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COMPOUND EFFECT AS AN EMERGING TREND IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICAN LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMAN AT POINT ZERO AND LES SOLEILS DES INDÉPENDANCES

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Abstract

The dynamic nature of literature and society has consistently impelled man in the search of new vistas of opportunities to further the cause of humanity. It is therefore no gain saying that the African literature though from its beginning was focused on the criticism of colonization and its structures, but the postcolonial literature is strongly characterized by some important innovations. The narrative moved from colonial heritage to self-constructed heritage, from hetero-criticism to auto-criticism. The concept of "Compound Effect" which is the effect of the build-up of multiple actions, as postulated by Darren Hardy is one of the emerging trends that has been consciously or unconsciously demonstrated in the literary universe of some postcolonial African writers. A critical analysis of Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances* will convince you. This study sets out to analysis the representation of the phenomena of "Compound Effect" in the works of El Saadawi (*Woman at Point Zero*) and Kourouma (*Les Soleils des indépendances*) using a duo literary approach that combines postcolonial and psychoanalysis theories. The research therefore exposes varied subtle forms of violence meted on both El Saadawi and Kourouma's feminine characters. The study concludes that, multiple insignificant actions could make or mare someone's destiny.

Key-words: Postcolonial literature, Psychoanalysis, Violence, compound effect.

Introduction

There is no denying the connection between literature and society. The founders of the sociological method, like as Georges Lukacs (la théorie du roman), who proposed in plain terms that the author's thoughts are where the problems of his society are found, provided a clear illustration of this reality. Lucien Goldman (pour *une sociologie du Roman*) contributed to this reality by way of his notion of "le structuralisme génétique," which holds that every writer's social situation is reflected in his or her work. Mikhail Bakhtine, a Soviet philosopher who espoused the theories of "Dialogisme" and "Polyphonie," maintained that the central neurological system of all expression is exterior rather than inner, in stark contrast to the individual conscience of expression. This fact was also contributed to by Roland Barthes in his book *Le degré zéro de l'écriture*. This fact was verified by Tadié Jean-Yves in his book *La critique littéraire au XXème siècle*, to name a few.

It is well known, literature as a whole not only reflects societal experiences but also evolves over time and space along with society. Every literary work develops along with its writers' experiences and history as well as the society in which it was produced. African literature developed from the precolonial to the colonial era, during which time the pioneers became more devoted and militant in their pursuit of a fight against colonialism and for independence. With independence came the postcolonial era, during which her focus moved from critiquing the flaws in the colonial system to critiquing the failure of post-colonial and post-independence structures. This fact was collaborated by Bestman noted by Kalu when he believed that "l'essor du roman africain correspond sensiblement à deux phases fondamentales de notre histoire: le moment colonial et l'époque post-coloniale" (7) (The growth of the African novel relates considerably to two major eras in our history: the colonial period and the post-colonial era). He continued by adding:

Le premier mouvement est naturellement caractérisé par les diatribes anti-colonialistes, alors que le deuxième est marqué par un sentiment de désillusion éparse provoqué par la rupture d'un "contrat social" tacite entre la masse et son élite dirigeante. La deuxième phase perpétue le même spectacle de violence, le même concert de souffrances et semble avoir hérité des accents et même des outrances de la premier, si bien qu'on peut parler d'un lien récurrent ou d'un rapport génétique qui les relie (7) (The first movement is naturally characterized by the anticolonial diatribes, whereas the second is marked by a sense of shattered hope caused by the rupture of a tacit "social contract" between the masses and its ruling class. The second phase perpetuates the same spectacle of violence and the same concert of suffering and seems to have inherited the accents and even the excesses of the first, so much so that we can speak of a recurrent link or a genetic relationship which connects them).

It is obvious that violence was a major feature of both colonial and post-colonial Africa. Hence, post-colonial African writers have exposed and condemned the impacts of violence in post-colonial Africa, especially as it affects the most vulnerable sex (the female gender), by using some emerging trends consciously and unconsciously. In keeping with this reality, the purpose of this study is to examine the representation of "Compound Effect," a term coined by Darren Hardy and used as the title of one of his best-selling books, in a few selected works by Ahmadou Kourouma and Nawal El Saadawi, including *Woman at Point Zero* and *Les Soleils des Indépendances*. We do so by combining postcolonial and psychoanalytic theories. These methods were chosen because of the fact that, the concept "Post-colonial theory" refers to an after-the-colonization study of literature and it lays emphasis on minority communities (women, children, slaves etc). Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis is founded on the idea of "l'inconscient," or a nature or dream that, although being suppressed, nonetheless manages to reveal itself. On the other side, the idea of a "Compound Effect" shows how a number of (insignificant) decisions can either create or destroy a person's future. When it comes to writing, compound effect is meant to describe how numerous actions have multiple consequences. In this instance, the series of violent deeds that our writers' female characters (Firdaus and Salimata) underwent and their multiplying effects. We'll be discussing the various acts of violence committed against both characters, Firdaus in Sadaawi's fictional world and Salimata in Kourouma's, as well as their combined impact.

Nawal and Violence against women

Doctor, psychiatrist, author, advocate for human rights, survivor of female genital mutilation, and feminist Nawal El Saadawi hails from Egypt. She was also a former political prisoner. She vehemently opposed both male and female genital mutilation as a feminist, human rights activist, and female circumcision survivor. She also criticized the objectification of women and female bodies in patriarchal social structures. She stated in a 2014 interview that she thinks "the basis of the oppression a global post-modern capitalism system underpinned by religious fundamentalism that is oppressive to women (Wikipedia.org).

In 1982, she established the Arab Women's Solidarity Society in order to achieve this. She was both a psychiatrist and a feminist author, and after the 1972 publication of *Women and Sex* cost her job as Director of Health Education and Editor-in-Chief of *Health* magazine, she became involved with a study on neurosis in Egyptian women. She was able to undertake twenty-one in-depth case studies, which she published in 1976 on "Women and Neurosis in Egypt," thanks to the opportunity provided by this research for her to interact with various female convicts in both the cell and the mental clinic. During these her regular trips to the cell, she met Firdaus, a female inmate who served as the inspiration for her book *Woman at Point Zero*. The entire story of *Woman at Point Zero*'s universe was shaped by Nawal's feminist perspective on violence against women, which she shared with female compatriots like Lynn Mbuko (*Chaque Chose en son Temps*), Mariama Ba (*Une si longue lettre*), Fatou Keita (*Rebelle* and *L'aube se leva*), Aminata Sow Fall (*Festins de la Detresse*), and Régina Yaou (*La Révolte d'Affiba*) etc. Her fights for violence against Muslim and non-Muslim women in Africa in general and Egyptian Muslim and non-Muslim women in particular equally inspired this work under review. The following fact was noted in the Foreword:

Firdaus is well-known worldwide. It is real. From Jakarta to Jeddah to Jerusalem to Johannesburg, Muslim and non-Muslim women know this woman, this heroine of Woman at Point Zero. The reader is transported into a woman's cell the night before her execution in this novel, which is actually creative non-fiction (Miriam Cooke, 2007).

In *Woman at Point Zero*, Nawal tells the first-person story of Firdaus, a murderer who offered to tell her tale before being put to death. The work explores the subject of women's subordination and violence against them in a post-colonial African patriarchal society; as a result, it is necessary to describe the many types of abuse that Firdaus encounters while telling her story.

Kourouma and Violence against Women

One of the most prominent authors of the post-colonial era, Ahmadou Kourouma, a Malinke Prince from Côte d'Ivoire, is renowned for his dedication to and vehement critique of the anomalies of the post-colonial structures. In his debut work, *Les Soleils des indépendances* (The Suns of Independence), Fama and his wife Salimata serve as the main protagonists and are set in the early post-colonial era of Africa. The narrative is split into two parts, each of which focuses on a different question of violence. In the first section, which is the subject of our attention, Kourouma strongly denounced cultural violence, which is linked to physical, psychological, emotional, and other types of violence and is characterized by acts of rape, female genital mutilation, sterility, forced marriage, and widowhood, as we will see later. The political bloodshed that plagued Africa after independence is revealed in the second section. The first section of *Les Soleils des indépendances* is a satirical portrayal of the situation facing African women in light of some harsh cultural customs. Kourouma draws inspiration from his own experiences as a prince while creating his characters. That is to say, he provides first-hand evidence of the marriage between Malinke traditions and violence, as Claude Nicholas, who was mentioned by Kalu, claimed "l'appartenance malinke de l'auteur lui permet de décrire ces coutumes de l'intérieur(...) ce qui demeurent donc dans la présentation des coutumes par l'auteur et la volonté de les présenter telles qu'elles existent et de les expliquer au lecteur profane(31). The novel exposes and condemns various kinds of violence arising from the Malinke customs most of which affect women represented by Salimata.

Nawal and Kourouma's violence in *Woman at Point Zero* & *Les Soleils des indépendances*

Depending on the viewpoint of the scholar or thinker, the term "violence" has a variety of connotations. For the sake of this research, we shall connect our self with the definition of Susan George on violence and that of United Nations on violence against women. According to Susan George, who was referenced by Kalu Wosu, violence is "...anything that inhibits individuals from meeting their basic requirements, including those for food, shelter, and clothing, as well as dignity." (p.1). Violence against women is defined by the United Nation as:

Any act of gender-based violence, whether committed in public or privately, that causes or is likely to cause bodily, sexual, or emotional pain or suffering to women, as well as threats of such behavior, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty (www.who.int).

From the perspectives of Susan George and the United Nations, a critical examination of the incidents in the lives of Firdaus and Salimata validates the truth that they were denied access to the necessities of life as well as their basic human rights as women. They were also equally vulnerable to structural violence as well as physical, sexual, mental (psychological), cultural, and verbal abuse. To demonstrate how Nawal and Kourouma portrayed these diverse types of violence in their respective literary discourses, we will critically examine *Woman at Point Zero* and *Les Soleils des indépendances*.

Structural Violence in *Woman at Point Zero* & *Les Soleils des indépendances*

According to Jacky & Mirjam, who were cited by Uchenna Anih, "structural violence refers to the violence of legal domination, that is, the systematic way that an established authority or an institution maintains its hold on a social category (class, group) by causing psychological suffering to a person in order to prevent their emancipation." (La théorie de la violence structurale renvoie à la violence de la domination légale, c'est-à-dire la manière systématique dont l'autorité en place dans une structure ou une institution maintient son

emprise sur une catégorie sociale en lui infligeant une souffrance psychique de sorte à entraver son émancipation) 188. According to Jacky and Mirjam's description of structural violence, the primary character in Nawal's literary world, Firdaus, was a victim of structural violence in that she was routinely raped by the patriarchal structures represented by every male character who came her way. Salimata, on the other hand, was not spared either because she was brutally raped in both the mourning room and her recovery room following her circumcision. Salimata was abused by Tiecoura, a representation of the traditional institution that was supposed to be guarding her. In the case of Firdaus, a social institution (the police) tasked with protecting her instead abused her under the pretense of purging the nation of wicked people (prostitutes). Listen to the culprit "You're a prostitute, and it's my duty to arrest you, and others of your kind. To clean up the country, and protect respectable families from the likes of you. But I don't want to use force. Perhaps we can agree quietly without a fuss. I'll give you a pound: a whole pound. What do you say to that?" (67). The worst thing is that the social organization that was supposed to shield her from the social wolves on the street ended up being worse than the wolves. Unlike the others who pay for her services, the so-called "patriotic citizen" betrayed her without even fulfilling his commitment. "...I opened my eyes, dragged myself off the bed, put on my dress, and then learnt my head, my tired head, against the door for a moment before leaving. I heard his voice say from behind me: 'what are you waiting for? I have no money on me tonight, I'll give you money the next time' (67). At this point one cannot help but ask, so who is more deserving of respect-the prostitute or the dishonest liar? What a contrast? The entire social structure represented by all the male characters in Nawal's and Kourouma's literary environment legally dominated and inflicted both psychological, sexual, cultural, emotional and physical agony on Firdaus and Salimata and consequently prevented them from pursuing the goals that would have served as their means of freedom. This reality was reechoed in one of Firdaus' interactions with her uncle "what would you do in Cairo, Firdaus?" And I would respond, "I'll join you at El Azhar and study there." Then he would laugh and explain that El Azhar was just for males. (14). She will confirm in her own words that her subconscious still harbored the ideal of education and emancipation: "...With my secondary school certificate and suppressed desire I belonged to the 'middle class'. By birth I was lower class." (10). For Salimata, her hope of carrying a child and having a beautiful marriage was aborted as confirmed by the narrator "Elle pensa que... Elle avait le destin de mourir stérile" (she thought that... she had a destiny of dying sterile) 78.

Representation of Physical/Sexual Violence by Nawal & Kourouma

It goes without saying that Nawal in *Woman at Point Zero* and Kourouma in *Les Soleils des indépendances* are both concerned with eradicating physical violence, which is represented by all of their male characters and traditional institutions. Anything that physically harms or injures someone with the intent to manipulate or control them is considered physical violence. From Firdaus' father, who beat her mother when she was a young girl, to her uncle, who told her that "all spouses beat their wives," every man in Nawal's fictional world was an expert in women battery (46). Firdaus additionally attests to her own first-hand experience with female battering in her early/forced marriage:

...After this incident, he got into the habit of beating me whether he had a reason for it or not.....On one occasion he hit me all over with his shoe. My face and body became swollen and bruised...One day he hit me with his heavy stick until the blood ran from my nose and ears. So I left...I walked through the streets with swollen eyes, and a bruised face, but no one paid any attention to me.(46-47)

Firdaus attempted to leave the group of lady batterers, but it seemed impossible when she entered the home of another woman batterer, Bayoumi, who had come into her life under the guise of the messiah before revealing himself to be composed of the same stuff as other men. According to Firdaus, the docile dove abruptly changed into a ravenous wolf. "It was as though I was seeing the eyes that now confront me for the first time. Two pitch-black surfaces stared into my eyes...I was speaking in low tones, and my eyes were fixed to the ground, but he jumped up and slapped me on the face..." (52).

Firdaus was subjected to physical torture that progressed to rape and sexual assault. For every male character she interacted with, she was subjected to repeated sexual assaults and rape. She first experienced sexual abuse from her childhood friend Mohammadain. "A small boy by the name of Mohammadain used to squeeze me under the water. He would force me to lie down beneath a mound of straw, and he would lift up my galabeya." (12), then with her uncle, it advanced to a new level. "...My galabeya often slipped up my thighs, but I paid no

attention until the moment when I would glimpse my uncle's hand moving slowly from behind the book he was reading to touch my leg..."(13). From her first husband Sheikh Mahmoud to Bayoumi and his friend, the door of sexual assault in Firdaus' life remained open to every male she came in touch with. The scenario with Bayoumi and his friend was a combination of both physical and sexual abuse "...He would come back in the middle of the night, pull the cover away from me, slap my face, and then bear down on me with all his weight... He sank his teeth into the flesh of my shoulder and bit me several times in the breast, and then over my belly" (53). She was similarly persuaded to become Sharifa's sex slave, a police officer sexually assaulted her, and she was a casualty of subtle legalization of gigolo. In other words, Firdaus was introduced to prostitution through a series of sexual assaults and rapes. It is clear from her story that this is the case: "I am not a prostitute. But right from my early days my father, my uncle, my husband, all of them, taught me to grow up as a prostitute (108). Her testimony attests to the fact that her prostitution was a result of a combination of sexual abuse.

In the case of Salimata in *Les Soleils des indépendances*, her rape by Tiécoura the night of her painful circumcision and that of Hadj Abdoulaye after her being physically attacked by beggars left doubts and feelings of deception in Salimata as it concerns the traditional religion and Islam. Kourouma completely condemns deceit and violence through the characters of Tiecoura and Abdoulaye, who represent these two honorable institutions and, hence, serve as icons of morality.

Representation of Psychological Violence by Nawal & Kourouma

Nawal and Kourouma fiercely condemn psychological abuse. This is the kind of violence that appears as a threat or as deeds that make someone fearful. In *Woman at Point Zero*, every single male character, starting with Firdaus' father, who not only threatens her mother but also her, is a representation of psychological abuse. She was equally threatened severally by her spouse on every occasion by his incessant grumbling, ranting and screaming at her. Let's hear her out:

If I dropped the packet of soap powder and spilled a few grains on the floor, he would jump up from his chair and complain at me for being careless. And if I pressed a little more firmly than usual on the spoon as I took ghee out of the tin for cooking, he would scream out in anger...One day he discovered some leftover of scraps of food, and started yelling at me so loudly that all the neighbors could hear (46).

In Bayoumi's home, Firdaus began her dance with psychological abuse, forcing her to scream for assistance in order to escape the house where she had been imprisoned. Her gigolo repeatedly threatened her every time she asked him to leave her. The cops intimidated her for refusing to serve as their pimp. The numerous dangers she faced combined with her courage to make her a bold lady, which is why she was determined to be set free. Her quest for violent freedom is expressed thus "There are only two categories of people. Firdaus, masters and slaves. In that case I want to be one of the masters and not one of the slaves."(103). But was she actually unbound?

On the other hand, blood became Salimata's representation of psychological abuse. Salimata was terrified by the circumcision. Her circumcision knife and the knife used to sacrifice the coq both had blood on them (red color). The color red turned into a terrifying emblem for her:

L'excision! Les scènes, ses odeurs, les couleurs de l'excision. Et le viol! Ses couleurs aussi, ses douleurs, ses crispation... Le viol ! Dans le sang et les douleurs de l'excision, elle a été mordue par les feux de fer chauffe au rouge et du piment. Et elle a crié, hurlé. Et ses yeux ont tourné, débordé et plongé dans le vert de la forêt puis le jaune de l'harmattan et enfin le rouge, le rouge du sang, le rouge des sacrifices (33)...Le sang gicla, le sang de l'excision, le sang du viol ! (74).

The emphasis on blood and the color red is to confer a traumatic message on Salimata's experiences. Salimata was so traumatized with the color red that she saw it in the eyes of Baffi and every man she encountered.

Representation of Emotional Violence/Verbal Abuse by Nawal & Kourouma

Verbal abuse develops as a result of a buildup of emotional abuse, there are connections between the two. Emotional violence is the use of words or acts to denigrate someone, whereas verbal abuse is the use of spoken or written language to cause someone distress.

The literary worlds of Nawal as well as that of Kourouma are that of emotional and verbal assault but in varying degrees. We noticed that the words of every man Firdaus spoke to hurt her tremendously. Sheikh Mahmoud, her husband, pounced on every chance to beat her and rip her heart open with his words even before he resorted to physical violence, shouting, screaming and yelling became her breakfast, lunch and dinner. It seemed like Firdaus' antagonists had specific objectives which was to destroy her emotionally. This is so because, their choices of words if analyzed were words intended to make her look stupid, worthless and hopeless. Words like "street walker, you low woman (52)... Slut, bitch (53)... You're a prostitute (67)... You are not respectable" (76). Words are powerful they say. They are like seeds that when planted, the sower may not imagine how deeply they will be rooted into the soil. We see all the words planted into the soil of Firdaus' heart having lasting echoes in her psyche as illustrated by her words:

...But although Di'aa went out of my house, his words did not leave my ears with him that night (77) ...Where ever I went the words clung to me cold and sticky like spit, like the spit of an insult echoing in the ear, like the spit of insolent eyes over my naked body, like the spit of all the degrading words I had heard ringing in my ears at one or other time, like the spit of all the brazen eyes that undressed me and examined my nakedness with a slow insolence, like the spit of courteous eyes that looked aside as I shed my clothes, hiding their contempt under a respectful guise (78)

We learn from her statement above that, the cumulative effect of all the words used on her caused her to become emotionally, cognitively, and physically damaged. Consequently, verbal abuse and emotional violence becomes as deadly as physical violence or even worse.

Salimata's situation was similar; she experienced the same amount of verbal and emotional abuse. People weren't just uncaring in the middle of all her sorrow; they also called her names. She was repeatedly charged with being wedded to a ghost who was the cause of all the bad things that had happened to her as illustrated in the following lines:

...Des méchantes paroles, des maudites, lances contre Salimata pendant et après les rites du veuvage...(42) D'ailleurs c'était inutile, vraiment inutile, elle appartenait au diable, elle demeurait toujours hantée par le génie, le même génie qui l'avait violée : il s'opposait à tout rapport de Salimata avec les hommes...(41) « Maudite beauté qui attirait le génie ! Une femme sans trou! Une statuette ! (43)

In the traditional African community that emerged after independence, Kourouma exposes the ignorance at play. He questions how a society can inflict such cruelty on someone and then accuses her of bearing the brunt of their misdeeds. The combination of all these demeaning words and the degrading actions of circumcision, rape, forced marriage and the rites of widowhood all combined to traumatize her emotionally.

Representation of Cultural Violence by Nawal & Kourouma

Firdaus was also a victim of cultural violence, as shown by a critical examination of her experiences. A person suffers injury as a result of cultural and religious traditions in this instance. Firdaus had undergone female genital mutilation as described by the narrator "... Then she brought a woman who was carrying a small knife or maybe a razor blade. They cut off a piece of flesh from between my thighs. I cried all night" (12). She was unable to convey the message of her suffering or sense of helplessness in the face of a culture that exposed her to bodily pain other than by crying nonstop all night. We observed another form of cultural violence in form of 'les castes' and negligence. Firdaus' description of various scenario's where the men in her world had the right to some basic necessities of life and privileges whereas, the women and children do not is a proof of this reality as we see her describe this situation in her own words:

My father never went to bed without super, no matter what happened. Sometimes when there was no food at home we would all go to bed with empty stomach. But he would never fail to have a meal (18)... My father used to occupy the oven room in winter, and leave me the coldest room in the house. My uncle had the bed to himself, while I slept on the wooden couch. Later on, when I married, my husband ate twice as much food as I did, yet his eyes never lifted themselves from my plate... When I cooked fish I used to give it all to him, and just take the head or tail for myself. Or if it was rabbit I cooked, I gave him the whole rabbit and nibbled at the head (51)

We enter Firdaus' universe, where only a particular sex is deserving of better. Initially, she watched her father take all the best, then her uncle and subsequently her husband as well as every other male she encountered. For Nawal, this is another instance of colonization, but this time it's cultural. And in the present kind of colonization, gender prejudice/inequality has taken the place of racial discrimination.

Firdaus also endured early or forced marriages as a kind of cultural cruelty. As was customary in her environment, she was sold to a man who was at least twice her father's age. She had a painful marriage experience since she became an executive housekeeper, which Nawal views as feminine domestication.

For Salimata, the customs of the Malinke people is closely related with violence as opined by Jean-Claude Nicholas cited by Kalu Wosu "Les coutumes exercent sur l'individu une violence à la fois morale et physique(...) La violence physique de l'excision est reconnue en tant que telle. C'est une cérémonie symbolique, l'épreuve ultime que vient couronner un enseignement initiatique. » (31). Kourouma presents to us the cultural violence experienced by Salimata. The cultural ceremonies of female genital mutilation including the sacrifices before the circumcision and, her three months of being a cultural prisoner all in the name of widowhood rituals all combined to cause Salimata so much pain which resulted to her actions.

Representation of Compound Effect in Nawal and Kourouma's Literary Universes

The theory of compound effect, also known as reciprocal or circular causality by Aristotle and compound interest by Albert Einstein, is predicated on the notion that seemingly insignificant, small actions over time can have significant effects that can be either positive or negative depending on the actions. Many, seemingly tiny negative behaviors will unquestionably result in an increase in unfavorable outcomes, and vice versa. Bringing up literature, especially the novels

in question, we'll look at the repercussions of the many types of violence Firdaus and Salimata—the female characters in Nawal and Kourouma's characters were subjected to.

In his theory of "Dialogisme & Polyphonie," Mikhail Bakhtine informs us that the outside is where every expression's central nervous system is located. If we use Bakhtine's theory in this situation, we won't be in error if we say that Firdaus and Salimata's development into the violent individuals they became was the result of all of their interactions with society; the structural, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, cultural, and verbal abuse they endured contributed to their transformation into monsters. The result of their interactions with others (violent environment) was the sum of their expressions (words and deeds). Their society planted violence in their psyche and this registered thoughts that had to be expressed one way or the other but it started subtly.

The kind-hearted, affectionate, and sympathetic women were killed by the mutilation of Firdaus and Salimata's female genitalia and the ensuing series of sexual assaults they committed, giving rise to new apathetic, hostile, and cold women. Salimata grew cold and out of place because she was used to being alone and experiencing all of her suffering: "...Salimata, seule avec ses malheurs, seule dans sa case, dans la concession, dans le hamlet nuit et jour et pendant des semaines, des lunes, des hivernages et des harmattans" (43). Firdaus did the same by closing off her world.

"She no longer hopes for anything, or desires anything. She no longer fears anything, for everything which can hurt her she has already undergone." (95)

Their hate of men is another effect that we have noticed. Their cumulative ugly experiences with men stirred up innate hatred for men or any masculine symbol. The traumatic effect of the color red which of course for Salimata is a symbol of masculinity, reappeared in her psyche each time a man came close to her and automatically stirs up hatred as described by the words of the narrator "Tiémoko ressemblait en tout autre point comme le empreintes d'un meme fauve a son frère Baffi, donc à Tiécora aussi... avec des yeux brûlant du feu de la violence" (43). ("Tiémoko resembled in another for the image of his brother Baffi, thus to Tiécora as

well... with eyes burning from the fire of violence," Salimata said of the red color's painful effect on her (43). Salimata transformed every guy into a monster.

The impact of the series of violence was more on Firdaus in the sense that, not only did she hate men, she hated marriage and also resorted to prostitution. She got to the point where she couldn't hide her disdain for them as illustrated in clear terms in her own expressions "Any one of them, it doesn't make any difference. They're all the same, all sons of dogs, running around under various names, Mamoud, Hassanein, Fawzy, Sabri, Ibrahim, Awadain, Bayoumi (55)...I became aware of the fact that I hated men, but for long years had hidden this secret carefully(96). For Firdaus all men are criminals and deceivers notwithstanding their professions or relationship with a woman. To this end, marriage for Firdaus "was the system built on the most cruel suffering for women" (94). The issue got worse when the man she ultimately decided to fall in love with despite all the odds broke her heart.

The alteration of Salimata and Firdaus' value system is another consequence derived from their experiences. Firdaus was thought that, the word morality, dignity and patriotism is a delusion. They had been raised in a violent society, and if given the chance, they would kill any guy who got in their way. If a kindhearted Salimata came close to killing Abdoulaye who wanted to violate her, is it not as a result of her new acquired value system and quest for vengeance? For Firdaus, the society transformed her to a living dead so for her, a good value system was only for the living. She was therefore ready to kill "They know that as long as I am alive they will not be safe, that I shall kill them" (110). This raises the question of whether our authors condone murder in any form. The response is in the negative. Nawal and Kourouma employed this narrative style to show the danger of violence and its possible effects. This is the reason Salimata ultimately chose to flee rather than murder her victim. Truth and death, in Firdaus' opinion, are comparable as she affirms "...When I killed I did with truth not with a knife" (112). So her concept of murdering here is, to have the bravery to stare society in the face and state the truth.

Conclusion

Nawal and Kourouma present in their literary universes the image of two gentle, sweet, kindhearted, sympathetic and generous women who gave their all to their societies and expected to receive love and care in return. As one moves out from their literary universe, one now sees another image of two transformed women but unfortunately, it was a negative transformation.

The question that comes to bare now is how did they get here? Their new image was the compound effect or compound interest emanating from the structural, physical, psychological, emotional, cultural violence and verbal abuse they were subjected to. Another question that is begging for answer is, Could these women have undergone a more beneficial transformation than they did? The brief positive change in Firdaus' life that occurred the one and only time she taught she had found love provides the solution to this unavoidable situation. Firdaus attest to this reality in her own words "With love I began to imagine that I had become a human being..." (93). But this fresh enthusiasm was shattered once more. What if her society kept expressing its affection to her? She most likely would have realized her dream and avoided the road she took. She would have been alive as a result, but she passed away psychologically and emotionally before passing away physically. Salimata on the other hand would have been a contented mother and wife. But the pair's ambitions remained unfulfilled attesting glaringly to the effect of negative compound effects.

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