fredrickson and Roberts as “the actual sexual victimization, i.e., rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and incest”(Fredrickson and Roberts 11). These forms of sexual objectification have worse physical and psychological effects on women compared to other forms where oppression is indirect. Sexual victimization leads to severe psychological drawbacks on the victim including depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, and in some cases suicide. Before dealing with the impact of sexual violence against women, we need to explain such acts by examining the issues of rape and incest.

Gwendolen is victim of both rape and incest, traumatic incidents which lead to her psychological breakdown and admission into a mental hospital. Rape appears again in *Second Class Citizen* in the form of spouse rape although it is a minor theme compared with *Gwendolen*. As in *A Question of Power*, Head adopts in *The Cardinals* a different perspective about sexuality since the writer uses the theme of sexuality in a symbolic way to reflect the socio-political context in South Africa during the 1960’s. In other words, the treatment of sexual abuse is different in Emecheta and Head’s novels. While Head’s concern is with “the spiritual and philosophical significance of patriarchal behaviour that sexually objectify women”(Bazin 51). Emecheta depicts lived traumatic experiences of women with little concern for the political context of their time.

Gwendolen is Emecheta’s novel that we will focus more on in this part since it has both rape and incest as the leading themes. However, before exploring Gwendolen’s traumatic experience with sexuality, we need to define these sexual abuses and reasons that push men to commit such acts. Rape is defined as a “sexual intercourse performed without the consent of the woman involved”(Carolyn and Frye 189). Violence is often associated with this definition

of rape since the woman's refusal of this act implies the use of violence to force her to have sex.

Rape has also been linked by feminists to gender inequality as it mirrors the superiority of men and the inferiority of women (weaker sex), as Deborah Madsen observes: "The threat posed by rape and violent assault keep women confined in terms of where they can go and when…gender is a system that ensures continued male domination through the masculine control of feminine sexuality"(Madsen 153). Rape is, therefore, associated with masculine power control that is inscribed and maintained by different oppressive systems including patriarchy. The feminist Patricia Hill Collins, for example, explains how rape was a concrete manifestation not only of patriarchy in the black community, but also slavery in America where it was used as a weapon by men to dominate and repress women:

> Rape and other acts of overt violence that black women have experienced, such as physical assault during slavery, domestic abuse, and incest accompany black women's subordination in intersecting oppressions. These violent acts are the visible dimensions of more generalized, routinized systems of oppression. (Collins 146)

The rapist is the holder of power over a woman who is victimized not only by her physical weakness, but most importantly by preconceived gender hierarchies that posit man as the dominant. The rapist/victim dichotomy reflects the dominant/dominated relation that governs men/women relations. This dichotomy is reflected in the novels and it will be interesting to explore the reasons that transform Winston, Uncle Jonny, Francis into rapists.

Many theories have been advanced to explain rape. From a psychological point of view, Rey Chow, drawing on Sigmund Freud's theory on sexuality explains rape in terms of "perversion" and the theory of symptom formation. Simply put, "perversion" as studied by Freud means the "persistence of infantile sexuality in adults at the expense of adult genitality"(Chow 95). The fear of castration for

boys that goes with the identification with the father after the Oedipal complex (his desire for his mother), makes him gradually transfer his sexual desire to other women. If this transition is not achieved, the boy continues to live a sense of castration that leads him to the symptom of aggressivity that comes from the continuous castration fear. He transfers his fear on pervert sexuality such as rape where he tries to get rid of the infantile trait of sexuality(Amir 501).

However, this theory excludes the socio-cultural considerations that can explain rape. Amir Menachem relates rape not to perversion or sexual deviance, but rather to the rapist's "participation in a group which condones the use of force in attaining the goals"(96). He then studies rape from a subcultural perspective by exploring social and cultural codes of power. Similarly, William MaCord and Joan MaCord explain rape as a socialization process. According to them, "a father being sexually promiscuous as well as a brutal disciplinarian education and premature sexuality may lead to rape behaviour"(MaCord and MaCord 52). Hence, when a man experiences in his childhood lack of affection, lack of security and an appropriate identification with a paternalistic figure, he may develop feelings of anxiety and fear that are attenuated in case of rape by the satisfaction of having control over his victims. Vimala Veeraraghavan associates rape to a defective Super Ego which is responsible for controlling interpersonal relations. She writes:

> it is well known that the superego is the result of the Oedipus complex and it is assumed sometimes that there is a relationship between defective superego and rape. A special type of superego is that which is developed by members of a peer group of subcultural influences. Such a superego condones violence and perversion and is found in those offenders classified as 'socialized delinquents'(Veeraraghvan 5)

In spite of these explanations, nothing can justify sexual abuse on women that is rather related in the novels to masculine power domination. Gwendolen is not yet a woman when she is savagely assaulted by an old man that she considers as a grandfather. Emecheta gives many details about Uncle Johnny's life to explain the

reason for abusing the little girl. He is depicted as a respected man in his little village who offers gently to help her grandmother with the farm work. Nothing is mentioned about him having a family or a wife which may posit him as a man who lacks social stability. This may also suggest his justification for abusing Gwendolen since he has difficulty seducing women or building relationships

However, Gwendolen noticed Uncle Johnny's strange behaviour well before he commits his crime. Unlike people who touched Gwendolen's cheeks or pulled gently her hair, he "always touched her tights" (*Gwendolen* 9), but these little signs did not raise the girl's suspicion for she has total confidence in the old man. In the absence of her father Winston who leaves to work in England, we can see that Uncle Johnny plays the substitute father for her. She considers the old man as a loving and protective male figure who takes care of her Granny Noami. She reminisces of the time when he used to come to visit them when she was younger and as a father "he would make her sit on his knee and give her boiled sweets"(*Gwendolen* 10). After Winston's departure, Gwendolen felt sad and lonely, but the presence of her mother Sonia provides her with a sense of security. Symbolically, during the day of Winston's travel, Sonia took Gwendolen's hands and did not allow Johnny to hold her again. This scene gives hints for the progression of events into the rape act for it takes place after Sonia left her to join her husband in London.

In fact, Gwendolen becomes a prey for Uncle Johnny when she is abandoned by both father and mother. In a sense, the absence of her parents' protection and presence can be considered responsible for the abominable sexual abuse experienced by Gwendolen. Instead of taking her to London, Sonia prefers to leave the little girl of eight behind amidst poverty, insecurity and sexual molestation.

This sense of abandonment is reflected by Emecheta through Gwendolen's naming. She is given a Christian name that no one knows how to pronounce

correctly in Granville. This fact makes of her an abandoned object with no name that can be sexually taken by Uncle Johnny who symbolically names her "Juney-Juney". This naming allows him to lay control over that little lonely girl that nobody wants and by claiming her body to be his. The critic Tuzyline Jita Allan observes:

> According to the text, a palpable symptom of Gwendolen's entrapment with the patriarchal culture that legitimates her rape is the parental gift of grand deception embodied in her name. the text opens with the lie that all but erases Gwendolen's identity, rendering her an easy target of patriarchal reconstruction…Having renamed her, Uncle Johnny reimagines her to fit his idea of rapable woman and then remakes her into the socialized image of woman who invites rape, thereby limiting the chances of Gwendolen's renaming and redefining herself.(Jita Allan 222)

Emecheta does not only depict Johnny as a rapist, but she equally points out the parents' share of responsibility in this crime through the neglect of their daughter. Hence, Gwendolen's tragedy can be said to start during her early life as she experienced a sense of alienation and identity loss because of her parents' abandonment.

Moving to the act of rape, Emecheta describes this scene from the perspective of Gwendolen. It goes with Emecheta's desire to depict it as a lived experienced through the eyes of the victim. After he drinks with Granny who was sleeping in the same room, Uncle Johnny moved to Gwendolen's bed where he raped her as Emecheta writes:

> The hand Uncle Johnny kept on her mouth was firm, but his other hand touched all her body, as if Uncle Johnny had four hands instead of two…He put his hand under the bedclothes and tickled her with his fingers. He wanted her to laugh and enjoy his playing with her, but instead fear and chock froze all her emotions. (*Gwendolen* 21-22)

What is important to note in this description of the rape scene is the rapist's use of physical strength to control his victim. The little girl has no chance to escape Johnny's imposing body. The second element to retain in this passage is the silencing of the victim. Johnny makes sure to keep her silent when he is raping

her and we will demonstrate the importance of the idea of “silencing” in relation to rape and its victims. The last salient point in our passage is Gwendolen’s feelings when she is being raped: shock and fear are the emotions that control the little girl. For a while, she could not move her body as she was frozen by fear and only her “eyes roamed”. Her reaction is typical of many rape victims who are so overwhelmed by the shock of being sexually abused that they are petrified and it takes them time to realize what they are going through.

After raping her, Uncle Johnny orders her not to reveal their secret. In addition to the physical assault, he starts to mentally harass her by reminding her that she is an unwanted child and if she talks about what happened between them, people will judge her as a “bad girl”. Silencing the victim is then an important aspect of the rape scheme where women are afraid to denounce their rapist in order not to be judged by society. Fear goes hand in hand with sexual abuse which makes of it an “unspeakable” crime as Ama Ata Aidoo writes in *Changes* when Esi Sekyi, the main female character fails to find “an indigenous word or phrase”(Aidoo 12) to articulate her traumatic experience after being raped by her husband. In addition to her paralysis and silence, Gwendolen can barely breathe when she is raped by Uncle Johnny as Emecheta describes: “He was on top of her. She almost suffocated” and later when she struggled out of his grip and run away to the backyard, she describes the “suffocating air in the shack” (*Gwendolen* 22). These breathing problems suggest the high level of stress of Gwendolen who is in state of shock.

The physical pain induced by the rapist’s penetration of the victim’s body is what awakens Gwendolen from her petrification. Gwendolen’s inside burned and she felt sore, but the physical violence inflicted by her rapist is nothing compared to the psychological damage that this savage act has on her personality. In this respect, the critic Shivaji Sengupta observes: “Gwendolen’s insides burnt with the rape, outside, she was numb with fear. But I think what she felt the most was a

terrible sense of isolation: her parents did not want her"(Sengupta 241). Indeed, Gwendolen's alienation after being raped is enhanced by the feeling of being abandoned with no one to listen to her and protect her from Uncle Johnny's abuse. She cannot denounce her rapist because she has nobody she may talk to especially a mother who could have understood her and stopped Uncle Johnny as she symbolically used to take her hands from him.

Silence about rape is one of the immediate effects of sexual abuse. It is equally followed by fear of being assaulted again as we see Gwendolen "placing her mother's sewing chair behind the door to prevent Uncle Johnny from coming back. It took her a long time before she was finally able to fall asleep" (Gwendolen 23). In fact, Gwendolen's fear leads to anxiety or more particularly what Fredrickson and Roberts call "safety anxiety" that women experience in a culture that sexually objectifies their bodies. They explain that "more than men, women need to be attentive to their potential for sexually motivated bodily harm" (Fredrickson and Roberts 181). They add that "research shows how this attentiveness is a chronic and daily source of anxiety for many women, affecting their personal and work lives". In other words, what may differentiate men and women in relation to their feeling of security in society can be seen through "women's vigilance to safety (double checking locks, checking the backseat of their cars, jogging with a dog…etc.,)" (183). Gwendolen's attempt to lock the door with the sewing chair of her mother can be considered as a "vigilance strategy" that reflects her safety anxiety of bodily harm as a victim of rape. In this respect, Manish Sharma enumerates the effects on rape victims as follows:

> The first thing is that many people would go into a state of shock because of what happened. And that shock can be in various forms: it can take the form of depression. That is the patient becomes quiet, doesn't want to hear, doesn't want to talk to anybody. Otherwise, the patient becomes sleepless, continues to get the repeated experience of that particular event, in forms of nightmares…there can be hypervigilance and exaggerated startle response. (Sharma 31)

Some of the symptoms discussed above appear on Gwendolen who is sleepless, afraid, shocked and vigilant about Uncle Johnny's possible visits at night. she is even bewildered to see his reaction the next day when he comes to help them in the bee farm. Emecheta describes her state of confusion as follows: "Gwendolen followed them in a confused state. If what Uncle Johnny had done to her last night was wrong, how can he behave so normally this morning?"(*Gwendolen* 24). In fact, her young age makes her confused about what happened last night when she comes face to face with Uncle Johnny's complete indifference showing no signs of regret or shame

Uncle Johnny's reaction reflects not only his perversion and lack of morality, but it is also a strategy to exploit Gwendolen's innocence to convince her that what happened between them was not a criminal act. She should consider it as a form of affection for the man who helps them survive the poverty of Granville. Gwendolen kept her rape secret partly because she did not want to upset her grandmother who was happy to have Uncle Johnny as a friend. The other reason for her silence is the belief that nobody will believe her and as Johnny convinces her, she will be labelled "bad girl". He indoctrinates her to think that having a sexual intercourse with him, is a way to show her love for a respectful man like him:

> Johnny had started to make her feel guilty. All she knew was that as she grew older, she began to entertain the irrational fears that everybody would blame her if they knew her secret. She is beginning to learn by daily indoctrination that there was little a man like Uncle Johnny could do wrong…he told her that they were not hurting anybody and that it was her way showing him she loved him. It seemed at that time a sin not to live Uncle Johnny. (*Gwendolen 2*5)

We can note that Emecheta describes manipulation strategies of the rapist who physically and mentally abuses the little girl. Gwendolen then lived a dilemma between telling the truth about her rapist identity and keeping a man who is the only supporter of her grandmother. She finally surrenders to Johnny's sexual abuse as he continues to rape her on some nights. However, the psychological

pressure on her is so intense that she externalises her pain through bed wetting which can be considered as a symptom of a post-traumatic stress disorder or what is commonly known as PTSD that some victims develop. In the case of children, PTSD symptoms take the form of a "loss of recently acquired development skills such as toilet training or language skills" as Manish Sharma explains(32). It is important to note that bed wetting can be read as an unconscious call for help that her body expresses since she cannot voice her rape. However, she is punished by Granny Noamy who asks her to carry her soiled beddings around the yard to make her ashamed of what she did. What Granny ignores is that Gwendolen was ashamed of something bigger than bedwetting: "Granny worried about the stink in their room, but for Gwendolen the shame sat on her like a perpetual load"(*Gwendolen* 25). In fact, in addition to anxiety, shame is another result of sexual objectification. Fredrickson and Roberts explain shame as:

> The negative emotion that occurs when people evaluate ideal and come up short. Individuals experiencing shame tend to attribute their shortcomings globally to the self in its totality (e.g., 'I am a bad person') rather than narrowly to their specific action (e.g., 'I Did nothing bad').(Fredrickson and Roberts 181)

Gwendolen internalizes the shame of the "bad girl" label that Johnny puts on her although she did nothing "bad" for she is after all, the victim. Here, there is a reversal of positions where a victim is made responsible for the offense since she should bear the shame of the rape act. It is again part of Johnny's indoctrination to make her bear the guilt of the abominable sexual relation he imposed on her.

In addition to an acute sense of shame and an overwhelming anxiety that invade Gwendolen, she has to bear the moral harassment of Uncle Johnny who uses every occasion to threaten her and raise her fear. In a sadistic way, he even enjoys making jokes that make "her mouth went dry". He keeps asking jokingly: "you no wan' make people know our tiny-tiny secret, do you, Juney-Juney"(*Gwendolen*

29). Gwendolen is so afraid that she dreams only of the day when her parents would call her to join them in London and escape this physical and moral abuse.

Gwendolen's anxiety and disgust at Johnny's repeated sexual assaults become so difficult to live with that one day she decides to reveal everything to her grandmother. By doing so, Gwendolen hopes to put an end to the ordeal in which she lives, but her grandmother and her community are going to disappoint her. Granny Noami with a group of women went to Uncle Johnny's home and started to blame him for what he did. The mob was so furious and every one began to call him names. Rosa, one of Sonia's friends even suggested to send him to prison for his crime. To her surprise, Uncle Johnny denies all the accusations made by the little girl and starts to defend himself: "How at fit do such a thing, when Noami lay there? Me and Noami, friends long time, you know. Ah work my ass out on she bee farm, so this is thank you. Why June-June no shout, huh? Why she keep quiet?" (*Gwendolen* 34).

By blaming Gwendolen for being silent about her rape, Johnny succeeded in convincing his neighbours about his innocence. The victim is turned into a victimizer in the eyes of her people who come to believe that "maybe the little warm love the job"(*Gwendolen* 34). This scene in the novel corresponds to a common belief in cases of rape about the consent of the victim. In this respect, Nicholas Groth explains that "one of the most persistent myths about rape is that the victim in some way was party to the offender: she was seductive or provocative and 'only got what she asked for'"(Groth 7). Gwendolen's implication in her own rape by seducing Uncle Johnny is even more difficult to bear than the rape itself. Most victims of rape opt for silence after their sexual abuse fearing the reaction of their societies. In many cases they are criticized about the way they dress, smile, walk or behave blaming them to attract men who are seduced and their act is to some extent justified. Fredrickson and Roberts explain how women's beauty has been used as a justification for men's sexual objectification:

> Some men who rape construe physically attractive women as personally threatening, and therefore; deserving of retaliation. For instance, those who suggest that a female victim of sexual assault 'asked for it' often refer to her physical appearance. Women whose appearance is considered 'striking' or 'provocative' are thought to provoke their own rape, much as a punch in the nose provokes a fist fight.(182-183)

Judged as a provocative girl, even Granny Noami who was furious at the discovery of her grand-daughter's rape joins the rest of the village and blames Gwendolen for seducing the old man. she complains about the way Gwendolen walked, and starts to correct her "by telling her to tuck her backside, otherwise men would think she was a bad girl, inviting trouble" (*Gwendolen* 36). In this sense, Granny is by no means different from the rest of the community. She even holds the other people's accusations about the reason why she was the only girl being troubled by Johnny.

Gwendolen is further psychologically devastated by the accusations of a close person like her grandmother who is supposed to protect her. Her alienation is double fold; sexual and social. She associates sexuality with assault, violence and abuse which will impact her self-esteem as a woman. Instead of being an act of intimacy between two loving partners, she grows up linking sexuality to perversion and disgust. She is alienated from her own body that is objectified and used by a man who takes control over her and this same body is even making her accused of being responsible for her own rape. Socially, she is alienated from her own people who judge her a "bad girl" and side with the rapist. She feels abandoned and isolated from the rest of the community.

The only positive thing Gwendolen gets from revealing her rape is that Uncle Johnny stops visiting her at night. At least she is no more sexually abused as she starts to dream of leaving Granville after her parents ask her to join them in England. With a lot of hope, Gwendolen starts her trip to London leaving behind her, years of deprivation, sexual abuse and a great sense of insecurity. The PTSD symptoms gradually disappear when she arrives England, as she stops bed

wetting and goes out of her isolation to enjoy family love and protection. She thinks that she is safe with her parents far from her rapist and the place that reminds her of her traumatic experience. However, she does not know that she is just exchanging rapists as she will face another form of sexual abuse that will be discussed later in this section.

Concerning *Second Class Citizen*, the sexual objectification is not as much highlighted as in *Gwendolen* yet it is important to analyse the way Adah's sexuality has been a source of alienation. In addition to the issue of birth control, Emecheta deals with an extreme form of women's sexual objectification in *Second Class Citizen*. It concerns the sexual victimization of married women or what is known as spouse/marital rape. This kind of sexual abuse is one of the most complex and difficult ones to denounce because it occurs within the marital institution where sexual intercourse between the two partners is taken for granted. Diana Russel explains the common belief that by right, marriage gives man control over his wife's sexuality and that the notion of rape is in contradiction with the very institution of marriage: "The husband cannot be guilty of rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract, the wife has given up herself in this kind into the husband which she cannot retract"(Russel 129-130). For a long time, and in almost all countries, there was no law that recognized the existence of marital rape and this implies that no woman could resort to justice in case of being sexually abused by her husband. This lack of legal protection of married women as far as rape is concerned is known as "marital exemption" which was first introduced in 17th century England by Mathew Hale. Diana Russell explains how rape laws excluded the idea of rape within marriage as they define rape as "the forcible penetration of the body of a woman who *is not the wife of the penetrator*"(129). The condition that the "penetrator" of the woman's body is not the husband makes impossible to accuse him of rape.

In addition to the absence or little recognition of spouse rape as a crime against married women, it remains as one of the mutest forms of oppression because women generally are afraid to speak out their husbands' sexual victimization as they fear their society's reaction. In fact, in most cultures, a husband has all the rights over his wife's body; hence, the idea of spouse rape stayed for a long time as a taboo or "the unspeakable sin".

Adah is victim of Francis's voracious sexual drives since he believes that "no marriage succeeds without a good sex life. As far as he was concerned, marriage was sex and a lot of it, nothing more" (S.C.C 39). This statement is very important because it suggests that Francis does not conceive marriage as a relation based on love and affection, but rather as a way to get sex and a lot of it. It reflects also the construction of Adah only as a sexual object providing him with pleasure whenever he wants. As stated earlier, Fredrickson and Roberts explain that sexual objectification of a woman takes place when:

> Her sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments or regarded as if they were capable of representing her. In other words, when objectified, women are treated as bodies- and in particular as bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others. (Fredrickson and Roberts 175)

This definition seems to fit Adah who is perceived by Francis as "flesh", not as a person who needs to be loved by a man. She experiences sexuality as assault more than as an act of intimacy. In fact, Adah is victim of spouse rape on the first night she arrives in London. Describing this scene, Emecheta writes: "but how could she protest to a man who was past reasoning. The whole process was an attack, as savage as that of any animal" (S.C.C 36).

The words used in this description are suggestive of the non-consented act. Adah does not want to have this kind of sexual intercourse, but she is helpless as she knows that there is no hope to make him stop and when she protests, she may get hurt by this man who is no more "reasoning". The adjectives Emecheta employs are very pertinent as they reflect the sexual assault on Adah. The terms

“savage”, “attack” and “animal” make the act fall into the frame of rape. It is performed without the consent of Adah in addition to the savagery and violence that characterize his act.

Adah’s refusal of this sexual relation is manifested by her passivity or “frigidity” as Francis noticed. According to Tuzyline Jita Allan observes that explains that Adah’s frigidity is “an imperious strategy” working at “diminishing the worthiness and significance of the penis”(Jita Allan 211). In this sense, Francis violent sexual performance can be seen as a defence mechanism to recover the significance of his genitalia.

Here again an evitable link must be drawn between sexuality and power control. Francis uses sexuality to impose his power over Adah to “regain” his masculinity that was robbed from him in England. All this makes him feel inferior to Adah who is successful, and the only way to reaffirm his power is to control her body. Omar Sougou captures this situation as follows: “the narrative correlates his financial impotence with fear of losing his masculinity. Thus, he seems to use his phallus to repress the rebellious woman” (Sougou 44). This reminds us of Elizabeth’s assailants Dan and Sello who use their sexuality to torment her in order to recover their power.

As an abuser, Francis falls into the battering category described by Julie Alison and Lawrence Wrightswan. They identify three types of spouse rape: The sadistic or obsessive type where men’s sexual interests run towards the perverse, the force-only rape where no physical or verbal abuse occur and the men act on some specific sexual complaints (the rapist loves his wife and the act is sudden and after not repeated). Finally, the battering rape which is the most frequent form of spouse rape. This type corresponds to Francis’s profile of rapist as it goes with the battering of his wife. Wrightswan and Alison explain this type: “these men hit their wives, belittled them, called them names, took their money, and as another

way of humiliating and degrading them, resorted to sexual violence"(Alison and Wrightswan 94).

Francis fits this definition of a battering rapist as he financially depends on Adah, physically beats her, sexually assaults her and mentally abuses her with degrading words and comments, in addition to his adultery. Indeed, Adah who is frequently pregnant and shows frigidity once sexually assaulted, did not satisfy Francis who started "shopping around for willing women" (S.C.C 37). This confirms Francis's view that a woman is an object to be controlled for he sees all women as commodities that are "sought and paid for and must remain like that, silent obedient slaves"(S.C.C 156).

Moreover, Francis uses Adah's money to seduce Trudy the white foster mother of their children who becomes his mistress. What is surprising is Adah's reaction to her husband's repeated sexual affairs with Trudy and other women. She is described by Emecheta as being "happy about it; she even encouraged him. At least she would have some peaceful nights"(S.C.C 37). The readers of the novel may be critical of such an attitude, which consists in accepting men's objectification of women and justifying their claim to satisfy their sexual desires. But it is equally important to put the novel in its cultural frame. In fact, in the traditional Nigerian society, it is accepted that a married man has sexual partners when his wife is unable to satisfy his desires. Using this argument, Francis gives a justification to his adultery:

> In their society, men are allowed to sleep around if they wanted. That gave the nursing mother a break to nurse her baby before the next pregnancy…he was brought up to like that variety. Women at home never protested, and Adah had said that she did not mind. No man liked his freedom curtailed, particularly by a woman, his woman. (S.C.C 55)

This passage explains Adah's reaction to her husband's adultery. In fact, she has internalized the norms of her traditional society according to which, the husband is free to take other women when his wife is nursing their babies. This shows that

Adah does not consider sexuality as a manifestation of love and affection, but rather as a burden, a duty she has to perform as a wife. Adah is sexually alienated since sex is lived as a traumatic experience, as Joya Uraizee writes:

> Marriage makes her acquire a distance and fear from sex partly due to her own ignorance of it, but mainly due to the repeated pregnancies Francis forces on her. In fact, for her, sex and marriage become an endless grind of hard work, continuous cycles of pregnancy and sickness, and physical and mental abuse.(Uraizee 100)

In this sense, we can conclude that sexuality as experienced by Adah has left on her a great sense of alienation from her body which she sees as an object to be controlled by her husband and the patriarchal society where she grew up. Sexuality has been a source of physical and mental oppression that brought for her degradation and misery.

After dealing with rape in the novels, the last theme of this study is incest that is also known as parental rape. Indeed, theories about incest go back to antiquity from Aristotle who warned against the consequences of sex among the same blood relations to the Romans who were the first to codify its illegitimacy.

From a biological point of view, Simona Argentieri explains incest as an act against the nature of human beings. She holds that there would be “a natural and inborn repulsion against sexual intercourse between relatives, as though, in the genotype of our species there were a particular gene that produces a behavioural reaction against incest”(Argentieri 19). In this sense, sex between the same blood relatives shakes the natural order of the universe. It may also lead to reproduction among relatives which constitutes the most repulsive consequences of incest. Argentieri further explains that according to a Eugenic hypothesis, people construct incest as a taboo in a spontaneous way to protect themselves from the “damage” that this kind of relations can produce as “the appearance of recessive heredity diseases in the homozygosis, as well as for the loss of advantages of the heterozygosis (greater vitality, fertility, longevity, etc.,)”(19).

From a cultural point of view, incest is denounced as a pervert sexual act. In both *Gwendolen* and *The Cardinals*, it is used by Emecheta and Head respectively to question the social values and morals of their communities. Starting with *Gwendolen*, the main character is victim of her father's sexual abuse after she joins her family in London. Emecheta starts to give signs of the incestuous relation that would link Winston to his daughter on the day of her arrival. His uneasiness with the little girl calling him Daddy at the airport suggests the complexity of his feelings towards a daughter he has only seen on some occasions. With time, he comes to appreciate her and have a special way to talk and laugh with Gwendolen so much so that Sonia is suspicious of his behaviour as he never had such complexity with her. Sonia starts to give Gwendolen piercing looks and even bursts into one of the most hurting statements that freezes her: "to think me tell Winston to let we save money for bring you here" (*Gwendolen* 88). Even Sonia is shocked after making this remark that sounds as if someone else formulated it.

Sonia's reaction plunged Gwendolen again into the nightmare of her rape memories that she had tried hard to forget as she sees in her mother's eyes the same accusing look of Granny Noami:

> Her young chest cried: 'Oh please God, don't let me be blamed for laughing with me Daddy'…After all this man was her Daddy. But why did her mother give her the eyes of suspicion Granny Noami gave her a long time ago in Granville? She wished to bury that past, just as if it had never happened, as if it were a bad dream which must be forgotten at the dawn of the day. (*Gwendolen* 88)

Gwendolen's trauma is revived by Sonia's accusing look, but she refuses to believe that her father can harm her as Uncle Johnny did before. However, Sonia's suspicions are confirmed when Winston abuses his daughter who has just turned sixteen. Taking advantage of his wife's absence for a trip that takes her to Jamaica, Winston commits the abominable crime of incest. Unlike the first rape that takes place in Jamaica, Emecheta narrates the incest from the perspectives of both rapist and victim. Winston starts to have desire for his daughter of sixteen who represents for him a woman like any other "because of the separation,

Winston does not feel socially responsible as a father of Gwendolen"(*Gwendolen* 144) as Emecheta states. This statement is important because it reflects the way Winston sees his daughter. It is for him more a biological link (procreator/off spring) than a real parental relation. According to Simona Argentierit, Winston justifies his act by this distance as she hold: "through natural selection, an instructive lack of erotic attraction develops towards those with whom one has co-habited"(Argentieri 20). Growing far from her father makes of Gwendolen a stranger to Winston who fails to consider her as a daughter like her sister Cheryl who is seen as a "biological and social daughter". Winston's weak argument represents another strategy by the rapist to convince himself of the legitimacy of his crime.

Winston tries to fight the growing desire he has to his daughter. Indeed, the way he approached her is suggestive of his dilemma as he begged her to give herself to him, but expecting her at the same time to fight back:

> When he was overcome by desire, he had begged her to give him herself, because he was her Daddy, and if she loved him she would not deny him this little favour. He did not expect Gwendolen to believe him. No woman with her head rightly screwed on believed such rubbish, but Gwendolen did. The girl was stupid.(*Gwendolen* 144)

This passage reveals many elements that explain the rapist's reasoning and justification of his act. First, like Uncle Johnny, Winston plays on Gwendolen's emotions by convincing her about the idea that this act is a way to demonstrate love to her father. We notice then the same strategy used by the two men to justify their crime as a form of affection. The second important element is the term Winston uses to name incest: "a little favour" which is again a strategy to diminish its gravity and hide or disguise this crime as something trivial. As a good girl, Gwendolen is supposed to give her loving father, this little favour and let him abuse her sexually. Winston continues to play with words to convince the innocent girl about the "normality" of the act. The last statement shows Winston or the rapist belief that a woman is supposed to fight back her rapist. It is very

interesting to note that Winston puts the blame of his crime on his daughter who is expected to stop him. Instead of condemning himself for violating the sacred parental role he should hold, he blames her for the incest.

The contradiction in Winston's attitudes is further suggested by the strong hand he places on Gwendolen's mouth when he is raping her. This leaves little chance for the girl to fight back or scream. Although he "begged" her to accept the sexual intercourse, he uses his heavy body and hand to paralyse the little girl. So, as a man, the father resorts to his physical power to impose a sexual act on Gwendolen making of it as any other forms of rape.

Narrated from the perspective of Gwendolen, the incest scene is not very different from the one she has already had in Jamaica. The begging of the men who assaulted her, the hand put on her mouth to prevent her from screaming and fighting back, and the same look of resignation in her eyes as she is frozen by both fear and horror. The only difference in the incest scene is that she is not a "novice" as her father discovered when he raped her. His reaction is very symbolic of the hypocritical and contradictory behaviour of a man who is not shocked by what he has done to his daughter, but rather to find out that he is not the first man. Gwendolen is bewildered by her father's attitude and the judgment he made about her:

> What she did not expect was her father's reaction. Yes she fought timidly, but she was not a novice. She had been thought what to do. 'shut up, shut up, me say. You bitch. Why you say no before? You B…bitch. You allow men to trouble you and no tell me or your Mamy. You wicked gal. Devil Gal' (*Gwendolen* 145)

Winston has the same reaction of the rest of Jamaican community including her grandmother by calling Gwendolen "bad", "wicked" and "evil girl". He stigmatized her as a "bad girl" without even asking or trying to know what happened to her before in her homeland. We can qualify his attitude together with the rest of her society as phallocentric since it sides automatically with the rapist as a man. What disturbed Winston more is not the fact that he abused his

daughter, but he is furious at the idea that he is not the first one to penetrate her as Emecheta ironically states:" he thought he was going to be the first. What a disappointment"(*Gwendolen* 145). We have here a typical patriarchal justification of rape that blames the woman for seducing the men who is not to be condemned for his sexual abuse. The victim is again turned into a victimizer while the rapist is forgiven which makes her even more alienated from her body and from the others.

When she discovers the incest relation between Winston and his daughter, Sonia adopts the phallocentric attitude of her society and condemns Gwendolen for seducing the "innocent" father. She is in a state of denial as most mothers who victims of incest. Commenting on the mother's reaction to their daughter's rape, Manish Sharma writes: "one of the reactions is extreme anger accompanied by resentment both with the father and the daughter. The daughter in many cases is extremely humiliated for seducing the father"(Sharma 39). Instead of reacting to her husband's horrible act, she prefers to ignore the truth and put all the blame on Gwendolen.

This idea of daughters seducing their fathers appears in Freud's "seductive theory" that he develops to explain that within the Electra complex, it is inevitable that the little girl tries to seduce her father. According to him, a girl's envy of masculine attitudes that is his famous "penis envy" belief, makes her transfer her affection from her mother (who represents castration or lack of penis) to her father and later to other men as the only way to correct this deficiency. The woman then who claims to have been sexually abused by her father is negating or repudiating that she has seduced him as a way to correct her castration. He writes: "this latter piece of behaviour seems to provide conclusive proof. Why should patients assure me so emphatically of their unbelief, if what they want to discredit is something which from whatever motive they themselves have invented"(qtd.in Forrester 78). This explanation of female sexuality and definition

of women in terms of lack (castration) have been widely criticised by Feminists. Lynne Segal comments on Freud's seduction theory as follows:

> Freud's female patients did not come to him complaining of having been sexually abused, only to have Freud deny their abusive memories. Rather, it was Freud himself who tried to convince his patients' of the truth of his own seduction theory.(Segal 127)

In the same respect Marish Sharma wonders how a woman can be accused of seduction in rape cases as she writes: "what do they expect? That a woman should cut her body assets and throw them away or slacken her face and then exist? We have become so over conscious that women seduce and men are seduced"(Sharma 54). It has become so common to accuse women when they denounce rape of seducing their rapists that many victims of sexual abuse prefer to remain silent knowing that they would be considered as responsible for it.

When we apply Freud's seduction theory on Gwendolen, we realize that the little girl has never tried to seduce her father or Uncle Johnny. They are figures of love and protection not of sexual fantasy for her. It is interesting also to note that Freud's theory is not completely inadequate for it seems that in the mind of people surrounding her, the little girl is to be blamed for the sexual act. It can be said that Freud's theory seems to emanate from the patriarchal codes that conceive women in terms of inferiority or deficiency which could, according to them, explain her unconscious attempt to correct her position and be like men by seducing him. It this sense, rather than seeing incest as a traumatic event in the child life, it is linked to some fantasy to satisfy a "presumed" sexual desire in childhood. This is definitely not the case of Gwendolen who lived rape as a trauma and the devastating effects on her psyche are proof of an act of abuse rather than seduction.

After abusing her, Winston preaches in the church about the sins of the world and Gwendolen is shocked to see how hypocritical her father is. Winston was no more a father for her as she considered him like the other men who can abuse

and harm her rather than protect her as fathers do. Gwendolen responds to the trauma of incest exactly in the same way of her first rape; that is by isolating herself from the rest of society. She returns to the "shell she had built around herself against the adults in Grandville" because she has "no solid and protective Daddy to shield her anymore"(*Gwendolen* 146).

In addition to her withdrawal from society, Gwendolen was tormented by the dilemma of whether to reveal her secret or remain silent about her abuse. On one hand, she knows that all the blame would be put on her and on the other, she fears to be responsible for her father's possible imprisonment. Her behaviour starts to reveal the beginning of her psychological breakdown as she begins to have fits of mental disorders: "One minute she would be in deep despair, her heart bounding…other times, she would be happy and become almost obsessional about the way she looked…she saved money to buy loads of cheap make up"(*Gwendolen* 147). Gwendolen could not find help in people around her. She does not have friends to confide to, nor a mother who can listen to her. This enhances her sense of alienation as the critic Neerja Chand observes: "the second rape initiates a second and now abnormal sense of alienation. She begins to feel abandoned and alienated by her parents. Her mother had left her to danger twice and her father had raped her. Where was she supposed to go?"(Chand 183). Therefore, we can state that Gwendolen represents the rape victim who is trapped by silence, fear and isolation.

In fact, Sonia has participated in her daughter's alienation when she abandoned her to be raped by men twice in Jamaica and London. She judged her for seducing men by her way of walking and refused to believe that her husband had sexually abused his own daughter. This absence of a mother figure has accelerated Gwendolen's descent into depression as she lacked an emotional support especially when she discovers that she is bearing the child of her own father.

Making his daughter pregnant is the most devastating consequence of incest for beyond the abuse and moral annihilation of the victim, bearing a child that represents the concrete outcome of this act makes the victim further alienated from her body. On the social level, this pregnancy signals the break of the natural order that prohibits procreation between same blood relatives. It shakes all the moral codes and brings ethical anarchy as stated by Manish Sharma:

> If the father rapes his daughter, he gives her the ability to become pregnant. The father has begot his daughter. Biologically at least, nobody can break this fact. By raping her, he has made her his mate by breaking the bridge maintained by nature, the father has made the relationships of parent and husband copulate and join with each other. This is a biological bomb-an unethical catastrophe. (Sharma 55)

Winston is shocked when he learns that Gwendolen is pregnant and taking advantage of her friendship with a young Greek immigrant called Emmanuel, he accuses him of being the father of the expected child. Gwendolen is racked with guilt at the thought of accusing Emmanuel when a social worker comes to question her about her pregnancy. She is lost between her feeling of guilt towards her boyfriend who is made responsible for the pregnancy and the fear to denounce her father who risks imprisonment. This dilemma tortures her emotionally and gradually breaks her nerves as she fails to bear the psychological pressure put on her.

Winston tries to convince himself that having sex with his own daughter is not a sin. His question to his friend Ilochina is suggestive of his attempt to justify incest as he asks: “Do you marry your daughters?”(*Gwendolen* 142). Emecheta uses the character of Ilochina to explain how obnoxious incest is in her culture and the explanation she gives about the reason for condemning incest in Igbo culture is quite interesting. In fact, the Igbo men do not oppose incest for the sake of protecting girls or preserving the natural order. It is rather for the sake of the bride price since a virgin woman fetches a higher dowry as Illochina observes: “A daughter belonged to the father; her bride price was his. If the daughter was

chaste, it would enhance her father's position and make him richer. So why should a father ruin his own wealth"(Gwendolen 142-143).

From the feminist scope, this statement that is given from a male perspective is considered extremely sexist as it reduces women to mere sexual commodities since they are exchanged for a given price. However, a few lines later, Emecheta gives the Igbo women's view point about incest which they consider as an offense against the land. The story Illochina tells about a man who is caught abusing his daughter by a group of women suggests this difference of male and female perspectives in relation to incest: "When the women took hold of his penis and were about to chop it off, he bursts into a song of agony…But the women were merciless, because it was a sin against the earth. They pounded him into a pulp with their, cooking utensils"(*Gwendolen* 143).

It is worth noting that the punishment is inflicted by the women of the village and not by men. it reminds us of the reaction of the villagers in Jamaica when the women wanted to send Uncle Johnny to prison while the men accused the little girl of seducing the old man. Winston is thrilled by this story, but he is determined not to reveal the secret of his offense and since he is not interested in the bride price, he believes that he has a chance to escape punishment. With Irony, Illochina informs his friend that if the rapist is not caught by women, according to their culture, he will undergo the land's punishment as he can be killed by thunder.

Winston's state of mind makes him change and Sonia has noticed that he is no more the same man. He stops preaching at the church and avoids Gwendolen's eyes when they are in the same room. It is important to mention that Emecheta relates Winston's sexual urges towards his daughter to the lack of African values. She seems to blame colonialism for separating a black man like him from his African roots during the slavery period. Omar Sougou explains the correlation between the cultural dislocation and incest: "a sense of fragmentation, while he

is sexually involved with his daughter shows in his question to Illochina such as: do you marry your daughter?"(Sougou 207). This deracination engendered a loss of African codes of morality and virtue. In the same respect, the critic Christine Sizemore relates incest to Winston's isolation, poverty and loss of African heritage:

> Emecheta is able to achieve some distance in her analysis of sexual abuse and incest in the patriarchal family by making the family Jamaican and by blaming the sexual abuse and incest on the effect of slavery that robbed the men of their African heritage and values in addition to the extreme poverty that derives black Jamaicans to emigrate.(Sizemore 374)

Again, these explanations fail to justify Winston's crime against his daughter. Moreover, depicting Jamaicans as abusers as opposed to the "good" Nigerians who maintain their values may raise some questions about the ambivalence of African cultures represented by the writer. In fact, despite the cultural moral codes in Africa, incest is still taking place and it is represented by many writers as suggested earlier in this chapter. In this sense, the reader may doubt the idealized image Emecheta gives of African culture as it is not devoid of moral flaws. In addition to Winston, Emecheta deplores the deterioration of the mother/daughter relation because of slavery when she writes: "the closeness between African mothers and daughters had been lost during the slave passage"(*Gwendolen* 170). But here again the reader may question this idea since Emecheta builds other female characters who fail to have a close relation with their mothers, like Adah who has never shared any intimacy or mutual support with her mother even when she was living in Nigeria.

Sonia is not an isolated case of a mother who reacts negatively to her daughter's sexual abuse as studied earlier. Instead of showing sympathy to their daughters, they accuse them of seducing their fathers. This reaction emanates from the internalized patriarchal codes that make the father a flawless figure and consecrate the idea of the wife's dependence on him. Hence, Sonia prefers to sacrifice her daughter rather than lose a man who financially supports her. In

spite of this sacrifice, Sonia is left alone when Winston dies in a gas explosion in the building where he works with Illochina.

The legends told by Illochina about incest in Igbo culture seem to mingle with the novel's narrative. In fact, like the rapist in the story, Winston is killed by some external forces. Illochina comments on his friend's death as follows: "Gas and electricity are earth forces we call Ani. They have their way meeting out vengeance"(*Gwendolen* 200). A parallel is nicely drawn by Emecheta between the accident Winston has and the Earth "vengeance" in the Igbo beliefs to punish rapists. However, it should be stated that through Illochina's comments, the reader may doubt this hypothesis because Winston did not wait until gas had been tested as usual to start his work taking the risk of a possible explosion, "as if he wanted to die" as Illochina concludes.

Although Winston did not confess his horrible crime, Emecheta portrays him with some humanity as he is plagued with guilt and finally commits suicide as a sort of punishment to his act. He can be contrasted with Uncle Johnny who has never shown signs of regret after raping Gwendolen. He joins the church as a way to purify his soul from the sin of rape as Emecheta describes his hypocritical reaction: "he had now changed, he had become a born-again Christian and he knew God had forgiven him"(*Gwendolen* 131). Like Winston, Johnny hides behind religion to buy an atonement for his acts; however, for Gwendolen "a dirty man is a dirty man" no matter how religious he may seem.

Gwendolen's psychological breakdown takes place before her father's death. The little girl loses her mind when her parents make love on the same bed where Winston used to rape her. Gwendolen is shocked to hear their parents having sexual pleasure while their daughter is going through trauma and depression. At this moment, contradictory feelings overwhelmed her as she feels disgust, betrayal and even jealousy against her mother who is taking her place on that same bed. It is clear that Gwendolen starts to lose all good sense and her mind

reels as she explodes, “too much to carry” (*Gwendolen* 174). Gwendolen cannot bear the situation in which she lives and as a way to pull herself out of this hell, she runs out of the house and starts walking to the end of nowhere.

Gwendolen’s psyche is disturbed and she reaches the edge of madness as Emecheta writes: “…and she felt like tearing her soul away from her body. She wished her mind could run away from her body so that they would not see her again. But her body refused to let her mind go. They were together, body and mind”(*Gwendolen* 174). Gwendolen wants to supress from her mind all memories so that there will be no pain or hurting images of rape, incest, rejection, racism and abandonment. All these traumatic experiences are difficult to bear, and the ache was still there. She continued walking for two days, absent minded and dreaming of a place where there would be “no Uncle Johnny” where there would be “a nice and loving and loyal Daddy” and where “a mother could talk to her daughter, gently and believe her daughter”(*Gwendolen* 174).

Gwendolen is taken by the police and when asked about her name and address she could not remember: “her brain and mind were blank. The look was glazed and vacant”(*Gwendolen* 176). Judith Trowell who conducted research on abused children at the Tavistock Clinic during the 1990’s reported similar unconscious defence mechanisms adopted by victims of rape and incest. She further explains how they tried to run away from reality by “damping down” repressed feelings as “they attempt to rid themselves of unbearable memories: they are lifeless, flat, avoidant, and have psychogenic amnesia”(qtd in. Sandler and Fonagy 23). Gwendolen’s amnesia can be seen as a post-traumatic stress disorder that reflects a self-defence mechanism to repress undesirable feelings. However, this amnesia is temporary as it is soon followed by hysteria through which Gwendolen shows a total confusion of memories as she believes that she was still living in Jamaica with her Grandmother. She starts shouting at the police officers giving contradictory information about herself and where she comes from. This reflects

her disjunction with reality as she loses feet in the actual world. The police officers confirm that the girl was going mad when she finally sat on the steps outside the station and started talking to herself. She is finally taken to the mental hospital to get medical treatment.

Gwendolen's hysteria is linked by Emecheta to her incest as she keeps shouting "leave my Daddy alone, I don't want him to be locked away, no, no"(*Gwendolen* 178). We should note that even in her hysteria, she is pleading the nurses not to take her father to prison. However, her subconscious is expressing itself through madness which allows her for the first time to break the silence about her sexual abuse. Like Elizabeth, madness is a way to trespass her sense of alienation and give voice to her traumatized self.

When Sonia and Winston come to visit Gwendolen, she almost revealed the secret of her father's abuse, but she changed her mind at the last minute because she realized that her mother will not believe her: "All that Gwendolen planned to say melted in her throat and formed a big lump of hatred against her father, against all men"(*Gwendolen* 191). In fact, in moments of lucidity, Gwendolen fails to externalise her feelings because of her sense of abandonment by a mother who has never shared with her any confidence. Repression of feelings continued to destroy Gwendolen even in the mental hospital, for she could not trust anyone to tell him/her about her secret. The only times when she seems free are moments of hysteria, which occurred when she first joined the hospital. She was given sedatives and the nurse warned her that the injections they gave her, could harm her baby. Gradually, Gwendolen learns to contain her emotions as she realized that she had to be careful because it "was not a place where you were allowed to give in to emotions"(*Gwendolen* 192). Gradually, Gwendolen recovers her sanity with the birth of her baby that has given her strength and hope to start a new life.

Before dealing with Gwendolen's healing process, an episode that will be discussed in the next chapter, it is important to note Sonia's reaction to Gwendolen's madness. She is quite hypocritical as she starts crying when she sees her, but Gwendolen could not believe in the sincerity of her mother's tears. She, the mother that was aware of her husband's horrible act against his own flesh, preferred to ignore it as Emecheta writes:

> And her mother crying all those stupid tears? Could she not guess that she wanted to talk to her? How could she be so blind? So busy playing the little wife, when even the social worker who did not live with them had almost guessed the truth. Maybe her mother knew, but did not want to accept it. (*Gwendolen* 192)

Sonia prefers to close her eyes on her husband's obnoxious deed fearing to lose her man if the truth is revealed. She is also apprehensive of the society's reaction when her people discover that Gwendolen is pregnant and above all mad. For that reason, she keeps her daughter's admission to the mental hospital secret and when she loses her husband, all her anger goes to her daughter. Sonia embodies the patriarchal values of her community that conceive women as men's appendage. She cannot imagine her life without Winston who is forgiven his incestuous relation with his daughter. When he dies, Sonia who is used to depend on men, quickly finds a lover called James to substitute her husband.

Sonia is depicted as a selfish, self-indulgent and materialistic woman since right after her husband's death, she starts a relation with a married man. Waiting for the payment of the insurance of the company where Winston worked, she begins to buy fancy furniture and clothes. This mode de vie was meant to supress the bitter reality of her daughter's rape, pregnancy and madness. Her frivolous life style is an outlet that allows her to forget her daughter, but very soon, this artificial peace of mind she constructs with sex and money turns to be an illusion. In fact, after a while, James's wife discovers his adultery and she violently aggresses Sonia in the street. James stops visiting her and the insurance paid just a little amount of money, half of it was to be put away in the trust for the younger

children and the remaining half was to be split between her and Gwendolen. Sonia is devastated especially as she has to give back all the expensive furniture she has already bought. This was the last blow that destroys Sonia's hopes of a happy life far from her "evil" daughter and treacherous husband. Surprisingly enough, all Sonia's anger goes to Gwendolen who is made responsible for all the problems she went through. She decides to kill her daughter especially as she learns that Gwendolen went out of the hospital and got a council apartment where she was living with Emmanuel and her new born baby. Emecheta describes her thoughts when she is on her way to kill her daughter:

> What would the world say if they knew that she felt like killing her own daughter? Would they say she was mad? Would they be able to understand her?...She did not worry so much about all that money being kept for the younger ones. But Gwendolen! God must have sent that daughter to destroy her! (*Gwendolen* 235)

Surprisingly, Sonia will change her mind after she visits Gwendolen in her apartment and sees her little baby who looks exactly like Winston. However, her intentions reveal her failure as a mother. Sonia is to be contrasted to Gladys who cares for her children and holds a closer position with Gwendolen than her own mother. Although Gwendolen will find support in Emmanuel and the social officers who provide her with necessary assistance to raise her little baby girl, what hurts her most is a mother who has never believed her. Gwendolen has then to endure the traumas of sexual assault and the pain of mothering rejection and abandonment. She needs a lot of strength to heal her wounded self and be an accomplished woman and mother.

The theme of incest is also to be examined in *The Cardinals* although Head's treatment of sexual abuse is slightly different. As stated earlier, while Emecheta depicts incest as a traumatic lived experience through the eyes of Gwendolen, Head explores it more as a symbolic form of abuse reflecting the Apartheid system. However, In spite of the symbolic side of incest in *The Cardinals,* the novel starts with the representation of an experience of sexual abuse in Mouse's early

life by a man she considers as a father. At the time of her rape, Mouse was still called Miriam and she was living in the slums of Cape Town. Her adoptive father tries to rape her, but she is saved by his wife Sarah as Head describes this traumatic scene:

> One night the little girl awoke startled when a heavy hand was placed over her face almost smothering her. With the other, the man tore at the thin tattered clothing that she slept in. In her fright the child kicked out and struggled desperately and her struggles awakened the woman Sarah who shouted: "My God, what are you doing to the child?" (*Cardinals* 9)

We can find in the passage above some similarities with Emecheta's description of the rape scenes where the abusive men use their hands to silence their victims. Violence is equally used to control the little girls' bodies and sexually victimize them. Mouse is lucky to be protected by Sarah, the caring woman who gets savagely beaten by her husband when she tries to stop him. Although the rape did not take place, this incident left traumatic effects on Miriam who was petrified by fear. She slept under a hedge and when she woke up, the next morning "she lost her sense of purpose and direction and only a silent, stubborn will power kept her feet moving"(*Cardinals* 9). Like Gwendolen, Miriam walked without knowing where to go and when she was finally taken to a hospital, she woke up not knowing who she was. Nobody came to claim her and she was placed in another family under another name: Charlotte Smith. It is interesting to note that like Gwendolen, Miriam had psychologic amnesia as a consequence of her traumatic experience. Both characters could not remember their names and where they came from. As stated earlier, this amnesia can be considered as a self-defence mechanism to supress traumatic memories of rape.

Mouse's early experience with rape creates in her an alienation from her body. She becomes afraid of men's look and covers her body with loose oversize clothes as a way to protect herself. Her body then becomes objectified by men's look and she comes even to hate it as it makes of her a pray to sexual abuse. In her mind, sexuality is linked with abuse and violence rather than love and pleasure. Later in

the novel, the reader can relate her fear of Johnny to her traumatic experience with rape.

Everybody in the newspaper noticed Mouse's fear of men as James suggests. However, Mouse's apprehension of men can be understood if we know the context in which she grew up when she was living in the slums. Mouse is seen as a sexual object to be taken by James who even encouraged Pk to rape her: "the trouble with you is that you're morbid. You just need a good rape. It's a pity I'm not the raping type"(*Cardinals* 94). This statement is suggestive of the relation between power and sexuality. As a white man, James gives himself the right to take Mouse's body and sexually abuse her. However, what is more shocking in his words is that he represents rape with "good" attributes and even as something "needed" by Mouse. His perception goes along with the idea that we have explored earlier about the myth among some men that victims of rape are partly responsible for their abuse, that is to say, seductive women want to be sexually taken by men. Being coloured makes of Mouse an even more "accessible" sexual object to white men as Johnny explains: "men think she is cheap because she's Black"(*Cardinals* 93). The Critic Desiree Lewis explains that "as a black woman, she needs to confront distinctly gendered patterns of silencing in addition to those of Apartheid"(Lewis 111). Indeed, like Elizabeth, Mouse is victim of a double sexual objectification as a woman and as a coloured.

Johnny's attitude towards Mouse is different from the rest of her colleagues. He starts by bullying her and making sexist remarks about her appearance, but she soon raises in him feelings of love and affection. He asks her to move in with him persuading her that this may help her improve her writings. He wants her to change her appearance as he states: "I just can't have a woman around who dresses the way you do. Cut two inches off those hems and fix up the slips"(*Cardinals* 73) Moreover, she is supposed to help in the cooking, cleaning and shopping.

The theme of incest is introduced to the reader when Johnny gests into Mouse's bed the next day she moves in his apartment. Although no sexual intercourse takes place, Johnny's remarks about his previous relation with his sister is a writerly signal of the idea of incest. Johnny observes:

> You can pretend you're my sister for a bit…My sister always used to sleep next to me and when I woke in the morning, she'd have her arm tight around me like this. I used to like it. It's a comforting feeling to wake up and find someone with their arms around you…I used to kiss her, not the way a brother should kiss a sister but the way a man kisses a woman. (*Cardinals* 78)

What is surprising is Johnny asking Mouse whether she thinks there was something incestuous about his relation with his sister, and her answer is "No". The reader may be struck by such a reply for it is clear that a sister-brother sexual relation by all standards falls into incest, but for Mouse, it is accepted. The interpretation of Mouse's reply can be related to her distorted conception of sexuality. Approving incest by Mouse and Johnny is explained by the critic Collette Guldimann as follows: "Mouse and Johnny have both grown up without those nuclear family structures, represented in its most radical form by the fact that they don't know that they are father and daughter"(Gudimann 117). The critic's statement can be paralleled with Johnny's explanation of Mouse's justification of incest "That's because you aren't aware of family relationships. I wasn't aware of them either. After my father died, we were about twelve of us altogether. She was nearly always drunk too, so we just grew up like a lot of animals"(*Cardinals* 78).

This passage made by Johnny gives a sociological perspective to explain incest. It shows the impact of family dislocation caused by Apartheid on the individual. Lacking any kind of social codes that define and frame relations between the members of the same family, Johnny and his sister transgress the natural bond that prohibits sexual intercourse between them. Similarly, Mouse has grown up without a true family as she spends her live exchanging homes. Simona Argentieri relates incest to this lack of family structure as she writes: "Through natural

selection, an instinctive lack of erotic attraction, develops towards those with whom one has co-habited"(Argentieri 20). In fact, Mouse did not spend her life with Johnny which is supposed to explain the acceptance of incest by both of them.

However, it should be stated that Head is alluding to the role played by Apartheid in the separation between father and daughter. Because of The Immorality Act, Mouse, the coloured child, has to grow up without a family or a model to follow. Moreover, Johnny's family's bad conditions and poverty engendered by Apartheid reduced them to "animals" where all moral codes were swept away. Many girls turned into prostitutes to survive the poverty of slums like Johnny's sister who was just ten year old.

Johnny's sister is a child whose body is sexually objectified and assaulted by older men for some money. As a black girl, she has to sell her body to feed her family. Here again sexuality can be read in the novel as "dramatizing and defining Head's political anger"(Lewis 110) as Desiree Lewis states. If a society tolerates the paedophilic tendencies of men who abuse a little girl because she is poor and black, why then would it condemn sexual relations between a brother and his sister. Through Johnny, Head throws light on the hypocritical and false social values that governed South Africa. Johnny further juxtaposes his incestuous relation with his sister to the paedophilic sexual intercourse she has just gone through:

> One night she was stabbed to death. I think I would have never forgiven myself if I had withheld the kind of love, she wanted from me. All just makes me not care one hell about the laws and rules of society. They are made by men and women who know nothing about suffering…I can't take the sham hypocrisy and false values any longer. (*Cardinals* 78)

This juxtaposition of prostitution and incest shows clearly the picture Head wants to give of her society; "a decadent" one where values and moral codes are lost. This introduction made by Johnny about his sister, prepares the reader for the

incestuous relation he will have with Mouse knowing that neither him nor her are aware that they are father and daughter. This fact, that remains vague even to the reader since no direct and clear statement is made by Head about their family link. However, owing to the biographical aspect of the work and the statement made by Johnny asking her to pretend to be his sister may confirm the supposition of an incestuous relation. Johnny further reinforces this idea when he informs Mouse that if he had a daughter, he would probably make love to her too. Mouse is not shocked by Johnny's words as she equally accepts the idea of incest between a father and his daughter and "each is prepared to entertain the idea that under some circumstances, the incest taboo can justifiably be transgressed"(Mackenzie 85).

The concept of transgression is very important for the reading of the incest taboo in the novel. As stated earlier, Head uses this taboo in a symbolic way to deconstruct the shallow moral codes of her society. In his book *Borders, Boundaries and Frames: Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies*, Mae Henderson defines transgression as "the modifying limits that transform the unknown or forbidden into inhabitable productive spaces for living and writing"(Henderson 2). Breaking the natural laws of family structure is symbolic of the transgression of political and social laws that are aimed to hinder the individual's freedom.

Indeed, Mouse and Johnny transgress the boundaries of their societies to create a new place where all laws disappear. But most importantly, as Henderson writes, where there is a space for "writing" far from the limits imposed by the Apartheid government represented by *The African Beat*'s editor Pk. By transgressing the social norms of his society that condemn kissing his sister as an "unspeakable filth", Johnny has created a space of "love" and "comfort" for her (albeit incestuous).

For Mouse, transgression takes more the form of creative writing as Johnny intended to make of her an accomplished writer. Indeed, the critic Sisi Maquagi

describes Mouse's progress in the novel as "a series of stepping across boundaries"(Maquagi 177). As a supposed daughter of a forbidden union between Johnny and Ruby, she crosses the boundaries. Her success to get education amid the slum life is another form of transgression and finally, she breaks the laws of society when she goes through her relation with Johnny who is supposed to be her father. In fact, Mouse is not that weak and insignificant person as her entourage sees her. She stands for the breaking of all laws and boundaries instored by the Apartheid system that alienates blacks and coloureds.

It is clear that Head's treatment of the incest taboo differs from Emecheta's handling of this theme. Indeed, while it is severely condemned in *Gwendolen* as a sin with its devastating psychological effects on the main character, Head seems to take it to another level where it serves as a positive symbol of transgression and protest against racism especially as Johnny and Mouse stand for the Cardinals who represent change. But, apart from reading incest in the novel as a means of transgression, approaching this theme from a feminist perspective reveals the importance of two aspects in sexual abuse: power relation and social structure. In other words, feminists relate incest to men' power control and domination that are the characteristics of patriarchal systems. Feminists also reject social norms and values that silence victims of sexual abuse to protect men as Bell Vikki states:

> Incest reveals the gendered power dynamics of the society in which we exist…incest cannot be regarded as asocietal at all, but has to be analysed instead in direct relation to the social structures which are continuously producing themselves as "normal".(Vikki 95)

In fact, incest is understood as a kind of sexual abuse on children in a society where men hold power. In spite of the ambiguity of Johnny's feelings and intentions towards Mouse, the juxtaposition of love and violence in his attitudes with her is very disturbing. Johnny uses all forms of mental abuse when he first meets her which indicates his authoritative status as a man. Within the patriarchal scheme, Mouse was almost sexually abused by her step-father and then sexually

and mentally harassed by PK, James and Johnny who constantly made sexist remarks about her. Later, when Johnny starts to be interested in her as a woman and a writer, his male chauvinism takes over their relation. In fact, he takes all the decisions that concern her without waiting for her consent. He takes her to his home, orders her to take care of the house, shows her how to dress and even physically abuses her by slapping and strangling her on some occasions. In this sense, incest is a projection of power dynamics that govern their society as it reflects Mouse's objectification by Johnny.

Concerning the social structure in which Mouse lives, her society accepts this male authoritative behaviour as "normal" as already stated by Bell Vikki. Indeed, the norms and laws of the patriarchal system consecrate male control over women's bodies which could explain Mouse's passive and inert behaviour when Johnny takes hold of her life. Mouse is conditioned from her childhood by gender and racial codes to be objectified either by men or institutions.

It is interesting to note that Johnny has changed his strategy when dealing with Mouse because he realized that violence is not the answer. He states: "It's one thing to have a woman's body but it's more important to have a woman that you love and understand and can live with, and who loves and understands and can live with you"(*Cardinals* 84). Finally, he understands that caring and nurturing cannot only transform her, but also heal his own soul after years of deprivation and suffering.

However, it should be stated that even in that love relation he speaks about, Johnny keeps the control over her. He still directs her life and dictates how her writing should be. Many critics have seen in Head's representation of incest as a symbolically liberating and healing process for both Mouse and Johnny, but we have also to read it keeping in mind the socio-cultural context in which the writer has lived. The critic Craig Mackenzie stresses how "Bessie Head was radically dislocated from any framework of societal form and belief, this meant that she

was prepared to countenance of extreme ideas"(Mackenzie 87). In fact, being rejected as an illegitimate child, growing up amid poverty in the slums, joining an orphanage where she experienced all forms of discrimination, flying away to a country that refused to integrate her and finally falling into psychological breakdown left in Head an outrageous rejection of all norms, codes, laws and boundaries that alienated her. Mackenzie further observes: "Such extreme experiences engender extreme responses including that of entertaining the notion that an incestuous relationship can be healing and beneficial"(87).

In fact, Head projects in her fiction a world where all the boundaries melt, where the individual's well-being is the ultimate purpose. This idea is reflected by Johnny's last statement when he sees Mouse's confusion about the intended sexual act they will have: "life is a treacherous quicksand with no guarantee of safety anywhere. We can only try to grab what happiness we can before we are swept off into oblivion"(*Cardinals* 137). The closing words of the novel suggest a very pragmatic vision of life free from restrictions. It is an invitation to live the moment and grab what happiness it can offer referring to the sexual relation between them. He suggests that this moment can at any time be stolen from them with the reality of a world governed by racial and social shackles.

In this section, we have studied extreme forms of women's sexual objectification in the patriarchal systems where they are set. Gwendolen and Mouse are victims of rape at an early age and this sexual abuse led to their alienation as they suffered from various psychological post traumatic disorders. For Gwendolen, incest drives her to insanity and she is admitted to a mental hospital. Adah is also victim of marital sexual abuse where her body is conceived as an object to answer her husband's sexual desire and bear children. All these protagonists are commodified by men either through patriarchy that conceives males as holders of power, or through institutions and systems such as the

Apartheid and its laws, that justified black and coloured women's sexual victimization.

The next chapter will explore the way the female characters succeeded in breaking the constraints put on them by their social, political and cultural environments to reach self-accomplishment. It will study how the process of the main characters' desalienation takes place and the factors that help them heal their broken selves.

Chapter 4 :

Women's Desalienation and Self-Realization

a-The Healing Power of Motherhood

As the title of this section suggests, I intend to study the link between motherhood and the desalienation of the female protagonists. Gwendolen, Adah and Elizabeth find in their roles as mothers the power to pull themselves out of the psychological breakdown they experience and reach self-realisation. The nurturing aspect of motherhood helps in healing the wounds of these characters' souls and give them strength to fight the demons of their world that is governed by racist and sexist dogma as we have already demonstrated in this research.

Motherhood is one of the most controversial issues among feminists whose opinions differ between those who consider this role as an inhibiter of women's independence and self-accomplishment, and those who see motherhood as a means to empower women. Simone de Beauvoir is one of the earliest feminists who rejected motherhood and described it as an alienating experience regarding the 'unpleasant' physical changes of women's bodies during pregnancy. She further described motherhood together with marriage as institutions that subordinate women to men. According to her, motherhood imprisons women in the domestic sphere and prevents them from pursuing successful careers as their male counterparts(De Beauvoir 152).

Today, this image of motherhood as an alienating experience has changed. Indeed, the fight of feminists moved from the early anti-maternal discourse to differentiate between motherhood as an experience and institution. Adrienne Rich's famous book *Of Woman Born : Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976) comes to throw light on two meanings of motherhood: "one is superimposed on the other : the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children ; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that that potential-and all women- shall remain under male control"(Rich 13). Rich is not against motherhood as an experience of bearing and

raising children. She rather rejects the social and patriarchal constructions of this institution that functions ideologically to imprison women in this role. Exclusively defined by their ability to bear children, women faced a set of stereotypes and constraints formed by the socially accepted ideology of mothering. Self-assertion, financial and intellectual success are not contradictory with the fact of being a mother; hence, feminists today want to end the myth of the "self-sacrificing mother" who has to reconcile her personal with her professional career.

They equally advocate more efficient social networks to help women find a balance between their roles as mothers and their self-realization as individuals. The feminist Nazaret Castro explains that the challenge of most feminist movements today is to "de-individualize motherhood" which implies less responsibilities on women' shoulders in relation to child care and more implication of state institutions and further involvement of men (Castro). in her article, "*Feminist Mothering : Challenging Gender Inequality by Resisting the Institution of Motherhood and Raising Children to be Critical Agents of Social Change"*, the feminist activist Fiona Joy Green holds that mothers with a feminist consciousness can act as agents of change in society. She further holds that "mothers with a feminist conscious move from an inauthentic obedience of the values of the dominant culture toward appreciating how many of these dominant values are unacceptable and, thus, can be actively challenged"(Green 84). Women need to understand the dual meaning of mothering and their ability to transgress and transform the oppressive conditions of this institution. In this sense, motherhood with a feminist consciousness becomes the empowering process that contributes to the main characters' desalienation.

The idea of motherhood as an empowering experience is equally present in African literature. The mother figure is often associated with strength, healing and nurturing. The motherist approach has been set by the feminist critic and writer Catherine Acholonu as a philosophy that celebrates these aspects of motherhood. Motherism deals not only with the ability of women to bear and

bring up children, but it also encompasses this biological ability to the spiritual and symbolic meaning of the mother figure. Catherine Acholonu has defined motherism as follows:

> Afrocentric feminist theory, therefore, must be anchored on the matrix of motherhood which is central to African metaphysics and has been the basis of survival and unity of the black race through the ages. Whatever Africa's role may be in the global perspective, it would never be divorced from her quintessential position as the Mother continent of humanity, nor is it coincidental that motherhood has remained the central focus of African art, African literature (especially women's writing), African culture, African psychology, oral traditions and empirical philosophy. Africa's alternative to Western feminism is motherism, and motherism denotes motherhood, nature and nurture…the motherist is a man or a woman committed to the survival of mother earth as a hologrammatic entity.(Acholonu 10-11)

From the passage above, we can understand that the ideology of motherism is based on the following tenets : the importance of motherhood for African culture and unity through time, the commitment of motherism to the protection and preservation of nature, the healing and nurturing powers of motherhood and finally the emphasis on the spiritual meaning of motherhood and the movement's engagement in the survival and well-being of humanity. It is worth to notice that being a motherist does not necessarily mean to be a woman; a man can also embrace this philosophy as it goes beyond the narrow biological meaning of motherhood.

In fact, from Acholonu's definition of motherism, we can spot a large number of similarities between this philosophy and womanism developed by Alice Walker and brought to African literary criticism by Chikewenye Ogunyemi. Like the motherist, "the womanist is committed to the survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female" (Walker 71). It is then a philosophy that is characterised by the universality of its fight against all forms of oppression and the call for the well-being of the community. Similar to motherism, womanism seeks the healing of the feminine self through the nurturing power of motherhood as Ogunyemi writes:

> Womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black lfe, while giving a balanced representation of womandom, its aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing that one sees in the positive integrative endings of womanist novels…motherhood binds women together in a collective experience of childbirth and nurture. Eventually this means a nurture of the community itself, and hence the significance of mothering. (Ogunyemi, *Womanism:The Dynamics* 63)

After explaining the motherist and womanist movements, it is interesting to explore the way our female protagonists reached self-realization through motherhood using both critical approaches. Starting with *Second Class Citizen,* Adah's pride of being the mother of four children is not to demonstrate since she considers her children as the only source of joy in her life. In spite of all the hardships Adah went through, she had never repudiated her role as a mother. Francis, however, considers his children as a burden as he claims: "I can't go on doing it, you'll have to look for someone. I can't go on looking after **your** children for you"[emphasis added](S.C.C 40). Francis uses the possessive pronoun 'your' to refer to 'his' children which may reflect his cultural African background that considers a mother as the exclusive reason responsible for raising her children. Adah has always assumed this role and she has always claimed her children as hers. By the end of the novel, we can see that Francis declares to the court that the children are not his after burning their birth certificates and that he does not "even mind their being sent for adoption"(S.C.C 143). Although she was exhausted by her last child pregnancy and devastated by her husband's ill-treatment, she received Francis's words with hope:

> Something happened to Adah then. It was like a big hope and a kind of energy charging onto her, giving her so much strength even though she was physically ill…then she said very loud and very clear, 'Don't worry, Sir. The children are mine, and that is enough. I shall never let them down as long as I am alive' (S.C.C 143)

This key passage corresponds to the motherist perspective that posits motherhood as a way to empower women. The terms 'energy', 'strength' and 'hope' contradict the miserable situation in which Adah finds herself when she asks for divorce. Moreover, these terms suggest that Adah has at last pulled herself out of the sense of alienation she experienced during her marriage with

Francis. Marie Umeh makes clearly the link between Adah's survival and motherhood when she describes Adah as "the long-suffering mother par excellence…there is no sacrifice Adah would not make for the benefit of her children…without children, life has no meaning"(Umeh 107).

Indeed, Motherhood gives Adah feminist consciousness to challenge her status quo as she decides to break her marriage, resume her studies, find another job and most importantly start writing. Adah could not abandon herself to despair and weakness because she is responsible for the survival of her children. This instinct of survival provided by motherhood has always been fascinating and enigmatic as it transforms women into strong creatures when their children are in need of help. In addition to the empowering aspect of motherhood, both motherists and womanists insist on its healing potential. Adah's tortured self finds comfort in her children who represent the only family she has after she left her relatives in Nigeria and became a divorced woman. She understands that she does not need a man to feel self-accomplished and that her children can fill that emotional gap. Adah, then experiences the joys of motherhood that help her reach emotional balance and peace of mind.

In *In the Ditch* which narrates Adah's life after divorce, we see her moving to a council house and struggling with the discriminatory welfare system to raise her children. She experiences poverty and racism, but she is depicted as a self-asserted woman who, in spite of all the hardships, acquires a degree in sociology, finds a respectful job and a house for her children, in addition to writing. In fact, motherhood is not the only factor that guided Adah from her alienation to self-fulfilment. Writing provides her with a new form of expression that lets her voice her pain and heal herself. This link between writing and Adah's will to free herself from the chains of her marriage is to be demonstrated later in this chapter.

Motherhood appears also in *Gwendolen* as a leading theme. We can see that Emecheta adopts a womanist stand when she proposes it as the remedy to

Gwendolen's psychological breakdown. Her pregnancy gives her hope and strength to fight her depression as she has to survive for the sake of bringing her baby to life. When she learns that she is pregnant, Gwendolen realizes that she has a new raison d'être: "what was it ? the baby ? No, not only the baby but also her future and her reason of being alive… the only thing that she could call her own" (*Gwendolen* 179). It is true that in most rape cases, pregnancy is lived by victims as an alienating experience rather than a healing one. As a product of rape, the baby may be a source of repulsion rather than joy for the raped woman which may contradict with Emecheta's idealization of motherhood in the novel. Emecheta then offers a very optimistic resolution to a rape story that ends up by Gwendolen accepting her baby, while this is not the case of most victims.

When she moves to hospital, Gwendolen is encouraged by the nurse Ama to cooperate with the doctors in order to avoid injections that can affect her baby. Surprisingly, Gwendolen responds to her advice and the process of recovery from her depression was triggered by making the motherhood act as a therapy: "the nurse was a bit of an actress… 'I love having babies. It can be the most beautiful experience a woman can ever have…My advice enjoy it just as if this is the only one you'll ever have. If you don't give them any trouble here, they may arrange for you to have a flat soon'."(*Gwendolen* 180). The nurse presents motherhood as a beautiful experience that it is worth living and make Gwendolen cling to life to enjoy it.

Gwendolen makes her first steps on the healing process when she realizes that she must externalize her pains and negative feelings as Emecheta states: "she should tell someone one day…she could not bottle it up in herself through, otherwise it would kill her"(*Gwendolen* 180). Her need to voice her rape functions as a talk therapy that psychiatrists use with their patients. She subsequently starts to open up her "shell" and share her feelings with the nurse Ama who provides her with support. However, Emecheta does not explore this process of healing as

opposed to Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* where the reader is immersed into a very detailed description of all of her recovery phases. Indeed, little is said by Emecheta about the therapeutic mechanisms that helped Gwendolen overcome the trauma of rape and most importantly how she managed to accept her baby. It must be stated that Head who faced psychological problems in her life had a better understanding of mental illnesses and that could explain the precision with which she had adapted this theme to fiction.

After a long stay in the mental hospital, Gwendolen gives birth to a baby girl that the nurse calls Lyamide. The name of the little girl is very symbolic: it is a Yoruba name that means "My mother, my female friend, my female saviour, my anything-nice-you-can-think-of-in-woman's form"(*Gwendolen* 210). The name Emecheta gives to the baby reflects a philosophy that celebrates motherhood as a form of self-healing since lyamide is the saviour of Gwendolen. The little baby represents all that Gwendolen has needed mainly the caring love of a mother that Sonia has failed to give her. The critic Neerja Chand comments on Emecheta's use of motherhood in the novel:

> At the end of the novel, Gwendolen can not only pronounce her name confidently, she has also matured into a self-sufficient mother and human being. Emecheta underscores the significance of motherhood in a woman's life by showing it as a liberating experience for Gwendolen. It heals the innumerable wounds inflicted on her psyche by life and its ugly circumstances. (Chand 185)

In this sense, the literary work can be read as a womanist or motherist novel since motherhood healed the shattered self of Gwendolen who was victim of sexual abuse, racism and social rejection. The first indication of Gwendolen's desalienation and recovery of a sense of wholeness comes when she refuses to abort or give her child to adoption. The birth of her baby is symbolic of Gwendolen's rebirth as a strong self-confident woman who is in control of her life for the first time. She decides to resume her education, keep the child, leave her mother's house and get a job. All these changes reflect Gwendolen's healing as she starts to exist as an individual with an independent identity. In a passage that

can be considered as an epiphany in the development of the main character, Emecheta writes:

> When asked about the abortion of her baby or giving him away for adoption, Gwendolen reacted and decided to take her life back. She would like her mother to know that she was keen on keeping the baby, that she and the baby would not be a burden to her. She would educate herself and get a good job. (*Gwendolen* 182)

This moment of self-realization can be seen as a turning point in Gwendolen's life who reached a complete metamorphosis from a rape victim silenced and crushed by guilt to a self-confident woman. It should be stated that this awakening of the main character is provoked by the birth of her child, which confirms the empowering and healing effects of motherhood on her. Like Adah, becoming a mother gives Gwendolen a sense of responsibility as she must be mentally strong for her child. This can be related to the idea of "feminist mothering" which implies the importance of the feminist consciousness of mothers that can empower women to break free from patriarchal rules and exist as individuals. A woman who gives birth performs the most extraordinary and difficult act which makes of her an extremely powerful being who can revolt against oppression. Once Gwendolen and Adah have this feminist consciousness, they become aware of their power and start to see mothering as a site of resistance to the damaging effects of the patriarchal expectations of motherhood. Adah breaks the all-accepting and self-sacrificing myths of motherhood and finds the courage to divorce and think of her personal success by becoming a writer. It is also important to stress that when Gwendolen sees her baby, her first thoughts go to her mother. It is clear that Gwendolen who was deprived from the protection and love of Sonia wants to be a different mother. She wants to be educated and financially autonomous to bring up her daughter.

However, it must be noted that Gwendolen is not alone to face the new challenges of her life as a single mother. She is surrounded by some women and most importantly, Emmanuel who refuses to let her down even when she is

admitted to the mental hospital. In fact, many critics find that in *Gwendolen,* Emecheta adopts a very different way of writing from her previous novels: a perspective that is womanist. The concept of sisterhood that is often a core idea to womanists is well represented in the novel through the female characters who provided Gwendolen with help and emotional support. Explaining the concept of sisterhood, Bonnie Thornton Dill writes:

> The concept of sisterhood has been an important unifying force in the contemporary women's movements. By stressing the similarities of women's secondary social and economic positions in all societies and the family, this concept has been a binding force in the struggle against male chauvinism, patriarchy and race. (Dill 140)

In the novel, Gladys, the nurse Ama, the Irish neighbour Moya, and the social worker embody women's solidarity and bounding that are necessary for the survival of Gwendolen. However, before dealing with Gwendolen's women friends, Emecheta expresses the theme of women's solidarity through the relationship between Gladys and Sonia. Omar Sougou comments on this use of the idea of sisterhood in the novel as follows:

> Gwendolen is a celebration of women's bonding. Besides Gwendolen herself, there is Gladys Odowis, deserted by her husband, she rears her children while studying…the friendship of Sonia and Gladys and the mutual support they bestow, bridge the possible differences with class barriers, education and individual cultural world-view may have engendered. (Sougou 215)

A parallel can be drawn between Sonia and Gladys, on one hand and Gwendolen and the Ghanaian nurse Ama, on the other. Ama has a different cultural and educational level from Gwendolen, yet a nice friendship is born between them. It can be stated that without Ama's help, Gwendolen would have not recovered properly from her psychological breakdown. In fact, Gwendolen needed an adult whom she could trust and talk to so that she could open the "shell" which was made to protect herself:

> be friending her was part of her treatment, she would have clamped her mouth shut. But maybe not. Childbirth is greater leveller for women…she started to think

> herself lucky to meet a down-to-earth African nurse who had pitied her and started to tell her things her mother would have told her. (*Gwendole*n 179-180)

Ama symbolically names the little baby and visits Gwendolen even when she is released from hospital. Gwendolen draws her strength from her friendship with Ama who understands her suffering especially as they both experience the same racial discrimination as immigrants. In fact, not only sexism and male chauvinism brought the female characters together, but also racism. Gladys, Gwendolen, Ama and Sonia have all faced racism as "second class citizens" in London and these hardships became a unifying force for them.

In *In The Ditch*, the empowering aspect of sisterhood appears as a dominant theme as the critic Tommie Lee Jackson explains: "they (women) like Mrs. Cox, have that sense of mutual help that is ingrained in people who have known a communal rather than an individualistic way of life"(Lee Jackson 111). Mrs. Cox, Billy's mother and Whoopey helped Adah to survive the loneliness and poverty she met there. Women forming a community to empower one another makes of Emecheta's works bear the womanist touch that celebrates women's solidarity as she further writes: "differences in cultures, colours, backgrounds and God knows what else had all been submerged in the face of greater enemies: poverty and helplessness"(111). In this sense, Adah who suffered from isolation and lack of emotional support in *Second Class Citizen,* owes a great part of her survival in *In The Ditch* to the help of the female characters. What brings these women together is the fact that they are all mothers fighting for the well-being of their children and this creates a further bound of solidarity and collectivity that transcends all the boundaries of race and culture.

In addition to the concept of sisterhood, womanism and motherism emphasize the role of men in establishing the idea of universal wholeness; men can likewise contribute to women's self-accomplishment. Emecheta's criticism of African males' chauvinism characterises most of her novels, a fact that engendered a vehement attack by some feminists like Ogunyemi who finds that the writer's

negative depiction of men reflects her adherence to the white western English feminism of her time. This tendency seems to be reversed in *Gwendolen* where Emecheta builds a very positive male character whose love contributes to a great extent to the healing process and desalienation of Gwendolen. In fact, Gwendolen's boyfriend Emmanuel feels true love for her and continuously provides her with care throughout her psychological breakdown and pregnancy. Moreover, after the birth of her child, he proposes to give her his name.

The positive image of Emanuel goes with the womanist and motherist aspect of this novel since Emecheta reproduces the "conciliatory spirit between the sexes" advocated by Ogunyemi in her definition of womanism (Ogunyemi, *African/Woman Palava* 222). The critic Neerja Chand establishes the link between Gwendolen and Emmanuel's love affair, on one hand and the protagonist's healing from the trauma of sexual abuse and rape, on the other. She writes: "A healing process begins for Gwendolen. In the ecstasy of love making, all barriers that separate two human beings recede to the background…the seeds of a new personality and identity begins to sprout …Emmanuel brings the magic of love into her life"(Chand 184). For the first time, Gwendolen relates to a man without the fear of being sexually exploited. She experiences sexuality with someone who loves her, a feeling she has never known before. All the men that she has met in her life gave her a distorted image of love based on perversity and sexual abuse rather than respect and sincerity. Emmanuel helps reconstructing Gwendolen's trust in men and the possibility of mutual love as she confesses,: "So it was real, this type of life. So, it was possible. So one could really care for another person"(*Gwendolen* 133). Neerja Chand concludes that through this couple, Emecheta "debunks the western radical feminist myth of 'women without men'."(Chand 186). This is reflected in the novel when Gwendolen admits that she needs Emmanuel to face life after she is abandoned by her mother.

In fact, the love scene with Emmanuel is to be contrasted to the rape scenes already described in the novel where we see Gwendolen petrified with fear, silenced by the heavy hand of her rapists and devastated by her feelings of guilt. The love scene with the two teenagers is described as follows:

> From her limited experience, sex was a humiliation in which women had to give themselves to their men just to make them happy…with her Daddy, she was too stunned to say a word. Emmanuel was different. With him it was a play. It was an escape from reality…they played, they fondled…she would have liked him to go on like this, just living like this. (*Gwendolen* 132)

Love making is expressed in this passage with positive terms such as "played" and "fondled". She is happy and she wants this moment to last in opposite to the rape scene where she is terrorised and confused. According to Omar Sougou, Emmanuel functions as "the man-would-understand and is to a great extent the means by which she asserts herself"(Sougou 215). We can state that Gwendolen's intimate experience with Emmanuel corrects her sexual misconception and reflects a reconciliation between the protagonist and her body.

In addition to the caring male character of Emmanuel, the womanist aspect of this novel lays partly in the representation of men as victims. Winston for example is not pictured as a sadistic rapist, but rather as a man who regrets his deeds with his daughter so much so that he commits suicide at the end of the novel. Omar Sougou writes:

> [Emecheta] is lenient with Winston in comparison with her well-known harsh and stringent portraiture of males who are harmful to female characters. The notion that Winston is a casualty of the social system is not clearly articulated, although the idea conveyed that race and class combine to victimize him. Winston appears as a monster and as a pathetic figure. (215)

We can conclude that in her late novels like *The Rape of Shavi* and *Gwendolen,* Emecheta adopts a rather moderate representation of black men, but this does not prevent her from denouncing all forms of oppression and males' abuse of women. In addition to the conciliating spirit between the sexes in her late novels, and the empowering aspect of motherhood and sisterhood, Emecheta insists on

the importance of education for her female characters' desalienation and self-realization in society.

Most feminists if not all place education at the heart of their struggle to create better opportunities for women and raise awareness about their rights. Commenting on the importance of education, the critic Rose Mezu observes:

> For Buchi Emecheta as for all the progressive feminists/ womanist writers, education is the desideratum for an enlighted, independent, self-fulfilling life. The writer's personae in her autobiographical novels transcends near impossible situations by the virtue of knowledge and wisdom conferred by education. Education, therefore, becomes the panacea to combat all ills for it heightens self-awareness, shapes perceptions and goals and forges a will of steel. (Mezu 14)

In this passage, Mezu highlights Emecheta's eagerness to equip girls and women with education as a weapon to overcome the constraints of their patriarchal societies and assert themselves. For Adah who stands for Emecheta in the novel, there is no doubt that her salvation goes through education. From her early age, Adah realizes the importance of educating herself and as demonstrated in the first chapter, the little girl faced all sorts of obstacles and violence from her family who traditionally believe that a girl is not supposed to study. She was beaten and had to steal money to carry on with her education. She was seen as a pariah when she grew up because of her education and after she moved to England, she was cast out by her Nigerian community because she had a "white man"'s job. Adah's education allowed her to work and provide for her family when her husband was failing his exams. Mezu holds that education provides women with "self-awareness" and "forges a will of steel" and it seems clear that Adah's decision to break her marriage with the abusive Francis is the result of her enlightenment and feminist consciousness as an educated woman. Francis is warned that Adah's education represents a threat to his power as a man as Emecheta writes: "Somebody had warned him that the greatest mistake an African could make was to bring an educated girl to London and let her mix with middle-class women. They soon know their rights" (S.C.C 55). In this sense, Adah's education empowers

her as a person who finds in her deep self the strength to react to her situation and free herself.

Self-knowledge is what leads Adah to desalienate and assert herself as Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey state: “Institutional changes proceed from dynamic sources within the personality. For this reason, knowledge of the composition and structure of personality in specific groups is a basic preliminary to social engineering”(Kardiner and Ovesey 10). Any change can be only possible if the individual is aware of his self and its abilities. Adah’s intellectual potential leads her to know her rights and promote change in her life first as a woman by divorcing Francis and as a black second-class citizen by getting a degree in sociology and starting to write. She is then an example of how women’s self-awareness works as an incentive for change that leads to improvement.

In *Gwendolen,* emphasis is also made by Emecheta on education. Although Gwendolen hated school because of racism and discrimination, she was reconciled with education at the end of the novel. As a New Woman, she wants to reconstruct herself as an independent and financially autonomous single mother. She decides to educate herself and get a job to provide for her little child. Motherhood again makes of Gwendolen a better person who dreams of improving her life as she symbolically holds: “I am a mother now, and I have read a book from cover to cover”(*Gwendolen* 213). Reading a book in English is an achievement and a symbol of salvation for Gwendolen since she had a lot of learning difficulties at school.

In addition to Gwendolen, Gladys Odowis appears as Emecheta’s most feminist character, as she embodies the author’s point of view that places education and motherhood as key empowering concepts for a woman’s self-assertion. Gladys reminds the reader of Adah who equally lives as a single mother, studies and works hard to provide for her family. Emecheta’s Adah and Gladys embody the womanist ideal as strong educated and self-fulfilled mothers. We can deduce that

Gwendolen takes Gladys as an example to follow since she has a closer relationship with her than with Sonia who has never been a mother for her.

Gladys's description of Gwendolen at the end of the novel reflects the development of this female character from a weak, traumatized, alienated individual into a strong and self-accomplished woman who has taken back control of her life. She is no more that lost child who fails to belong to a family or to integrate in the western society. She builds a family of her own with Emmanuel and Iyamide, she is surrounded by loving friends and she is on the point to educate herself in order to find a job for a better insertion in the British community. Addressing Sonia, Gladys says: "Don't worry, Gwendolen is a big girl now. She can take care of herself. She'll find her own identity"(G*wendolen* 238).

We can observe that the recovery of a distinct and assertive identity comes at the end of a long journey through which Gwendolen has experienced all sorts of oppression starting by rape and abandonment in Jamaica to incest and racial discrimination in London. We can then qualify this work as a novel of personal development where the character discovers the truth about herself only through the hardships she endures in order to reach at the end a feeling of wholeness and accomplishment. *Gwendolen* ends in an optimistic tone with the protagonist's success in overcoming her sense of alienation and becoming a strong independent woman. Optimism is also seen in the message of reconciliation and forgiveness that the novel holds at the end. Indeed, in spite of all the pain and horrors inflicted on her by her father, she had never felt hatred towards him. Out of loyalty to her father, she had always tried to protect him from prison and never revealed the secret about their incestuous relation until the birth of her child.

Similarly, Gwendolen forgives Sonia although she has failed to be a loving and protective mother for her. The name given to her baby which means "my mother" symbolizes Gwendolen's love for her mother. In the last scene of the novel, Sonia intends to kill her daughter that she considers evil and responsible for all the woes

that have befallen her life. However, when she sees the baby who looks exactly like Winston, Sonia realizes how unfair and blind she was: “Sonia went towards the cot and was transfixed. She opened her mouth, closed it, several times as if she was drowning…she saw Winston’s round face shrunk to the size of the child’s” (*Gwendolen* 236). This passage represents a moment of realization to Sonia as she finally comes face to face with the bitter truth of her husband’s sexual abuse of his daughter, a fact that she has tried by all means to ignore and bury deep inside her psyche. She even thinks that she has turned blind when she saw the baby, and this reflects how strong the emotional shock is, but Mrs. Odowis brings her to reality by saying: “No, Sonia, you’re not blind. You refused to see what you did not wish to see. Who could blame you for that? We do it all the time”(*Gwendolen* 236).

Sonia is again depicted by Emecheta with sympathy as she is understood by Gladys concerning her refusal to believe her daughter. It is a conciliatory end that Emecheta conceives to stress the idea of “forgiveness” as a way of healing the community. Instead of keeping the gap of hatred between Sonia and Gwendolen, Emecheta creates a moment of reconciliation which gives the novel a womanist perspective. The last comments of Gwendolen reflect this tendency of wholeness and unity: “'Oh, mum’, Gwendolen moved closer to Sonia on the chair. ‘Iyamide means ‘My mother is here.’ It is symbolic. It does not mean you’re no longer my mother. It means everything I never wanted, warmth, security, comfort, is all here in a female form”(*Gwendolen* 237). Motherhood means “warmth”, “security”, and “comfort” that contradict with the coldness and horror that Gwendolen went through her life. It provides her with the remedy for all her ills and allows her to forgive her mother. Describing the womanist aspect of the novel’s end, Christine Sizemore writes:

> the novel ends perhaps too optimistically for an incest victim but it does show a company together in London of women’s voices from Africa and Afro-Caribbean cultures and provides some hope that a resilient young woman like Gwendolen can overcome the legacies of racism and abuse. In spite of the tremendous costs

> portrayed in this novel, the potential for community among women survives.(Sizemore 377-378)

It is true that as a rape victim, Gwendolen healed and overcame her trauma in a fast way. The reader may question the process of healing that Emecheta fails to describe in depth compared to Elizabeth in *A Question of Power.* The novel can be considered in this sense "too optimistic" for a rape story, but it remains the writer's view that the love and care of the community can help victims to find comfort and recover. The wholeness of the community triumphs at the end of the novel with the healing of Gwendolen who stands for "the quintessential African New Woman"(Chand 186) and Sonia who symbolically plunged fiercely and repeatedly the knife she brought to butcher her daughter with into a rubbish bin. It is described by Emecheta as a ritual to free the family from the ills of the past and burry the hatred that separated them. Forgiveness requires more strength than revenge as Nelson Mandela says in one of his most famous speeches: "forgiveness liberates the soul. It removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon"(qtd.in Ashe).

As an immigrant from the West Indies Gwendolen is represented as a survivor who defeats both gender and racist discriminations. The novel's end can be contrasted with Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage* (1985) in which the West Indian protagonist, Leila fails to resist the overwhelming bad conditions of Caribbean immigrants in England after the second world war. Although Leila reaches self-awareness at the end of the novel by realizing that she is a powerful woman who can free herself from her husband's domination, she decides to return to her homeland as she could not stand racism as part of a minority group living in London.

The womanist/motherist aspects of Emecheta's *Gwendolen* can be equally found in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* since motherhood, women's bonding and the wholeness of the community are equally celebrated by the writer as a source of the main character's self-assertion and fulfilment. Elizabeth is a mother

and we can claim that this role saved her on several times from committing suicide and from psychological breakdown. We remember the scene when Elizabeth has reached the peak of her schizophrenia and intended to put an end to her life, and is brought back to her senses by the laughs and screams of her child Shorty playing football with his friends in the yard. Like Adah and Gwendolen, Elizabeth finds strength in her maternal feelings to survive and face the turmoil of her mental illness. In other words, her son gave her a raison d'être while everything around her was falling apart under the weight of racism and identity crisis she experienced. Shorty represents also the link with the Motabeng community as he succeeded in integrating the Botswanan society. In fact, when she is admitted to the mental hospital, he is taken care of by a family from the village. He acts also in the novel as a motivator to Elizabeth to cling to "normal" life as a mother performing everyday chores because she has someone who needs her.

The role of Shorty is very important in the novel since he makes Elizabeth experience the motherhood that she has never known before in her life. The critic Shivalik Katoch Pathania explains this aspect of Elizabeth's personality: "Elizabeth's lack of a mother, mother figure, mother-country and mother-tongue is the major reason for her unsettled identity, while her role as a mother of Shorty is the route to her regeneration"(Pathania 104). We can claim that motherhood gives Elizabeth a sense of identity that she has always longed for, that of a mother. Like Gwendolen's daughter, Shorty becomes a symbol of the family, the security and the warmth she has been denied all her life as a coloured woman. The nurturing aspect of motherhood accelerates the healing process of Elizabeth in the same way it helps Gwendolen.

Indeed, when she is in the mental hospital, Elizabeth wants to leave in order to be with her son. In spite of her total insanity and delirium at that period, she has never forgotten her role as a mother which according to Huma Ibrahim

“reaffirms her affiliations with others” and asserts her “belonging to a material world”. It equally “coaxes her back to sanity”(Ibrahim 166). The novel's last scene is quite symbolic of the power of motherhood to heal Elizabeth from depression. Indeed, her journey closes with her son which suggests that she went out of her sense of alienation to embrace the world with the love of a child who is a substitute for all the emotional depravation she had as Head writes: “ a peaceful meditative privacy settled on her mind. Her painful broken nerve-ends quietly knit together. She put Shorty to bed and for the first time in three years, embraced the solitude of the night with joy”(A.Q.P 206). This passage suggests the end of Elizabeth’s hallucinations as she appears no more afraid of the night that used to be the theatre of the horrifying apparitions of Sello, Dan and Medusa.

As we have stated earlier, motherhood is used by motherists not only as a mother-child relation, but also it can include a larger meaning of mothering being more a philosophy of nurturing, healing and empowerment. Head uses this theme on various levels as it can be read as a metaphor for creativity and liberation of the oppressed. The critic Shivalik Pathania speaks of the use of motherhood as a way to decolonize Elizabeth’s mind:

> Motherhood commences the process of decolonisation of Elizabeth’s mind. It is by virtue of being a woman that she experiences the joys of motherhood which despite its demands, brings deliverance from the psychological depression of being colonized on account of race as well as gender.(Pathania 105)

Motherhood enables Elizabeth to free herself not only from gender oppression as a woman, but also it gives her a sense of belonging to a race. As a coloured, she lived in a liminal state between the white and black races, and thanks to her role as a mother, she bridges the gap that separates her from the Motabeng community through Shorty who links her to the villagers. Gradually, Elizabeth is integrated in the village community when she starts to work in the garden with other Motabeng women. Elizabeth then pulls herself from her sense of being racially alienated as she finally finds a place in the African society. We can claim

that Elizabeth acts as the motherist whose task is “the healing and protecting of the natural cohesive essence of the family, the child and the society”(Acholonu 111). In fact, Elizabeth is protective of her son and she equally cares about the well-being of the Motabeng community that she starts to consider as a family for her.

She equally integrates the project set by Eugene to improve the living conditions of the Botswanans and the South African refugees living in the village. She shares with him the ideology of egalitarianism between the people irrespective of colour, caste or origin, in addition to a humanitarian philosophy engaged in the survival, healing and equality of all humanity.

The youth-development-work-group project set by Eugene, aims at developing local industries especially in the field of agriculture to promote economic autonomy and flourishment. Most of this group members are volunteers like Elizabeth as they all believe in a brighter future for their country. By unifying their forces and working hard, the members of the project succeed in creating a local economic network that uses the natural resources of the land and respected its natural ecosystem. According to Eugene, they project “to turn people’s attention to their natural resources”(A.Q.P 69). This sentence resonates with hope for Elizabeth and is according to Desiree Lewis a “trope for regeneration”(Lewis 218). In fact, Eugene's projects move creativity in Elizabeth and the other young people of the village who find in productivity and work a possibility for self-affirmation and progress. Products such as teapots, mats, blankets, pots, plates, soap and dresses are made by some volunteers while others prefers to join the other project of the garden where they grew different vegetables, fruits but most importantly seeds to promote agriculture in the area.

The spirit of preserving the natural environment and the use of eco-responsible systems to promote local industries correspond to the motherist stand that is committed to the survival of mother Earth as stated earlier. Elizabeth

is devoted to the work in the garden which becomes her favourite place since it provides her with peace of mind and a sense of accomplishment when she sees her first vegetables coming out of earth. Elizabeth is surprised to see how fertile and productive the land is where “Cabbages, tomatoes, cauliflowers and peppers appeared as if from nowhere and grew with shimmering, green leaves in the intense heat. They were making the half-rotting orders of green vegetables from Johannesburg as a thing of the past”(A.Q.P 125). This passage is very symbolic of the change in Elizabeth’s state since the green and healthy vegetables of Botswana which stand for her present life are to be contrasted to the rotting vegetables of her past days in South Africa. She has moved from the darkness of racial oppression in South Africa to the brightness of a healed self that has found meaning to her life in the arms of mother Earth.

According to Hershini Bhana, the garden is a place where “the men and women of the project form a community that faces the deep-rooted nature of white prejudice, creating space where identity regimes are not the determining factors of interaction”(Bhana 45). Indeed, the garden provides Elizabeth with a community, a family where all the boundaries between her and the Motabeng people disappeared for the sake of unity and positive change. Her sense of rejection and alienation is replaced by a regenerative and open connection with the group that makes her belong somewhere for the first time.

Reading the garden work from a motherist perspective establishes a link between motherhood and the land. A mother is a person who nurtures, protects and raises children which echoes also Elizabeth’s engagement to care for the land. The critic Shivalik Pathania has captured the role of the garden work in Elizabeth’s development as a character from alienation to self-realization:

> Elizabeth’s own instinct towards nurturing of plants and mothering of small boys is linked to her essence as a woman, a creator and ultimately to her power of self-expression. Elizabeth’s search for identity culminates in the theme of motherhood which becomes an emancipating experience. (Pathania 105)

In addition to her role as a mother, Elizabeth's work in the garden acts as a therapy that helped her to overcome her psychological breakdown. Catherine Acholonu expresses this ancestral link between mothers and mother Africa as follows: “the mother is at the spiritual heart of the African family. It is rooted in the Earth, an almost elemental connection between woman and earth. Goddesses and Earth mother induce fertility and meaning in humans”(Acholonu 110). Elizabeth’s connection with the garden is instinctive as this land becomes her second child to whom she dedicates her love, care and time. Shorty and the garden are Elizabeth’s sources of motivation to regain her sanity.

Elizabeth’s return to the land helps to decolonize her mind and assert her identity as a coloured woman as we have stated earlier. According to Roger. A. Berger, Bessie Head “offers in *A Question of Power* a provisional solution to the colonial psychopathology. Elizabeth can cure herself of her madness only when she returns to the land and through the help of the peasants, she reconceives a global humanist vision”(Berger 39). This passage echoes Frantz Fanon’s ideology developed in *The Wretched of the Earth* where he claims that “the fellah, the unemployed and the starving native do not lay claim to the truth; they do not say that they represent the truth, for they are the truth”(Fanon, *The Wretched* 49). Working with the “farmers” provides Elizabeth with the truth that the land belongs to the colonized and that they should have no fear in reclaiming it. The auto-appropriation of the garden means for Elizabeth the recovery of a legitimate identity as an African woman that was denied to her because of the Apartheid system. It is the quintessence of her ultimate sense of belonging to a land after a long journey of drift and non-belonging. Work in the garden gives her clairvoyance into the nature of humanity: the truth that egalitarian and non-exploitative relations between people are the keys for universal brotherhood where all forms of oppression recede. This ideology is highly womanist, since it aims at the universality of equality, brotherhood, and love for all mankind.

In addition to the womanist aspect, the novel closes with Head's vision of society and religion. She denies the existence of God and believes in men and their capacity to love each other. Head rejects religion with its patriarchal aspect adopting then the view of feminist theologians like Rosemary Renther, Noami Goldenberg and Elizabeth Gray. Noami Goldenberg explains their ideology that rejects "the hierarchy in traditional religion" and calls for "a more egalitarian world view". She adds: "Feminist theologians speak out against the male God in the sky and the lingering Christian view that the world was created specifically for man and that he has the right to use nature and women as he pleases"(Goldenberg 55). Elizabeth loses faith in religion and God after all the oppression and injustice she faced in the name of this same God. Christianity was used by Apartheid regimes to justify and maintain the myth of the white man's superiority and his so-called burden to civilize and enlighten the other races. She believes in a world without any superior being and calls for a rather egalitarian community as she realizes at the end of the novel:

> …the basic error seemed to be a relegation of all things holy to some unseen Being in the sky. Since man was not holy to man, he could be tortured and killed for his complexity, he could be misused, degraded and killed…there is only one god and his name is Man. And Elizabeth is his prophet. (A.Q.P 205-206)

Elizabeth debunks the masculine hegemony of the Christian religion by positing herself as a prophet and rejecting at the same time the God figure as an entity in the sky. She claims to be the prophet of humanity because she has reached insight into its very nature after her traumatic journey into the human soul. Commenting on Elizabeth's awakening, the critic Maureen Fielding explains: "this awakening is a crucial part of trauma, that is the stage when the survivor must leave the dream stage behind, must awaken in order to transmit what he has experienced. Most importantly the survivor must awaken others. This is the ethical imperative of trauma"(Fielding 103). Elizabeth's role is to spread this knowledge that power corrupts and leads to oppression as she formulates this insight in one of the most salient passages of the novel: "If the things of the soul are really a question of

power, then anyone in possession of the power could be Lucifer"(A.Q.P 199). This statement reminds us of Kurtz's moment of realization at the end of *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad when he understands that the human being can commit "horrors" when he has absolute power in his hands. In fact, to the question why individuals and societies become evil, Elizabeth's journey teaches her the following lessons:

> …it was the kind of language she understands. No one was the be-all and end-all creation. That no one had the power of assertion and domination to the exclusion of other life…an awakening of her own power corresponds to an awakening of love and mankind. (A.Q.P 205)

Reflecting this conclusion on the situation in South Africa at that time makes white people in South Africa not "the be-all" and "end-all" of creation as they had convinced oppressed black Africans for centuries using Apartheid ideology. Commenting on Elizabeth's realization of the truth about Apartheid, Huma Ibrahim argues: "In this way she resists not only the demons of 'personal madness' but also the horrors of 'political madness', namely Apartheid"(Ibrahim 164). We can conclude that Elizabeth reaches racial desalienation when she realizes that no individual, system or institution had the right to dominate another human being.

Indeed, this knowledge contributes to healing Elizabeth as she understands that human nature can be easily corrupted by the lust of power. Understanding the reason of hatred, discrimination and racism she has experienced may help her forgive and keep hope in the goodness of humanity since she sees that the human being is capable of good and evil at the same time. She notices this, for example, in the racialist doctor who hates blacks, but she is surprised by his love and care for children including Shorty. Dan also who stands for the worst side of humanity, bears these contradictory poles in him as Elizabeth states: "he taught her the extremes of love and tenderness through the extremes of hate"(A.Q.P 202). Her experience with Dan, though painful, is necessary to understand human

nature as she needed this insight into absolute evil. Elizabeth is aware of the importance of this journey with Dan and Sello at the end when she writes: “from the degradation and destruction of her life had arisen a still, lofty serenity of soul nothing could shake” (A.Q.P 202). Elizabeth’s healing is completed at the end of her journey into the human soul.

In addition to her painful but liberating experience with Dan and her role as a mother, Elizabeth finds strength in her friendship with Kenosi, the Botswanan woman who helped her recover her sanity. In fact, Elizabeth’s relation with Kenosi gives the novel a womanist perspective because it mirrors the idea of sisterhood as a way to help women survive the hardships of their societies. Elizabeth starts to work in the garden with Kenosi and gradually a nice friendship is born between them as she becomes fascinated by “Kenosi’s self-containment”. Although she is uneducated, Elizabeth finds in her work "a knowingness and grasp of life that made her beautiful”(A.Q.P 90). She is described as a quiet person with deep concentration and a “wonderful majesty and purposefulness”(A.Q.P 88). Their relationship is based on egalitarian principles where class and race boundaries melt leaving place to mutual respect and support. Moreover, according to Nancy Topping Bazin, Kenosi represents a feminist model for Elizabeth:

> In practice, she is saved by working in a garden with a woman friend, Kenosi who admires and respects her. Her work and relationship with the woman provide with a feminist model of thinking and behaving. Ultimately, Elizabeth rejects the patriarchal model of thinking and behaving in favour of a feminist model of an egalitarian philosophy. (Bazin 54)

Indeed, Kenosi and Elizabeth are partners in the garden project for although Elizabeth is educated and she has learned from Camilla about the seeding work, she has never treated Kenosi as an inferior to her. Their relation stands as a model for the love Sello wants her to experience when he says: “love is two people mutually feeding each other, not one living on the soul of the other like a ghoul” (A.Q.P 197). Kenosi helps her believe that egalitarian relationships are possible

and this constitutes a hope for the future of her people as she advocates the ideal of communal love and equality. Within the womanist/motherist perspective, Elizabeth's care for Kenosi can be associated with mothering and nurturing as she feels responsible for her exactly as her son. This mothering relation is reflected when the young woman explained how she badly needed her in the garden project and in her life. As Shorty brought her to reality, Kenosi helped Elizabeth cling to her sanity because she knew that both depend on her and this is reflected by Kenosi's worries and then relief when she meets Elizabeth after her stay in the hospital: "'you must never leave the garden.' ' I cannot work without you' "(A.Q.P 142). These words give Elizabeth courage to stand up to be present for her as Head writes: "Elizabeth struggled to an upright posture the way this woman brought her back to life and reality"(A.Q.P 142).

Elizabeth's isolation and social withdrawal are broken by the people who love and need her which gives her motivation to defeat her demons and recover her mind. Women's solidarity is celebrated at the end of the novel since the garden project succeeded and this was the result of Kenosi and Elizabeth's collaboration and mutual help. It provides her also with a sense of belonging that strengthens her as a woman of colour and makes her realize that human beings' relations are not exclusively governed by domination and oppression. Head believes that there is a kind of love where there is "no private hunger to be kissed, loved and adored. And yet, there was a feeling of being kissed by everything by the air, the soft flow of life, people's smiles and friendships"(A.Q.P 197). Love is then for Elizabeth a healing force found everywhere because it saved her as Head writes: "Though love and hate are not rational, love is sane…there is certainly something like 'being deeply attached' to others and sometimes you wonder how much sanity asserted itself, considering what we were faced with in South Africa"(Head, *A Letter* 57).

This love ties also Elizabeth to her friend Tom whose relation is based on mutual respect. Another aspect that makes Head's novel womanist is the construction of positive and supportive male characters who play a role in the survival and healing process of the protagonist. Like Emmanuel in *Gwendolen*, Tom provides the traumatized heroine of the novel with emotional support and accompanies her through her psychological breakdown. Tom is an American Peace-Corps volunteer who came to the Motabeng village to help there. He wanted to become a priest first, but then he realized that he would be more helpful for people outside a monastery. Subsequently, he participated in food programmes to help fight famine in Africa which brought him to work with Eugene and the other Danish volunteers. A strong friendship ties Tom and Elizabeth and their reciprocal human exchange contrasts clearly with the oppressive relations she had in South Africa with men. He embodies the hope of an egalitarian relation between races and sexes that Elizabeth dreams of.

Again, the kind of love she feels for Tom is different from the sexually perverted one claimed by Dan. She is not attracted to him as a man, but rather calls him my son like Shorty and this confirms our motherist reading of the novel. She wants to protect and take care of him exactly like Kenosi and Shorty. Elizabeth's mothering feeling bypasses the biological aspect of procreation to the nurturing emotions she has to people around her. Love, care and humanity gather these people who came from different cultural backgrounds. Indeed, the Stewana Kenosi, the coloured South African Elizabeth, the white American Tom, the South African refugee Eugene, and the Danish Birgette form a homogenous community because they succeeded in making the goodness and humanity in them triumph over racial and social boundaries.

Tom is a man who is capable of love for woman in contrast to the chauvinist and abusive males that Elizabeth met in South Africa and in her nightmares. She realizes this when he starts to visit her and try to help her with her illness as she

confesses: “I’m going to take him as the symbol of male nobility and compares his every word against my inner chaos”(A.Q.P 135-136).

As a man, Tom gives Elizabeth hope that not all relations between men and women are based the patriarchal economy that oppresses women. And as a white man, he embodies an optimistic view about the future of her people where whites and blacks can coexist in a harmonious community through egalitarianism. This hope for a universal brotherhood adds to the womanist aspect of the novel although it may be considered by some readers as a utopian end because Head believes in the possibility of creating a world devoid of all forms of oppression and discrimination. Huma Ibrahim questions Elizabeth’s recovery from “insanity” to “love of all mankind” and further asks: “is this complete and abrupt switch from suffering to belonging plausible?”(Ibrahim 164-165). It is true that there is some idealism in Head’s imagination of the end of this novel, but if we read it from a womanist/motherist perspective, we can trace the reasons why the writer opts for understanding, reconciliation, forgiveness and the triumph of goodness to close her work. A womanist, as we have already stated, is committed to the survival and wholeness of humanity and this will not be achieved with hatred and revenge. It is true that black Africans suffered from racism; however, the protagonist’s insight into evil makes her realize that all humans be they black or white can turn into oppressors if they are given power, or in other words, it is “a question of power”, not of race.

Thus, Elizabeth glimpsed at the dangers of absolute power in the hands of individuals especially politicians and regimes, and rather believed in the need to empower the mass. Power should be restored to the mass because according to her “ ‘the people’ are never going to rise above the status of ‘the people’” (A.Q.P 63). In the same scope, Fanon claims that the people should have the power and the responsibility to choose their destiny:

> To teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge as the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.(Fanon, *The Wretched* 197)

After her journey, Elizabeth takes the responsibility as one of the empowered masses to raise the consciousness of her people. Power is in their hands and what can save them is love for each other and brotherhood as Head closes her novel:

> she had fallen from the very beginning into the warm embrace of brotherhood of man, because when a people wanted everyone to be ordinary it was just another way of saying man loved man. As she fell asleep, **she placed one soft hand over her land**. It was **a gesture of belonging**. [emphasis Added] (A.Q.P 206)

This passage holds the womanist and motherist stands as they call for the wholeness of the community and the universality of brotherhood. It reflects the importance of love for the healing of mankind and it finally celebrates the nurturing power of motherhood not only for human beings, but also for the mother land. The last sentence affirms Elizabeth's complete healing and desalienation as she finally succeeds in breaking the state of in-betweeness as a coloured: she finally finds a mother land to which she can belong.

We have studied in this part the process of desalienation as it appears in *Second Class Citizen*, *Gwendolen* and *A Question of Power*. When endowed with feminist consciousness, it has been demonstrated that motherhood participates in the empowerment of the main characters. It gives them the capacity to survive all forms of oppression and make them realize the potential they have. Adah broke her marriage, Elizabeth recovers her sanity and Gwendolen overcomes the trauma of rape thanks to the strength provided by motherhood. In addition to the empowerment of the female characters, motherhood has been presented in the novels as a healing process. At the symbolic level, motherists and womanists insist on the nurturing, spiritual and healing aspects of mothering. This side of motherhood allows the alienated protagonists to adopt a philosophy of forgiveness and reconciliation even with their abusers. Motherhood then helped

them first to resist and revolt against the alienating forces of their environment and second to assemble their fragmented selves and regain their peace of mind thanks to their forgiveness. The next part, casts light on another desalienating factor through the study of the therapeutic effect of writing.

b-The Therapeutic Effect of Writing

In the first section, we have studied the correlation between motherhood and the protagonists' process of desalienation. Our aim in this part is to deal with writing that appears as another factor which has helped some of the main characters to heal themselves and reach self-realization. In fact, both Adah and Mouse find in writing an outlet to express their suffering and affirm themselves as independent women. In addition to being a means of expression, writing contributes to the desalienation of Adah and Mouse and we are going to answer the question in relation to the therapeutic effect of writing in order to explain how this process of healing is represented in *Second Class Citizen* and *The Cardinals.*

In her book *Signifying Pain : Constructing and Healing the Self Through Writing*, Judith Harris defines writing as a means of transcendence of the real world :

> Writing about personal experiences transcends the physical world of language where there is interplay between order and disorder, wounding and repair. Gradually, fiction and reality can become tangential realms braided together by the sparest of translucent threads. (Harris 2)

Adah and Mouse live in a world governed by racist discrimination and harsh sexist abuse. Writing allows them to transcend this reality into a world of fiction where everything becomes possible, where they can create a secure and safe space of expression for them.

Adah and Mouse are also victims suffering of psychological problems after all the horrors they faced and according to Harris, writing may act as a self-defence mechanism:

> Writing about painful experiences defends against the world-dissolving powers that often accompany trauma, depression and mourning. When writing is healing, it can intercede us by demonstrating our strength to confront our own pain without descending directly into the abyss of retreating into lethargy.(11)

Writing provides a safe space where it is possible to confront the painful experiences that persons cannot face in real life. By naming our pains, the process of healing can start that is when blocked or inhibited feelings are at last given expression. A lot of studies have been conducted to explore the therapeutic effect of writing on human beings in general and on victims of psychological problems and traumas in particular. The works of the psychologist James Pennebaker can be very helpful to study the therapeutic effect of writing. In the 1980s, he conducted a research on students at the Southern Methodist University to explore the hypothesis that writing can be used as a therapy. The experience went as follows: he divided his students into two groups; the first one wrote about daily routine life events and the second about traumatic or painful experiences of childhood. The results were quite interesting since he finds that "those students who wrote about personal traumatic events fared significantly better with long- term drops in visits to the students' health centre for illness". Moreover, in a questionnaire given to these students they reported " a greater sense of value and meaning as a result of writing"(Pennebaker and Smith, *Opening Up by Writing* 18). To confirm the biological benefits of writing on these students, Pennebaker conducted further research with the biologist Janice Kiecolt Glaser who made a set of blood tests on the second group. The results showed a remarkable increase of these students' immune system. Pennebaker concluded that writing left both emotional and physical positive impact on students which may confirm that writing could be an effective therapy for patients with post traumatic psychological disorders.

Moving to our novels, Adah in *Second Class Citizen* turns to writing as the only alternative way she has to articulate herself and voice her pain. Joya Uraizee explains how "writing ultimately becomes the most effective way for her to articulate the roots of her misery; she connects this with the reading and learning she had begun before her marriage"(Uraizee 103). In fact, Adah has always found in education and learning in general, a way to liberate herself from her traditional

society back home in Ibuza and Lagos. Henceforth, her writing comes as a result of all the readings made before and this fact has affected her self-knowledge as a black woman. It is interesting to note that before writing her first novel *The Bride Price*, Adah has started reading about American writers and activists such as James Baldwin and European socialists and philosophers like Karl Marx which is a very symbolic choice as it will shape her thinking. Baldwin calls for the blacks' liberation from racism which helps her understand the necessity to assert herself and regain her self-esteem as a black when she dares to write a book. Marxist readings also help her question her situation as a second class citizen and understand her sense of alienation as a worker under the capitalist system, but most importantly within the welfare system. These readings and others triggered in Adah the need to write in order to assert herself which is according to Katherine Frank: "the second phase of her move towards freedom after her readings"(Frank 493). Adah started the process of writing that would help her to heal herself when she was still living with Francis. Her miserable conditions and the bad treatment become more and more difficult to bear and she felt an urgent need to release this suffering. Judith Harris explains how powerful words are to confront some traumas that refuse to be buried in the human subconscious and she writes: "words can serve to ally anxiety and dread ; they can begin lift the oppressive weight of dolorous moods and infirmity"(Harris 2). There is then a positive effect of confronting her traumas and articulating them in words.

Writing is equally described by Emecheta as a therapy as she states:" the words, simple, not sophisticated at all, kept pouring from her mind. She had written it, as if it were someone talking, talking fast, who would never stop"(S.C.C 136). This description is very interesting since a parallel is drawn between Adah's writing of the manuscript and talking therapies that psychologists use with patients suffering from various psychological disorders. Omar Sougou has described the therapeutic effect of Adah's writing as follows: "writing *The Bride Price* has been cathartic in that it is tantamount to psychological purging"(Sougou 45). This link

between art and healing appeared in Aristotle's *Poetics* where he uses the idea of "catharsis" as a metaphor for the audience's "purgation" of negative emotions such as "fear and pity" through tragedy.(Aristotle 111). In this sense, literature and writing in general allow the "purification" or "cleansing" of Adah's pains by translating them into language as a first step before confronting them.

Emecheta captured this urge in Adah to heal herself as she writes: "the more she writes, the more she enjoyed writing. She was feeling this urge; write; go on and do it, you can write"(S.C.C 135). Writing becomes, in this respect, a source of joy for the protagonist amidst the misery she lives. It is also important to stress that this need comes from her inner self which means that "she engineers her own liberation through the discovery of her voice after she starts writing"(Dawson 106). We can claim that the first step in the process of Adah's healing is her decision to start writing that serves to speak out her ills, confront them and finally free herself. Writing also empowers her and for the first time, she controls something in her life since according to Frank: "to write about an experience, is to get some power over it, or to completely transform it"(Frank 494). Her novel gives her hope about the possibility of managing and changing her future life. Writing provides her with a companion that helps her defeat the social isolation she experienced in Britain.

The manuscript is about a couple deeply in love and the obstacles they face to be together. This may suggest that in this novel, Adah has projected her vision of love and marriage where we can see Chike, the main character as a loving and caring husband unlike Francis who abuses her. Writing helps Adah build her self-esteem as a powerful woman who has control over her life exactly the way she does in her novel through the female protagonist Aku-nna who challenges the constraints of her traditional society and flies away with her lover.

The novel also gives her a feeling of accomplishment especially after her colleague Bill read it and found that it was good enough to be published. But for

Adah, the most important fact is not her novel's publication as much as the fact of writing it. She finds in writing an independent and sovereign self that can exist without Francis which encouraged her to ask for divorce.

In addition to the empowerment and self-knowledge provided by writing, a link is made in the novel between writing and motherhood. Adah symbolically calls her novel, the "brain child" that she cherished as her children. In a symbolic scene, we see Adah on a sunny day, breastfeeding the fourth baby while she is writing *The Bride Price*. This scene suggests according to Ashley Dawson that Emecheta's "conception of writing parallels the act of intellectual creation to childbirth, her self-discovery takes place through development of her caring powers"(Dawson 106). In other words, motherhood as much as writing strengthen Adah as we have shown in the last section.

Indeed, we have already explained that for motherists, motherhood entails a symbolic meaning of creativity, nurturing and healing. In this novel, Emecheta then treats motherhood from a motherist perspective by emphasizing the idea of "maternal creativity" since Adah parallels her novel to her children. Giving birth biologically to children and intellectually to literary works becomes the source of joy and self-fulfilment for Adah as Emecheta wonders: "Did she not feel totally fulfilled when she had completed the manuscript, just as it was another baby she had had ?"(S.C.C 137). In this respect, Neerja Chand comments on the contribution of writing to Adah's liberation: "creative writing is another of Adah's joys. Writing offers a kind of surrogate motherhood and she is appalled when Francis burns the manuscript of her novel"(Chand 88). This link is further illustrated when Adah gives her manuscript to her husband to read and evaluate it.

After reading the novel, Francis scornfully criticizes her work and goes beyond this to burn it. Adah's maternal instinct is triggered by the sight of her 'brain child' being turned into ashes and this act was the last blow for her. Destroying the

novel is for her like hurting one of her children and as a mother, she cannot bear it: "Francis was burning her story ; he had burned it all…then she said to Francis, her voice small and tired, 'Bill calls that story my brainchild. Do you hate me so much, that you could kill my child? Because that is what you have done" (S.C.C 140). Adah feels the same pain that she would have experienced in case something bad happened to her children. This act gives her the strength to quit her husband and it can be considered as the moment of Adah's desalienation. She finally realizes that aspect of her identity as an independent self-fulfilled African woman; she can exist as an autonomous single mother, a writer and a black woman. Through Adah, Emecheta supports also the idea that being a successful woman and writer does not necessarily downplay her role as a mother. Alice Walker has captured this successful equation Emecheta made in *Second Class Citizen* between writing, motherhood and self-realization:

> Emecheta integrates the profession of writer into the cultural concept of mother/worker that she retains from Ibo society. Just as the African mother traditionally planted crops, pounded maize and done her washing with her baby strapped to her back, so Adah can write with her children playing in the same room.(Walker, 69)

Adah's African cultural heritage participates in empowering her as a woman and transforms motherhood from a burden to a source of motivation to ally her caring work as a mother to her feminine aspiration as a writer. This African heritage is represented in the novel by the concept of "the Presence" or what the Igbos call "the chi". The Igbos believe that everyone has a "Presence" or personal god that accompanies and protects him. When she was a child, Adah felt protected and comforted by this "Presence". However, when Adah came to England, she felt that the "Presence" had deserted her. At this period, she was a submissive woman under the control of her husband, but her "chi" reappeared at the end of the novel when Adah took hold of her life and decided to leave her husband. This may suggest that "the Presence" represents Adah's inner strength that pushes her towards hard work and success as it used to do when she was a child. In this

respect, the critic Joya Uraizee holds: "the Presence is more like the force of her own will power and self-esteem"(Uraizee 102). Similarly, Omar Sougou believes that writing is "the Presence"'s voice lost from Adah since she grows up:

> Producing narratives means breaking the silence imposed on her, which seems to have entailed the extinction of the voice that she calls "the Presence". It is no accident that "the Presence" manifests itself at precisely the time that the idea of writing starts to shape. The exercise becomes synonymous with liberation, for it restores confidence. (Sougou 45-46)

We can conclude from this statement that "the Presence" represents Adah's voice that was silenced during years of marital abuse, racial discrimination and poverty in England. Lacking friends or family members to whom she may confess her suffering, writing is the only possible medium where she can externalize those feelings. This process has positive effects on her as we have already demonstrated since it fills her with joy. The parallel she draws between the pleasure she gets from writing and the joys of delivering a baby confirms the cathartic effects of writing since we know that for Adah, nothing equals the feeling of being a mother except producing her first novel. Writing also allows her to free herself from her husband's abuse since the love story she writes about has opened her eyes on the kind of marriage she dreams of. Henceforth, she decides to break her relation with Francis. She defies also the racial codes of the white British institutions by affirming herself since as a writer. She will break her second- class citizenship and prove that as a black woman, she can be a successful member of the British community. Writing in this sense stands as one of the keys to end Adah's marginalization. She recovers a sense of "a self" that she defines according to her aspirations far from the racial and social standards set by others. Writing helps her end her fragmentation and reach wholeness.

As in Adah's experience, writing becomes for Mouse a way to escape from her alienation towards self-fulfilment and liberation. Commenting on the importance of writing to free Mouse from sexist and racist oppression, Desiree Lewis holds:

> On one level, the novel suggests that the central character's growing exposure to the written word will straight forwardly lead her to articulate a supressed voice…In particular it stresses that Mouse, as a black woman, needs to confront distinctly gendered patterns of silencing in addition to those of apartheid.(Lewis 111)

Indeed, writing acts as Mouse's voice to resist all forms of abuse that victimized her. As for Adah, writing is the only space where she can express herself and feel free to evoke out her repressed trauma. It serves also as a form of transgression of gender and racial bias. As said earlier, Mouse is alienated as a woman in the chauvinistic male world of journalism and as a coloured who faces racist discrimination with the Apartheid system. This sense of alienation is due to repressed feelings and James Pennebaker warns against such repression of negative emotions: "talking about a trauma is a natural human response. When this response is blocked or inhibited, stress and illnesses result. Beyond the potential dangers of long-term inhibition there is something positive about confronting upsetting experiences (Pennebaker and Smith, *Opening Up by Writing it Down* 27). Expressing emotions or what is termed by Pennebaker as "disclosure" helps Mouse overcome her trauma and with the help of Johnny, writing works as a liberating process for her. It gives her also self-knowledge for she speaks for her race and puts words on the oppression she faces: "disclosing helps us understand and ultimately assimilate the event…once it is language based, we can better understand the experience and ultimately put it behind" (11).

Mouse's interest in writing can be traced back to her childhood. Her process of learning can be divided into three phases: the first one is the mimic where Mouse started to duplicate pieces of writing without any kind of subjectivity. The second phase concerns the readings she makes which shape her thinking and finally, the creative writing phase where Mouse discovers her true self and starts to assert her identity as a woman and as a coloured.

The first contact with writing begins during Mouse's childhood. Meriam as she was called then was ten when she met an old man who worked as a letter-writer in the slum. The little girl is fascinated by his capacity to write and asked him to help her learn how to write. It is worth noting that the old man or scribe uses a manual called *The Art of Letter-Writing* and he just reproduces ready-made forms of letters with slight changes. His writing is then devoid of any form of creativity and imagination as he makes faithful duplication of texts.

However, Mouse shows signs of a critical mind when she questions the reason for using a manual for writing his letters: "she pointed to the book and the writing pad with a question in her eyes. It sent the old man into a fit of laughter. When he could talk, he said admiringly, 'you are a clever child. No one here questions why I should use the book to write a letter.' "(*Cardinals* 5). Although Mouse will learn how to write in a mimic way, she retains some degree of distance and criticism from what she writes which may predict a certain freedom of spirit and thinking that she will reveal in the future.

The first word Miriam writes is her name when she made an almost perfect reproduction of her name the way the old man printed it. As a way to acquire an identity, it is interesting to see that she starts by writing her name. According to Desiree Lewis, "her name is ostensibly an immediate mark of textual self-authorization"(Lewis 112). This symbolic act is suggestive of how writing is to help her construct an autonomous identity in the future. However, Miriam's initiation to writing although through a mimic apprenticeship, is abruptly interrupted by the death of the old man which signals the end of the first phase.

The second phase is marked by the change in Mouse's name who is called now Charlotte after she is adopted by a left wing tailor's family. Here Charlotte's mind is shaped by the readings she makes including mainly Charles Darwin's works. She is fascinated by "the precise and logical arguments and the quiet ecstatic beauty of the language never failed to awaken a delirious response in her. Darwin's ideas

are revolutionary for their time" (*Cardinals* 11). Darwin's questioning of settled beliefs was appealing to Charlotte's critical spirit. The child comes also into contact with communism on which she has a critical eye as the writer comments: "the home was wonderfully peaceful and filled with a quality she had not experienced before", but "communism itself had no meaning for her"(*Cardinal*s 11). Through Mouse, Head criticizes Communism whose advocates believe it can bring social justice. The writer is against all radical forms of political systems and ideologies including Communism and Black Power that appear later in the novel and in *A Question of Power* likewise. In her building of the main character, Head has endowed Mouse with a critical mind that comes as a result of her readings. Although Charlotte is going to spend her life moving from one foster family to another, she will be keen on educating herself.

The last phase in the development of Mouse into a writer occurs when she gets her first job in *The African Beat* that signals her entry into the world of writing. When she integrates the newspaper, Mouse has serious problems of communication. She is isolated from the rest of the world as she builds a shell to protect herself from a world that alienates her as a coloured woman. Johnny understands that writing can heal Mouse and help her construct an identity of her own. After writing a short story about Summy, Johnny realizes: "this bit here proves to me that you are very much alive inside…what makes you conceal this aliveness behind a mask of death"(C*ardinals* 42). Writing then becomes the medium of communication between Johnny and Mouse which allows him discover more about her. Like Adah, Mouse is silenced by a world of dogma and the only alternative she finds to express herself is writing although the process seems to be more complex for her. Mouse has to conform to the racist ideologies imposed on her by PK and other colleagues in the newspaper.

In fact, the highly chauvinistic environment of journalism at that time contributed to silencing Mouse exactly the way she was in her childhood. In this

aggressive milieu, Mouse found herself confronted with questions about her very identity as a woman and as a coloured. She came also face to face with racism that she started to question through her stories. When she started writing, Johnny detected in her stories a glimpse of resistance, creativity and freedom that was appealing to him. The story she wrote about Sammy and The Immorality Act case highlighted her engagement to show the truth about the racist practices of the Apartheid regime and the subordination of black people although she was asked to reformulate her stories to fit the interest of the editorial board of the newspaper. For Johnny, Mouse had a great potential because she retained a way of writing free from social and political authoritative norms. Like him, he wanted Mouse to preserve and develop this in her writing as he encouraged her to be rebellious in her articles:

> In writing, as in every other aspect of my life, I observe no rules or style. Just the thought of having to follow a set of rules or wedging myself into a style is enough to make my hair stand on end. Style must conform to my every mood, whim or fantasy. I want you to feel the same way too. I want you to express yourself in an innumerable variety of styles. (*Cardinals* 75-76)

This passage shows how writing can be a form of transgression: by not conforming to any rules of writing style, Johnny encourages her to symbolically break the chains imposed by social and political dogma. Writing then becomes a form of resistance to established racial and social systems. Johnny wants her also to be free in expressing her ideas free from any influence: "Don't be afraid to develop your ideas Mouse. They're yours. You can spread them out any way you like and don't be afraid to trust your impression either"(*Cardinals* 114). Writing is the territory for Mouse's self-expression and self-discovery. The more she writes about the black people, the more she questions her conditions as a victim of the Apartheid system. Writing also reveals the truth about the existential question she has always asked about who she is and where she comes from.

The story she writes about Ruby, that was narrated by Johnny, mirrors her life owing to the autobiographic aspect of the novel. It becomes, then a means to

acquire an identity as she is finally associated with a potential father and mother. It reflects according to Ogunyemi, Head's "need to reinvent her genealogy" (Ogunyemi, *The Twelve Best Books* 139). As the novel progresses, Mouse's learning of writing under the instructions of Johnny leads her to delve into her own self in an attempt to reach self-knowledge and build an identity.

Through writing, she confronts the highly masculine world of journalism at that time although she is constantly controlled by PK. It is true that *The African Beat* is a sensational newspaper, but it remains the outlet Mouse and black writers had to publish their writings in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to its liberating power, writing may help Mouse to express her feelings. She is described on her entry to the newspaper as a cold person with "inarticulate voice", "expressionless face" which looks "pretty dead". This description corresponds to one of Seeman's states of alienation that is powerlessness. Mouse is helpless as she is crushed under the weight of an oppressive environment that left her with no strength or vitality. Her state corresponds also to the shell Mouse built around her as a self-defence mechanism against the rejection and racism she had faced. Writing is the only tool Johnny finds to break this "mask of death" that she wears. Pennebaker insists on the importance of writing to regulate negative emotions and it seems to work for Mouse who pours in the stories she produces all the hatred, anger and bitterness she has. Johnny urges Mouse to look at the world through the artist/writer's eyes as he takes her to the mountain and asks her to describe the landscape. Her style is to be devoid of prescribed discourses she has learned to let herself free to express the beauty she sees. We can note this in Johnny's description of the landscape when they went on a trip:

> Look at that town the way an artist must look at it. He has to concentrate, in a compact and simplified form, its vastness, its mood, its purpose and the flow and rhythm of its life. He is lost if he starts picking at bits and pieces of life. Life is not in bits and pieces. It is a magnificent, rhythmic, pulsatory symphony. (*Cardinals* 134)

This discourse is very different from the prescribed style of writing Mouse has learned from her childhood. For the first time, she has to concentrate on aspects that she has never considered before such as the "flow", "rhythm and "symphony" that make life. This emotional and vivid side of writing is new for Mouse who used to report facts in a mechanical way to fit the journal's expectations. In other words, writing represents for Johnny a form of art to reflect the writer's perception of his world as he concludes: " look at that town with the eyes of an artist, look at it also with the eyes of a writer and let them be no differences between the artist and the writer" (C*ardinals* 135). Although, the reader is left with no clue whether Mouse succeeded in producing that type of creative writing, we expect that she is on the right path to free herself. We can say that unlike Adah, Mouse's liberating writing process is still in the making, but she is on the right path to reconstruct her own identity.

Like Emecheta, art is for Head a liberating force and a space for self-expression. Writing in *The Cardinals* reminds the reader of painting in *Maru* since Margarette uses it as a way of resistance. By following Johnny, Mouse may create a place to build herself. For Collette Guldimann, literature or language is employed by Head as a strong means of revolting against the sexist and racist discourses of South Africa (Guldimann 114). This revolution that Head calls for is symbolically represented in the novel by Johnny and Mouse who are the cardinals of change.

Mouse is associated with the moon while Johnny stands for the sun. At the beginning of the novel, Mouse's eyes are likened to moons: "look, it has opened its eyes, they are like great moons and as black as the night when the moon does not shine"(*Cardinals* 3). Johnny's first association with the sun occurs when he gives Mouse the first short story: "the day was grey bleak and rainy. She stood at the office window of the late spring rain. Click, bang, crash. And in bursts Johnny like the sun"(*Cardinals* 31). In fact, the epigraph of the novel clearly states that "the cardinals, in the astrological sense, are those who serve as the base or

foundation for change". Johnny and Mouse are then the moon and sun of the new universe that rejects the social and political constraints and dogmas of Apartheid. Symbolically, their supposedly incestuous relation breaks the conventions and norms of their society. Change has to do also with the new type of writing Mouse is trying to adopt that is free from racist and sexist prescribed discourses.

This chapter serves to shed light on the way the female characters reached self-realization at the end of their journey among the hardships caused by their social and political settings. Motherhood provided Adah, Gwendolen and Elizabeth with an anchor to stay stable in a sea of turmoil and mental breakdown. It gives them strength to fight back and survive for the sake of their children. Together with motherhood, writing acts as a remedy to the alienation and identity crisis experienced by Mouse and Adah. It allows them to reach self-knowledge that is the first step on the healing process. It works also as an outlet for their repressed feelings and traumas which helped them name their demons to defeat them. Although Mouse is still learning how to liberate her style from racist and chauvinistic constraints, we may see the cathartic effect of writing on her as she starts to show signs of recovery by letting her emotions and breaking her mask of death. The more she writes, the further she steps on the path of her desalienation.

Conclusion

Conclusion

This study has been conducted to investigate the issue of alienation as treated by two important African women writers, Buchi Emecheta and Bessie Head in the corpus of novels selected and thought pertinent for this research. Alienation is generally defined as a state in which an individual experiences a sense of estrangement from the environment in which he lives. Although they are set in different social, historical and cultural backgrounds, Adah, Gwendolen, Elizabeth and Mouse went through this state as they find difficulties to conform to their societies' norms and ideologies. Isolated, rejected, stigmatized and abused, the main characters are marginalized and they have to find in themselves the strength to affirm their identities as independent women. The reading of the novels revealed a common point which is the tripodal aspect of alienation that is based on social, racial and sexual facets. Hence, to study the reasons that led to the estrangement of the female characters, I have investigated the correlation between each of these "tri-axes" and the concept of alienation.

The first chapter was dedicated to the social form of alienation. Society can lead its members to alienation by imposing a certain norm of conduct that individuals must strictly abide by. Using social psychology, I have studied alienation as both a state and process to explain the strategies applied by society to alienate individuals and the way they react to it. A common alienating process that appeared in the novels is conformism which contributed to the destruction of the main characters' self. As women, they have to conform to the patriarchal ideology of their communities that conceive them as appendages to men who have absolute control over their lives. Stigma and labelling appear in the novels as strategies to impose conformism. Labelled as bad, prostitute, mad and coloured, the female characters have to bear the psychological pressure of their entourage which leads to their isolation and marginalization. In reaction to the process of conformism and its strategies, the alienated individual shows also

states or syndromes of alienation, mainly isolation and withdrawal from the social group. Through the metaphor of "the shell", both Head and Emecheta succeed in conveying the state of social isolation of the protagonists. It is a place of reclusion to the female characters who are compelled to retrieve from the external world that abused them.

In the second chapter, I studied race that stands in the novels as a prominent alienating factor. Mouse and Elizabeth are victims of racism that took the form of Apartheid in the novels. With its laws and institutions inspired by the whites' supremacy, the Apartheid system contributes to the alienation of the two protagonists who are outcast because of their race. With the help of Frantz Fanon's works, I have studied racism as a pathology that leads to an inferiority complex caused by the black's low self-esteem, self-denigration and in some cases psychological disorders. For example, Elizabeth who failed to bear the trauma of exclusion and racial discrimination fell into madness and had suicidal thoughts. Through Elizabeth's journey into insanity, Head tackled existential questions about the essence of humanity. While denouncing white racism, Head demonstrates that even blacks can turn into abusers towards coloureds and implies that the human being is too complex to be considered exclusively bad or good. Oppression has no colour since both races can be corrupt when given access to power. Mouse also suffers from both black and white people's rejection. As a coloured she is alienated from both races as she is seen as a misfit according to the racial standards of both African and western cultures. She fails to identify with both races and holds a liminal place that negatively affects her identity. Mouse suffers also from exclusion from the chauvinistic world of journalism of 1950s and 1960s South Africa. Her self-assertion is further complicated by a racist editorial board that discriminates her and hinders her career as a brilliant journalist and writer.

In her novels, Emecheta exposes the conditions of African and West Indian immigrants who came to seek a better life in England during the 1970s. They

faced racial discrimination and were allocated second class citizenship. The concept of citizenship has been studied in the second chapter to draw the contours of what is meant by being a British citizen. The Marshall model was used to explain the very definition of British citizenship that describes a citizen as someone who is a member of the British community having equal rights and duties with the rest. After applying the Marshal model, it has been concluded that neither Adah, nor Gwendolen can be considered as full British citizens. They do not enjoy the same rights as the white citizens in the fields of housing, health care and education. Both face also a serious problem of integration to the white community because racism prevented them from citizenship. Gwendolen is victim of racial comments and behaviours of her teachers and classmates, and this made her integration to the white society impossible. Adah also appears as a very isolated person and fails to tie strong friendships with white women. Feeling as strangers to the white community in England, Adah and Gwendolen had to struggle in order to regain their self-esteem and affirm themselves as individuals.

Sexuality is the third factor of alienation that was under study in chapter three. I have studied how the female protagonists underwent sexual abuse, a fact which further affected their identity's formation. The objectification theory developed by Barbara Fredrickson explains the way bodies are commodified by a patriarchal ideology that conceives them as objects to be evaluated and controlled. The correlation between oppression and sexuality has been proved since all protagonists have been victims of direct or indirect sexual abuse by a male character being a neighbour, a husband, a father, or a co-worker. Both writers have succeeded in throwing light on the devastating consequences of sexual abuse on women's self-identification and psychological health. A woman's self-definition is altered since it is exclusively conceived by and based on males' perception and validation. Alienation occurs when women integrate males' images of their bodies and monitor their behaviour and world view to fit those images. Unconsciously, women lose control over their bodies, that then become

alien to them. Rape and incest have been studied as the most shattering alienating factor that leads to the psychological breakdown of Gwendolen who is victim of both.

As to my investigation about the desalienation of the protagonists, I have explored the elements that helped the main characters reach self-fulfilment at the end. Indeed, the four literary works close with an optimistic end despite all the hardships that the protagonists have gone through. Recovering from the trauma of alienation comes at the end as a triumph of the female power over all forms of abuse. We can see that motherhood is proposed by the writers as an empowering role that gives Adah, Gwendolen and Elizabeth enough force to rise from their ashes. When motherhood is combined with feminist consciousness, women become aware of their strength and rights to revolt against oppressive systems. Motherhood has equally been taken to a spiritual level in the novels to include nurturing and healing. This side of motherhood allows the alienated protagonists to adopt a philosophy of forgiveness and reconciliation even with their abusers. It helps to surpass the trauma of oppression and exclusion to reconstruct themselves. In spite of their fierce criticism of all hegemonic systems and institutions, both Head and Emecheta hold a womanist philosophy of wholeness, forgiveness and healing. Their novels especially *Gwendolen* and *A Question of Power* end with a message of reconciliation with the community rather than revenge and hatred. Forgiveness requires a lot of courage that Gwendolen and Elizabeth derives from motherhood, but it can be liberating and beneficial for their mental health. Letting past hurts behind allows them to get rid of negative emotions and move forward in life.

In addition to motherhood, sisterhood and women's bonding stand as a womanist concept that helped some protagonists reach wholeness at the end. Gwendolen and Elizabeth find in some female characters help, compassion and support. Their relation becomes a source of comfort which helps them recover

from their psychological breakdown and have confidence in the goodness of humanity.

The last factor that participates in the healing of the female characters is writing. Adah and Mouse voiced their trauma of estrangement and deprivation through writing. Adah wrote a novel that helped her reconstruct her disintegrated self and exist as an autonomous individual. Through the works of James Pennebaker, I have explored the therapeutic effect of writing on the two female characters. It provides Adah and Mouse with a private and safe medium to externalize their negative emotions and pains. Before confronting their traumas, it is important to articulate and name them as a first step in the process of healing. We can notice that the desalienation of Mouse is not complete compared with Adah since the novel closes with an open end, but it seems clear that the process is triggered and she is on the right path to reach self-fulfilment.

After the exploration of the four literary works, I reached the conclusion that Head and Emecheta point out three factors that engender the female protagonists' alienation: conformist societies, racist discriminatory systems, and sexual objectification and abuse. The next finding of this research concerns the impact of alienation on the main characters. The study of the novels demonstrated its negative effects on them that took the form of social isolation, withdrawal, low self-esteem, self-estrangement, depression, psychological breakdown, schizophrenia and even suicide. Finally, it has been shown that in spite of all the difficulties encountered by the protagonists, the process of desalienation was possible. The paths maybe different, but we can note that each character has filled the void of loss and unbelonging that poisoned their lives. Adah through motherhood and writing, Mouse through journalism and creative writing, Elizabeth through her work in the garden, and her role as a mother and finally Gwendolen through maternity have all created a new place for them to belong and feel fulfilled.

To conclude, we can claim that studying alienation in relation to race, society and sexuality in the selected novels is just one way to approach this complex concept. Reading it from philosophical, psychoanalytical or existential point of views, for example, can give another perspective to explore its ins and outs and come up with other research questions that can be challenging to answer. It is true that the reasons behind alienation may differ, but what should be noted is that it leads to the same devastating effects on the construction of the self. This study then has been a reflection not only on women, but also on the human being's condition in the modern world where the individual is subjected to various ideologies, systems and institutions that have one common aspect which is power control.

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الكاتبتين روايات بعض في المرأة هوية و الإغتراب . يميتشيتا إ بوتشي و هاد بيسي

من لها لما الفنية آعمالهن في الآفارقة الكاتبات إليها تتطرق التي المواضيع أهم من الإغتراب ظاهرة تعد مع توافقه لعدم محيطه إلى الإنتماء بعدم الشخص شعور يعني الإغتراب .المرأة بهوية وطيدة علاقة المعاير هذه مع الأشخاص إختلاف .افراده على المجتمع يفرضها التي ،المعتقدات،والأيدلوجيات الأعراف هذا .هويته بناء على سلبا يؤثر مما الهامش على ووضعه مجتمعه طرف من الفرد نبذ إلى بالضرورة يؤدي الذات إغتراب و العجز اللامعنى، بالعزلة، كالشعور كثيرة نفسية مشاكل إلى بالإغتراب،يؤدي الشعور

في الأساسية النسائية الشخصيات هوية على تأثيرها و الإغتراب ظاهرة دراسة إلى البحث هذا يهدف روايتي إلى بالإضافة اميشيتا بوتشي النيجيرية للكاتبة **قواندولين** و **الثانية الدرجة من مواطن** روايتي موضوع ومعالجة تناول كيفية تحديد على الدراسة هذه تقوم .هاد بيسي للأديبة **الكرادلة** و **قوة مسألة** الشخصيات إغتراب إلى أدت التي العوامل و الأسباب تحليل الكاتبتين، طرف من دراميا الإغتراب من القترحة المكانزمات إيجاد وأخيرا الروايات أبطال شخصية بناء على الظاهرة هذه تأثير ، الأساسية ذاتها تحقيق و الإغتراب شعور على النسائية الشخصيات لتغلب الروائيتن طرف

الأول النوع : الإغتراب مشكل إلى أدت عوامل ثلاثة تحديد من تمكنا الأدبية، الأعمال لهذه قراءتنا بعد هوية لتحديد المجتمعات تضعها التي المعايير فيه تتسبب بحث إجتماعي الإغتراب من والتقاليد العادات على المبنية المقاييس لهذه الإمتثال عليه اللذي الفرد

وعدم الرجل مع المسواة تتميزبعدم التي للشخصيات الإجتماعي المحيط تحليل إلى الأول الفصل يتطرق الأخيرة هذه تتعرض المعاييرالإجتماعية، لبعض الشخصيات مطابقة عدم بسبب .الحقوق بنفس المرأة تمتع .الخارجي العالم عن وعزلتها إغترابها إلى يؤدي مما والنبذ للإضطهاد

الشعور من الشخصيات تعاني .الروايات أبطال هوية بناء على العنصري ثأتيرالتميز يتناول الثاني الفصل الدرجة من مواطنة السوداء المرأة من تجعل التي الإستعمارية والمؤسسات النظم بسبب والقمع بالدونية .الثانية

يقوم اللذي للإغتراب الجنسي الجانب الثالث الفصل يدرس العنصري، و الإجتماعي العامل إلى بالإضافة الشخصيات تعرض.الرجل يد في شيء أو كسلعة أصبح الذي جسمها على لسيطرتها المرأة فقدان على .للمرأة والجسدية النفسية الصحة على وخيمة عواقب له كان الجنسي، للعنف

على الشخصيات ساعدت التي العوامل إلى الأخير الفصل يتطرق الشخصيات، إغتراب اسباب دراسة بعد الإغتراب لمتلازمة كعلاج الكتابة و الأمومة تظهر .ذاتها تحقيق و تعيشها التي الإغتراب حالة من الخروج تعتبر .مجتمعاتها إضطهاد لمجابهة اللازمة بالقوة الشخصيات إمداد كبيرفي دور الأمومة لعبت حيث المشاعرالسلبية عن التعبير من تمكن حيث الرويات أبطال إغتراب إنهاء في أساسي عامل أيضا الكتابة .تعيشها التي والتهميش الإستبعاد،النبذ صدمة شفاء على يساعد مما والمعاناة