

Trauma in African Literature: Culture and the Phenomenon of Mental Distress in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk this Path*

Kabir Ahmed

National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract

One of the issues rarely considered in Achebe's debut is the traumatic experiences of Okonkwo and Nwoye. To illustrate the significance of this mental distress in their lives, this study compares the novel to a more recent one that focuses on trauma, Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk This Path*. The study aims to locate trauma and the disposition to recovery in culturally determined individuals such that traumatised persons within and without the same fictive world may respond differently to mental distress as a result of their cultural disposition. In the worlds created in the narratives of Chinua Achebe and Yejide Kilanko, both of African, Nigerian origin but different by generation and gender (also markers of culture), individuals who meet similar situations mentally respond differently, and those who are mentally distressed maintain different attitudes to healing. This difference, the paper argues, is determined by their cultural position on such experience. Herman's views on trauma are adopted for their explanation of the unspeakability of trauma and the recovery process. This essay further shows that the unspeakability of trauma could be traced to the culture of silence and shame under which experiences are viewed in Okonkwo's world. The findings of the study show that both the perception of trauma and the response to it (such as disposition to healing) are culturally determined.

Keywords: African Literature, Culture, Mental Distress, Recovery, Trauma

Introduction

The entry of trauma discourse into literary studies is traceable to the intervention of literary critics and scholars like Cathy Caruth, Kali Tal, Dominick La Capra, Shoshanna Felman, and Dori Laub. It gained significant attention in 1996 with the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*. Literary trauma theory was established on two models, the Classic and the Pluralistic. The

arguments of the two models revolve around the representability of trauma. For the classics, trauma, especially the event, can neither be remembered nor related. Caruth who champions this model argues that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature—the way it is precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Balaev, 4). She contends that the knowledge of a particular type of

past experience cannot be known and identified by its victim at the time of occurrence but can only be manifested through intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, and nightmares. This means that a trauma victim cannot remember a traumatic experience just as it happened. For Caruth, what returns to haunt the victims, is not only the violent event but also the reality of the way that this violence has not been known fully. In consonance with this, neurologist Bassel Van der Kolk says that “what may complicate the capacity to communicate about traumatic experiences is that memories of trauma may have no verbal component whatsoever” (Kolk 287). Greg Forter also explains that “the trauma short-circuited the capacity to process the traumatizing psychic concussion” (Forter 259). He points out that the delayed effect of trauma takes place to internalize the unclaimed experience.

On the other hand, the pluralistic model notes that the meaning and representation of trauma are variegated and that it can be remembered and spoken of in such varieties. Baleav explains that “in the pluralistic model, the meaning of a traumatic experience can be determined by the remembering process that is open to alteration over time by the individual’s memory who continuously revises memories, including those of traumatic experiences, in each moment of remembrance” (14). While the classic model denies the survivor the knowledge he has of his experience and also denies him agency, the pluralistic model of trauma suggests that the assumed unspeakability of trauma is

one among many responses to an extreme event rather than its defining features. Baleav confirms that psychological research indicates that amnesia, disassociation, or repression may be responses to trauma but they are not exclusive responses (6). The Classic Model moves away from the lived experience of trauma as though the person who goes through it loses consciousness of what they go through. However, the pluralistic approach acknowledges that language can convey the variable meanings of trauma. Joshua Paderson argues against the Classic model thus: “Traumatic amnesia is a myth, and while victims may choose not to speak of their traumas, there is little evidence that they cannot” (24). So, for this model, trauma victims remember but may choose not to speak about it.

Although Judith Herman belongs to the group that contends that trauma cannot be spoken of, her ideas are adopted in this study, because Okonkwo’s and Nwoye’s trauma, can be understood in terms of this unspeakability. However, their cultural context is complicit to the supposed unspeakability of trauma. The significance of this study lies mostly in the attempt to reconcile the two models by locating culture as the determiner of the speakability of trauma: where it is shamed or silenced, trauma victims are not motivated to speak about it. Furthermore, Herman’s recovery patterns afford this study the framework to examine the culturally informed responses of traumatised victims to recovery options. Herman shows that recovery follows four stages namely learning to fight, wherein

victims face their fears, and stand up to their experiences and abusers; reconciling with oneself, wherein victims come to terms with who they were and who they have become to chart a new course; reconnecting with others, wherein survivors build trust again and open themselves to connecting with others; and finding a survivor's mission, wherein victims continue their healing process by identifying with and assisting people in similar traumatic situations or generally in need of help. She submits that recovery from trauma is never complete (315) but it is possible to constantly move toward resolution by living an ordinary life.

Although the study of trauma has a largely Western origin, the reality of trauma is universal. As this study argues, the cultural context determines how trauma is interpreted and apprehended; mental distress is often only slightly affected by culture. While the victim may try to deny or dissociate themselves from the distress, like Okonkwo, he can only strain his mind even without immediately relapsing into the trauma. However, the strain could have as many consequences as a relapse. Okonkwo's experience makes the application of trauma to postcolonial African literature a necessity. Scholars have already experimented with this need for the adoption of trauma theory in the study of postcolonial experiences of disillusionment, alienation, hybridity, and civil war. For instance, Roger Kurtz's article, "Literature, Trauma, and the African Moral Imagination" argues that it is important to deploy trauma theory to understand the wounds of the

history of colonialism in African literature. It argues that African postcolonial literature is a telling or narration of the traumatic experiences of colonialism. In response to this argument above, Oripeloye admits that trauma theory can be applied to African literature given that it is a universal reality; however, he is not convinced about how African literature contributes to trauma recovery for Africans.

In his later book, *Trauma and Transformation in African Literature*, Kurtz makes it clear that recovery from trauma within the African imagination is through narration. Exemplifying Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, he argues that the novel is a way of coming to terms with the reality of colonialism, of breaking apart a nation caused by the colonial intrusion. So, in narration, Achebe reconciles himself and Africa to the reality of colonial experience. This position corresponds to the arguments of most of the trauma studies on *Things Fall Apart* (Harris, 1981; Durrant, 2012; Ifowodo, 2013; Mackay, 2018). They all see trauma in the novel as collective. Although Kurtz mentions that there are "collective and individual trauma" (33) in the novel, he sees the individual (reads Okonkwo) as a microcosm of the collective (read Umuofia, or Igbo society) which is why he does not give it the required attention that could explain Okonkwo's mental distress. The discontent with the application of Western-originated models of analysis, including trauma frameworks is informed by their "indifference to cultural specificity" (Luckhurst 2010, 12). However, this study satisfies this concern by locating trauma in cultures

while subscribing to the essential characteristics of trauma. Significantly, this study attempts to explain Okonkwo and Nwoye's responses to their traumatic experiences in terms of the culture they live in and contrast them with the different cultures and the consequent response to the trauma in Morenike and Morayo in *Daughters Who Walk this Path*.

The Traumatized in their Cultural Domains

Okonkwo has a traumatic childhood in addition to other experiences of his life that have left psychic wounds on him. But because he exists in a culture where neither the idea of trauma exists in their lexicon nor the reality allowed the expression, it is not focalised. This traumatic identity marks his shared quality with his son, Nwoye. As much as Nwoye seems to be antithetical to his father, both coincide at the point where they are responding to psychic wounds, though in different ways. Okonkwo's constant dissociation from and disapproval of Nwoye evinces his anxiety over his trauma, and his attempt to deal with it, as permissible within his culture. His rise and fall are symptomatic of his trauma. To establish his trauma, it is important to understand trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and repetitive phenomena" (Caruth 91). In this light, Okonkwo's life is an index of trauma: his excessive display of energy and cultural profession is a kind of sublimation. The psychosocial dynamics

of this sublimation in his life will be explained hereinafter.

It is also difficult to see the trauma of his life because the dominant causes of trauma in popular trauma discourse are rape (as in the case of Morenike and Morayo) and war (for the trauma of war in African literature: Dalley 2013; Tembo 2017; Vinod and Gayathri 2021). They share forceful invasion in common which is why colonial encounter has been read as traumatic. Kurtz explains that:

Events other than war and sexual abuse are also labelled as traumatogenic, including both events caused by humans as well as "acts of God." These may involve natural disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis, accidents, pandemics, environmental disasters such as oil spills, terrorism or persecution, and even medical procedures and emergencies (20).

In Okonkwo's case, his first traumatic experience is relational. This emanates from the kind of family he was born in. Within the culture of Umuofia, Okonkwo is born of a weakling and loafer. The identity of his father, Unoka, leaves a wound in him that constantly pushes him to distance himself from his father and anybody who identifies as Unoka. This is why he reacts condescendingly to Osugo whose inability to get a title reminds him of his father (21). Saul explains the source of relational trauma as "the impact of adverse events on significant relationships in families and communities" (4). After living like a pauper, leaving a pile of debts, his life

further complicates Okonkwo's mental distress by ending shamefully. Unoka develops an evil sickness which causes him to be thrown into the evil forest.

The narrator consistently refers to this familial experience as the source of the "passion" that rules Okonkwo's life. This passion or fear is properly trauma, and its effect is seen in his hyperactivity through hard work, meanness, and violence. To quote the reference to this traumatic fear extensively:

Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure, and weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than this. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy, he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was *agbala*. That was how Okonkwo first came to know that *agbala* was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion - to hate everything that his father Unoka had

loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness (11)

Okonkwo does not fear anything else other than himself, a fear within him. The familial experience overwhelms him so he tries to disconnect from everything that reminds him of this experience. The narrator favours fear as a word to interpret his psychological state. But it is evident that Okonkwo's kind of fear is different from every other instance of fear: Okonkwo's fear is internal but other fears in the story have external objects. Even when he kills Ikemefuna, the narrator notes that he acts out of this special fear (49). Obviously, his is a pathological fear. Among other relationships, pathological fear is a symptom of trauma. It has been clinically confirmed that the "chronic presence of fear, specifically in a typically safe context, can be characterized as symptomatic of PTSD. Additionally, one of the key characteristics of PTSD is an impaired ability to effectively distinguish between safe and dangerous conditions" (Rubin, Neria, and Neria, 305). Hence, Okonkwo's special fear gives away his trauma. Various, Okonkwo's trauma triggers fright, fight or flight. He is controlled by fear, he struggles to overcome his fear and he flees from realities that remind him of his traumatic experience.

Okonkwo further betrays his trauma through hyperactivity and hypervigilance which are part of increased arousal from trauma. His

success in farming and war, rashness, and violent disposition evince his responses to the traumatic stimuli. These are qualities celebrated in him within his culture that does not care about motivation. Properly speaking, he successfully sublimates the traumatic prompts, and only a few slips show failed sublimation. Freud describes sublimation in these terms: "The instincts that are dangerous to civilization can be tamed and rendered harmless only by being diverted from their original aim and given a new one that is compatible with the cultural ideals of civilized society. This is the meaning of the process of 'sublimation'" (*Civilization and its Discontents*, 73). Sublimation, as a psychological process, involves the transformation of negative emotions or experiences into positive outcomes such as creative expression, personal growth, or social activism. The instincts Okonkwo sublimates are traumatic impulses that ordinarily make him dangerous to himself and others. This enables him to remain in sync with the social world even when there is an underlying force pushing him against the social codes. Only on a few occasions does this sublimation fail and these instincts find expressions in prohibited actions such as defiling the week of peace by beating and shooting at his wife and killing Ezeudu's son. However, successful sublimation does not equate to recovery.

What could be considered more traumatising for him is the killing of Ikemefuna. This killing, unlike others he does as a warrior and in error,

leaves him mentally distressed so much so that he loses his appetite for two days (50). His insomnia within this period is also trauma-induced. MacNair opines that

"individuals who witness or cause harm can be traumatized, even though they may not themselves bear the brunt of that harm. Taking a human life, even in a socially sanctioned context such as police work, can result in what is sometimes referred to as "participation-induced trauma" or "perpetration-induced traumatic stress" (2002).

Although his society does not abominate his killing of Ikemefuna, this particular act leaves him shattered. Finding himself shivering at the thought of the boy, he soliloquizes; "When did you become a shivering old woman" ... "you who are known in all the nine villages for your valour in war? How can a man who killed five men in battle fall to pieces because he has added a boy to their number? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed" (51). Within his culture, admittance of mental distress or any weak emotion is only associated with women. Only Ezeudu advises him against participating in the killing, so the social reception of the act does not contribute to his mental state after the killing. His conscience holds him to judgment, and this leaves him distressed. In his self-mortification quoted above, he implicates the culture that forbids the

expression of traumatic symptoms. This prohibition may not be officially stated but the social construction disables the men, especially from such “effeminate” activities.

This disablement constitutes one of the sources of Nwoye’s trauma. Kurtz refers to this kind of trauma as structurally-induced. When an unjust social system creates long-term difficulty for specific populations, it could result in trauma. Nwoye’s effeminacy is structurally prohibited in Umuofia. It is the same femininity that made Umuofia consider Unoka a weakling. Nwoye prefers female companionship as against men’s which is filled with stories of violence and bloodshed. Like his grandfather, Nwoye detests blood (42-3), but the reception of his difference creates an anxiety that leaves a wound in his heart. This wound is further complicated when the only male character he finds solace in is murdered. According to the narrator, something snaps in him at this moment: “As soon as his father walked in, that night, Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been killed, and something seemed to give way inside him, like the snapping of a tightened bow. He did not cry. He just hung limp” (49). This snapping and the numbness are indicative of his losing mental normalcy. Nwoye, against his father’s and culture’s principles, is given to emotional outbursts such as crying. But surprisingly, he does not cry. This is why this moment shows that he has become mentally affected. The narrator refers to a previous

traumatic experience that caused a similar wound in his mind:

They were returning home with baskets of yams from a distant farm across the stream when they heard the voice of an infant crying in the thick forest. A sudden hush had fallen on the women, who had been talking, and they had quickened their steps. Nwoye had heard that twins were put in earthenware pots and thrown away in the forest, but he had never yet come across them. A vague chill had descended on him and his head had seemed to swell, like a solitary walker at night who passes an evil spirit on the way. Then something had given way inside him (49).

The metaphors of “snapping” and “giving way” share a conceptual domain with “wound,” for a snapping or giving way entails a break that leaves an opening, a wound. Being that these snapping and giving way as described by the narrator happen inside him, a psychic wound, otherwise called trauma develops.

For both Okonkwo and Nwoye, there is a cumulative trauma worsened by the fact that they are culturally constrained to not acknowledge such wounds, express nor openly seek recovery. In Nwoye, the claim that trauma cannot be remembered is disputed. Nwoye’s life shows that not speaking about trauma does not equate to unrepresentability. Both Nwoye and Okonkwo remember their trauma, however, conditioned by their culture,

they are not able to voice it out. Unlike Okonkwo who is immersed in this culture and is unable to seek healing, Nwoye finds healing not through the talk cure but through the process suggested by Herman. This contrasts with the culture of free expression of emotional and mental distress in *Daughters Who Walk this path*. The two traumatised women, Morayo and Morenike open up to each other and other people in their lives, enabled by the environment that does not undermine such realities.

Morayo becomes traumatized when a relative, Bros T, begins to sexually molest her. This molestation starts when he stretches his hands across her back and also brushes his hands against the sides of her chest (47). She is too young to understand that there is a limitation to physical boundaries and this makes her initially unconcerned about these occurrences. This abuse goes from molestation to an actual rape incident that traumatises her. She is terrified by this experience and, like Nwoye, goes numb and dumb (74). Her motivation to call her mother immediately, even though she is unavailable, and the wall gecko with reassuring presence and nod shows that she is not prohibited from expressing emotions. Morayo is fully aware of what is happening to her, she only cannot bring herself to talk about it. The shock and the threat from the perpetrator leave her silent. Kurtz's view that trauma somehow alters our perceptions of reality (2) is evident in her life. This is exemplified in her finding power in having multiple sexual partners. She confesses that "what no one understood

was how much I needed to be in control. I wanted to be able to decide what happened" (200). This is also connected to the hyperactivity of trauma victims as in Okonkwo. Her case would have ended in a suicide, like that of Okonkwo, had she not interacted with Morenike who is also on the journey to recover from her own trauma.

Morenike's trauma resulted from a rape by Chief Komolafe. Her first response to the trauma is denial. The narrator says that "she told herself that the incident with Chief Komolafe never happened, she said it over and over again, night after night, until she started to believe it" (114). She can narrate this experience immediately to her parents. Her father's response is also one of denial. He does not believe that his friend can inflict such pain on him and his daughter. However, he abandons her daughter and this complicates Morenike's trauma. The severity of these women's trauma has been variously underscored in existing literature (Dodhy, Ogbazi and Amah, Chandra et al.). The interest of this study is to juxtapose their trauma and those of the men in *Things Fall Apart* to unravel the place of culture in their responses to their experiences. For these women, their traumatic experiences notwithstanding, the environment in which they live understands the reality of trauma and they are not prohibited from sharing the experience.

Culturally Determined Disposition to Recovery

Guided by Herman's recovery stages, each traumatised character is examined to see how they respond at every stage

and their eventual end. Significantly, their cultural affiliation determines this disposition. One of the stages Herman identifies is learning to fight. In this phase, the traumatised character face their fears to “put themselves in a normal physiological response to danger” (Herman 294). Morenike demonstrates courage and confronts her abuser firmly. She makes it obvious that her son will stay by her. When one of Komolafe’s wives gives birth to the twelfth daughter, he decides to meet Morenike to claim custody of his son but she refuses to let go of the child:

Morenike refused to listen to any pleas, even when Chief Komolafe’s pleas became threats. “A child belongs to the father, and so Damilare rightly belongs to me. Even the law of the land recognizes this,” Chief Komolafe said to Morenike as they stood in her father’s sitting room. Morenike held on tightly to Damilare’s hand. “I don’t care. I will not send my son to live in a den of vipers. It will be over my dead body (145).

This refusal is evidence of her taking charge of her life and challenging the powers that enable her trauma. Komolafe is aware that Morenike is the only woman who has a male child for him, and this child is out of wedlock. He doesn’t care about this because all he wants is a son. Initially, he refuses to admit the child belongs to him when her mother confronts him. He doesn’t even show up to offer any assistance when Morenike gives birth to her son, even though the son belongs to him too. Given that she has the ultimate say, this

gives Morenike more courage. Also, her entire family, including her father, supports her and she can fight back. Her son, Damilare, remains with her and Komolafe leaves when he realizes he will never be able to claim custody of his son.

This kind of confrontation is lacking in Okonkwo. His culture can be summarised as the source of his trauma. This is because his familial experience and the killing of Ikemefuna are conditioned by his cultural context. Had the oracle not commanded the people to kill Ikemefuna, Okonkwo would not have done it. His justification for the killing is that the commands of the oracle must be complied with. His enslavement to culture is the remote cause of his trauma. Were his culture receptive and accommodating of people like Unoka, he would not have endured the shame of being told that his father was an *agbala* (11). The cultural context determines the value placed on taking titles and being masculine. But instead of confronting this culture that has rendered him vulnerable, he defends it with all he has until it swallows him. Nwoye’s fight, though not directly confrontational begins by identifying with a different culture. It is not easy for him but he moves from intentionally walking around the church building to going inside. When his father tries to question his involvement with the new culture, he walks away from the old culture to fully take up the new culture. According to the narrator, Nwoye “walked away and never returned” (122) This revolutionary act of walking away marks his fight. It is symbolic because it means his renunciation of the

culture that enabled his trauma. He also rejects Okonkwo, who is the representative figure of the culture in his family. He further denounces his affiliation with this culture by rejecting his father. He bluntly tells Obierika about Okonkwo, "He is not my father" (115).

The second phase is where the victims reconcile with themselves. At this stage, the victim makes an effort to examine themselves and find a way to free themselves from the bondage of the traumatic past (Herman 301). As part of her effort to heal, Morenike builds confidence in herself. In school, she puts in a lot of effort studying, and this earns her the position of a research assistant. Her "mouth dropped when Dr. Lot told her the stipend" (139). By desiring to be educated, Morenike can make peace with herself. She refused to quit once she had received her diploma and later got admitted to the University of Ife's double degree program. She successfully balances her roles as a student and mother. Morenike also helps Morayo to achieve this reconciliation. Although Morayo does not receive much support from her family, she can find peace within herself as evident in the reading habit she learns from Morenike. She was admitted to the University of Lagos for a degree in Economics.

Nwoye's reconciliation with himself is prompted by the new culture. The provisions of the new religion recognise his difference and shows its accommodating disposition. He is captivated by the melody and this helps him to find peace. The narrator describes the process and impacts:

It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul—the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul. The words of the hymn were like the drops of frozen rain melting on the dry palate of the panting earth (p 118).

This sense of coming to terms activated a hunger to identify with the members of this group, thereby opening him up to the next stage which is reconnecting with others. On the other hand, Okonkwo remains at variance with himself. He is unable to achieve wholeness. To some extent, his trauma causes him to lose sense of reality of distinguishing between himself as an individual, and as part of a collective. Engrossed in the hands of the culture that has held him hostage, Okonkwo considers himself Umuofia. Such loss of touch with reality propels him to stand to challenge the court messenger who comes to disrupt the meeting of Umuofia. One could argue that he acted because he was angry about his incarceration. But he is not the only one imprisoned. It is noteworthy that Okonkwo is not the only warrior in Umuofia. Moreso, he is not one of the Lords of the clan as he confessed after his exilic return that he has lost the opportunity to become one (104). Umuofia thrives without him during his

exile. But his traumatic illusion of being Umuofia pushes him to act in defense of the collective. His realisation that his action contradicts the minds of Umuofia leaves him devastated beyond respite. Hence, he neither makes an effort at making peace with himself nor inadvertently succeeds.

The next phase involves a process of reconnecting with others. When the victim reconciles with others, they would once again feel the trust in others, and that trust is warranted (Herman 305). Reconnecting with others does not imply accepting the sources of trauma. It means that the victim finds a safe company they identify with. Nwoye does not reconnect with the source or enabler of his trauma, he moves in with those who seem to have accepted him the way he is: those who preach gentleness and do not encourage rashness and violence. Until the new culture, Nwoye never identified with any group. He is always alone, afraid of his father's company. Ikemefuna, the only male company he enjoys has been killed. So, the new religion provides him the opportunity to reunite with men with a different perception of masculinity. In his interaction with Obierika who is surprised to see him among the missionaries, he declares his allegiance to the new community: "I am one of them" (115). On the other hand, Okonkwo is tied to the source of his trauma. He is consistent with his refusal to seek healing. Therefore, he is unable to extricate himself from his trauma.

Morenike and Morayo reconnect with others through Mr. Tiamiyu. He does not pose as someone who would

take advantage of these women. For instance, Morayo recounts:

"... I knew Mr. Tiamiyu very well. He often came to Auntie Morenike's flat during my visits. He and Auntie Morenike would spend hours arguing about one political issue or another, their voices rising as they each tried to prove their point. I liked the way Mr. Tiamiyu spoke to me like an adult, calling me "Miss Morayo" with a gentle smile..."(154)

Mr. Tiamiyu is a gentleman; he visits her flat and does not make any advances at her. This is why they feel safe in his company and can reintegrate into society through him. When Komolafe invites Morenike to his room, she is innocent and does not know that it would be dangerous to be alone in a room with a man. However, in the case of Mr. Tiamiyu, Morenike is the one who extends the invitation to her apartment. He treats her with utmost respect even while Morayo is present. Throughout the narrative, it is clear that Mr. Tiamiyu and Morenike are close to each other, but they never get intimate. Morayo even tries to ask Morenike why she doesn't want to marry him. But she refrains from asking as she thinks it may be rude. Morayo on her part is reintegrated into the society through Kachi. Her childhood friend Kachi, respects and acknowledges her humanity. Even when she shares her dark history with him, he does not give up on her. Their marriage is further

proof of Morayo's renewed faith in the community.

Herman also suggests that a trauma victim could achieve healing through finding a survivor mission. Morenike finds her survival mission by going to the Mission House with her grandmother on Wednesdays. At the Mission House, Morenike meets other women who weave baskets. There are many women there yearning for a child; these women weave baskets to help the orphans. Morenike's trauma is still fresh in her mind during this period. However, she starts healing by helping out at the Mission Home. Morenike does not only weave the baskets there; she also listens to the women recount their sorrows. Despite hearing their sad stories, Morenike refuses to seek sympathy by telling them her own sad story. When an inquisitive lady asks about her pregnancy, Morenike answers that the baby's father has denied it. Morenike refuses to elaborate on the story. This shows that Morenike focuses her positive energy on helping other people by being a good listener and this helps her heal. For Morayo, her turning point is when she attempts to commit suicide, Morenike's presence that day is a blessing that saves Morayo from dying. When Morayo hears about Morenike's story, she realizes that dying is not an option and she could survive. Morenike helps Morayo by establishing a close relationship with her. Nwoye's survival mission is mostly anticipated in the story. In addition to joining the new missionaries to preach the gospel, he also departs to train as a teacher in the college (145). These activities enhance healing from trauma. In Okonkwo's

case, he is still engrossed in the mission symptomatic of his trauma. His immersion into the culture that violates him makes him lose sense of the need to free himself and seek healing. So, his mission is not survivalist; it is a victim's mission.

Although "recovery is never complete" (Herman 315), victim's response to their trauma is determined by their sociocultural conditioning. A culture of silence prohibits the admission of trauma, and renders it unspeakable. In such a culture, to seek redress and recovery is to revolt against the culture. The irony of *Things Fall Apart* is that the supposedly cowardly Nwoye is the brave one who rebels against this traumatogenic culture. The so-called brave Okonkwo cowardly gives in to the machination of the culture and it exhausts him. Wolosinka claims that Morayo and Morenike are caught in a web of oppressive silence and that their parents maintain a legacy of silence for women, but this sounds more like a forced reading influenced by feminist ideology. Of course, a traumatised person hardly finds the voice to speak about their experience which gives impetus to the popular unspeakability of trauma. Most importantly, Morayo's silence is connected to her age. She is not mature enough to challenge Bro T's threats which keeps her from sharing the experience with her mother. Eventually, the two women are able to speak about their experiences unlike in the cases of Okonkwo and Nwoye. The entire narrative evinces the speakability of trauma and weakens the claim that the women are silenced. The story is

narrated by Morayo who that shares her story with everyone. Her voice in the narration shows that she is not held by a culture that stifles trauma expression. On the other hand, neither Okonkwo nor Nwoye ever speaks about their traumatic experiences. Their stories are told by a witness which further deprives them of a sense of urgency. Even Nwoye who moves towards recovery never found a voice to speak about it. Hence, the culture in *Daughters Who Walk this Path* allows the traumatised women the space for accepting and narrating their trauma unlike in *Things Fall Apart* where it is forbidden for men to show emotional weakness by admitting and speaking about their psychic wounds.

Conclusion

In a culture of silence and shame such as where masculinity is virtuous, admittance and expression of mental distress is considered weakness. The vulnerability of such weak people does not earn them care but marginalisation. This is the world in which Okonkwo and Nwoye are situated. Hence, they are unable to express their trauma so as not to be thought weak and consequently persecuted for it. Morayo and Morenike live in a different culture and are fully aware of their traumatic experiences. They are also able to admit, remember, and speak about the traumatic events even though some of these events happened during their childhood. On the contrary, Okonkwo considers it a betrayal of the culture of masculinity to accept his childhood trauma. He consistently tries to dissociate himself from the experience,

particularly the figure of that experience. Not even the trauma of the killing of Ikemefuna seems to him true enough to admit. Given his cultural understanding of existence as being based on a façade of emotional strength through denial of mental distress, he considers Nwoye who is struggling to express his trauma a disappointment. Nwoye holds on to this pain until he rebels. He is able to recover by first rebelling against the norm that silences him. He identifies with Morayo and Morenike for a successful recovery process. It is, therefore, obvious that one's cultural location determines, to a large extent, one's perception of and response to trauma.

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