ABSTRACT

African history was mainly the study of colonial history from colonial records and was imbued with many of the underlying assumptions about the Dark Continent that had been held by some of the earliest writers. The development of social anthropology led to the contextual study of local tradition and myth. Many historians naively continued to accept mythical tradition as historical record, but others sided with anthropologists in recognizing that, although traditions revealed much about the past, they also portrayed African views of the past only as they are interpreted today. In pre-colonial times, Africa had their own legal system based on their customs and practices. These customs were enforced by elders, clan leaders and in some areas kings who performed both civic and spiritual duties. The community determined the powers exercised by them. These powers included keeping peace, settling disputes involving marriage, divorce, the marital status of women, the rights of children, inheritance, election of customary heirs and land, performance of rituals, God’s protection and guarding against drought, famine and other disasters. Land tenure systems were communal, communities shared land under the authority and advice of community elders, clan heads and kings.

Bundles of rights in the same land could be held by different persons, and group rights in particular areas of land or common property rights also existed. These different rights in land could be transferred from one generation to the next. Decisions about who farmed a particular piece of land were made by clan heads but often resulted from discussions in the family and clan, guided by customs that took into account the needs of various persons in the group. Post colonialism is a vexed theoretical term, on which there is little agreement among its advocates on its meanings or referents. Employed in a wide range of cultural and literary disciplines, the term has become so diffuse and heterogeneous that it defies definition as to whether it refers primarily to texts and discursive practices, the construction of subjectivities and identities, or concrete historical processes. Now the question is how are the lives of the people after independence? Are they satisfied with being
independent or have felt the nostalgic years of Whiteman rule? Did they get demands meet from the local leadership? If not, what is wrong? Who will take the blame factor for all the mess? For now the above-stated questions are very pressing ones for everyone who claims to be living in a free Africa. Africans must take time to recognize where they have failed, people were freed from the yoke of colonialism only to fall under other yokes: one-party states, military powers, dictatorial powers. There's nothing but a fancy-dress parade and the blare of the trumpets, a few reforms at the top, a flag waving, and down there at the bottom an undivided mass, still living in the Middle Ages, endlessly marking time.

Women are defined by their relations to men. They are someone’s daughter or wife or mother, shadowy figures who hover on the fringes. The African woman occupies a unique but unenviable position in the world. She has borne the weight of inferior status and prejudice derived from her sex as well as her colour. But prejudice and physical oppression are not the heaviest burdens the African woman has had to bear. The woman has played different roles in African life and society and these roles have sometimes been varied and also contradictory. Firstly, the African woman has had to bear or endure physical labor and toil as a girl and later on as a breadwinner. She has had to brome a play thing, an illicit pleasure for the man. Yet, she has also remained a protector and provider for her family, a cushion for her man and children against the hostility and violence of the outside world. Fourthly, she has in recent times become involved deeply in a fight for equal rights with the man. She has in this sense gone into an agonizing process or re-evaluating and re-defining herself in her own term. The feminist movement that has emerged in post-colonial Africa is basically heterosexual, prenatal and concerned with women’s rights, political and economic issues. The African feminist approach differs structurally from the Western forms principally because African and much third world feminism owes its origins to different dynamics than those that generated Western feminism. African women’s resistance to Western hegemony and its foreign legacy within African culture have also shaped the post-colonial movement. The African variant of feminism has grown out of a history of female integration within largely masculine and agrarian-based societies with strong cultural heritages. The newly emerging African feminism has
also been as a result of women’s responses to political leaders who have attempted to limit political participation by women. This resistance has pushed women towards greater boldness in addressing the economic, legal and political elements that determine and affect gender and status in societies that have distinct cultural traditions and historical experiences. African feminism identifies with a secularized, global regime and movement, but is also a regime that has not quite entered the domain of liberalism and modern sexuality. The women were left behind to mind the homes, the children and the farms. Their erstwhile dependence on the men deepened as their consumerist status heightened. The men had all the money and the power. We blame colonialism as a whip horse but it is colonialism that eventually offered the beacon of light for women’s western education and exposure which propelled us to the outer wider world and recognition of the commonality of women’s subjugation world-wide. Women in Africa latterly have joined women in other nations in their quest for rights, for opportunity, relevance and recognition. This feminist quest is not imported, it cannot be. Nobody knows the latent volcano of the soul of woman nor indeed of man which can erupt suddenly and determinably. Bessie Head is a crusader for sexual and social justice for all men and women. Her favorite theme is the drama of interpersonal relationships and their possibility for individual growth and regeneration. To Bessie Head, South Africa typifies power in its ugliest form, and the revulsion with which she views such a moral wasteland has aroused in her a special reverence for human life and dignity. Head's characters are refugees, exiles, victims, all of whom are involved in a personal and very private odyssey of the soul from which they finally emerge regenerated, as well as spiritually and psychologically enriched. Her novels *when Rain Clouds Gather, Maru* and *A Question of Power* deals with the nature of the emotional and psychological problems of the protagonists. Among the most important female authors to emerge from postcolonial Africa, Nigerian-born Buchi Emecheta is distinguished for her vivid descriptions of female subordination and conflicting cultural values in modern Africa. Her novels *The Joys of Motherhood, The Slave Girl* and *The Second Class Citizen* articulates the positive sides of African tradition as it reflects what feminism is to her. It should be a feminism that cherishes the invaluable contributions of both men and women in upholding the family as the nucleus of the
larger society. Feminism is a reaction of women with guts and steam and nobody tells
the other to remove her head from the yoke. It is only the determinant weight. This is
so when we later examine the varied nature of feminisms in countries and women’s
reaction to their burdens. African literature has been enriched by the voices of women
expressing their concerns. It is seen from their various discourses that feminism is not
found only among the city-dwellers and educated women but among the rural and
unlettered women. It does appear that male chauvinism makes no such distinctions;
both categories of women come under the masculine yoke. The only difference is that
the educated women are able to free themselves from this masculine yoke quickly
because of the economic empowerment, education bestows on them. There is also a
need to remove the immoral and murderous options in women’s strive for rights
because the presence of only two genders leaves no room for mediation, so it becomes
rationally expedient that both have to come together in mutuality and work out their
differences.

The works of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta provide an exploration of the abuse
and mistreatment of black African people and subjugation of women in pre-
democratic societies. The racist policies written in this era of Southern African
history, acquired a peculiar importance in shaping and informing international
understanding of the racial politics and inequality in this era. Racial inequality caused
the stereotyping and labeling of black African writers in numerous ways. It was
extremely difficult for black African writers to voice their views and experiences of
living in a society riddled with oppression, prejudice and unequal economic and
educational opportunities. The works of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta provide an
exploration of the abuse and mistreatment of black African people and subjugation of
women in pre-democratic societies, as evident in the texts. Thus, the chapter will
investigate literary constructions by the authors and how they spotlight the oppression
and inequality concomitant within the Southern African society during the era of
unequal opportunities. More specifically, the aim of this chapter is to scrutinize the
psychological fractures caused by the dual oppression of race and gender, and to
investigate the inner conflict and emotional turmoil experienced by the white
perpetrators and black victims, displayed in the texts. Buchi Emecheta and Bessie
Head’s works present incidents of life experiences in Southern Africa, from two contrasting view points. They both examine the tensions that exist between white colored and African people who were forced to subsist in racially oppressive systems. A careful reading and scrutiny of the novels of Buchi Emecheta and Bessie Head allows the reader to gain knowledge of, and experience the lives lived by these authors, and the significant impact their experiences have on their writings. Furthermore, one can actually observe the extent to which society affected writers and impacted on the creation of their texts. Engagement with the Buchi and Head texts also adds to the reader’s knowledge of the issues prevalent in an era of racial oppression, and, thereby increases the reader’s literary understanding and knowledge. The theories examined are also of importance as these encourage readers to analyze the issues faced by all Africans in the pre-democratic and post democratic society and to demonstrate how life in Southern Africa has changed. Consequently, these theories underline how individuals are the ones responsible for change in society’s attitudes. It was the people of Southern Africa who were responsible for the racism and racist ideologies in African society. Thus, critical race theory and cultural studies allows individuals to reflect on how they have the power to rectify and change a racist and patriarchal society with the hope of an improved future.

Madness always has been in African literary studies, particularly in women's writing. Sometimes it has been presented simply as a literal quality of mind, interesting for its own sake, but more commonly it functions as a trope for various kinds of social dysfunction. In the novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta, the narrative voice is able or willing to articulate the speaking subject's relationship to madness, and the influence of the slave narrative in shaping that relationship. In the wake of perennial loneliness, mental turmoil, adversity and suffering, Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta turn inwards, in order to demonstrate how the human soul is able to rise above the parochial boundaries of its individuality and fixed identity, and accept mankind. Their spirit is exiled from their physical body so they she is able to understand the workings of human society. Buchi Emecheta and Bessie Head proceeds from an acute awareness of her condition of multiple marginality and colonization occasioned by such social totalities as race, culture, patriarchy, class, God and religion. As they
investigate and make an informed appraisal of these positions, they find them problematic and provisional. In fact, none of the notions they examined in the spiritual journey is a categorical imperative or a transcendental paradigm for defining and understanding identity.

Alienation is the most comprehensive term to describe the mental state of some of Head’s and Buchi’s characters. This term describes both the external and the internal aspects of their problems. Alienation is a characteristic feature of the modern man, his sense of inward estrangements, of more or less conscious awareness that the inner being, the real "I," is alienated from the "me," the person as an object in society. Many of Head's and Buchi’s characters have the status of stranger inside the society they live in and this situation creates friction, isolation and uneasiness in the life and mind of the newcomer. Head's and Buchi’s protagonists have their inner being disturbed and shattered by different causes: difficulty of adaptation, racial and class prejudices, traumatic memories, repressed feelings and unconventional philosophical or religious beliefs. The aim of Head’s and Buchi’s protagonists is to lessen their inner alienation and find a satisfactory peace of mind. Head and Buchi explore the question of alienation and mental balance from several angles because their writings are somewhat fictionalized versions of their problems. A good mental balance brings the characters to a healthier and happier existence. Psychic wholeness is the term employed throughout this thesis because it suggests a putting together of all the shattered pieces of the soul into a harmonious whole. This chapter has explored the alienation of Bessie Head's and Buchi Emecheta’s protagonists and their quest to attain psychic wholeness. *A Question of Power* is Elizabeth's journey into her soul. She experiences a progressive madness and loses her psychic balance, which she must at all costs regain in order to survive. She discovers her unconscious fears and hopes through dreams, nightmares and hallucinations. Elizabeth's quest enables her to cope with several psychological problems and alienating aspects of herself, but not all of them and at the end she regains only a temporary mental equilibrium. In Buchi’s *Second class citizen*, Adah gets out as the winner. She becomes successful in her fight with the outside world and makes England her home and thus gains her identity. So in
the immigrant experience it is the woman who succeeds finding a place of belonging, a real home and building a secure sense of self-identity.

“Utopia” can be defined as an ideal or perfect place or state, or any visionary system of political or social perfection. In literature, it refers to a detailed description of a nation or commonwealth ordered according to a system which the author proposes as a better way of life than any known to exist, a system that could be instituted if the present one could be cancelled and people could start over. In this chapter, we see that Head’s and Buchi’s work represents a society that is in absolute quest for peace and harmony. She has done this by mustering people from diverse cultural backgrounds and making them work together, by eliminating from society those who promote prejudice and to compel her characters to turn down power if they have to acquire it by stepping on others. It is imperative to emphasize that even though Head has projected a society in which human relationship is good and people feel for each other, work with each other in a society in which sex, race and skin color are not used as the standard for human competence or judgment, all these remain a figment of the imagination.

The history of the post-independent African state is that of monumental democratic and developmental failures. The few exceptions to this have been Botswana and Mauritius, and to a degree, democratic South Africa. After almost four and a half decades of independence, most countries on the continent are characterized by underdevelopment. The evidence for this state of underdevelopment can be found in any social and economic indicators one cares to examine. At the economic level, Africa has been marked by the dominance of the primary sector agriculture, oil and minerals partly as a result of the inability of the African state to foster an environment for high value added economic activities, low domestic capital formation and declining direct foreign investment, foreign aid dependence, heavy indebtedness, high unemployment and the informalisation of the economies where the majority of its people live in poverty. At this juncture, it is important to clarify the concept of a democratic development state so that it can be applied to the African context. The concept of democracy has received extensive treatment in the social sciences
literature. It is generally conceived as voters, through regular elections, choosing their leaders. A democratic developmental state is one that not only embodies the principles of electoral democracy, but also ensures citizen’s participation in the development and governance processes. But behind all the scenarios and the entire search for a solution, behind the pain and the anguish, is the paramount question, are we facing birth pangs or death pangs in the present crisis? Are we witnessing the real forces of decolonization, as the colonial structures are decaying or collapsing? Is the colonial state being washed clean with the blood of victims, villains and martyrs? African societies, with their strong recognition of cultural traditions, face the deep problems that characterize a modern society, most of which are neither of their making nor even of their wishing. African societies and their cultures have undergone continual change as far back as history and prehistory can illumine, and their experience of several centuries of the overwhelming economic, military, social, and cultural power of colonial overrule has led to both changes and stagnation. Postcolonial development strategies, well-intentioned or not, have in many respects continued the effects of colonialism, through economic exploitation and financial indebtedness. In addition, Africa has been used by outside powers, especially during the cold war, as a surrogate battleground between these powers. Most post colonial economic development has failed, owing to its been controlled by experts who have assumed that African societies are the same as those of industrialized nations and who are ignorant of the minute details of African cultures, social organization, and problems of local identity and purpose that lie below the level of nation-state. Sadly little progress has been made since the end of colonialism towards any real improvement in the lives of the ordinary people, instead change has been at the level of elites, who have taken charge of modernization and benefitted from it. Nevertheless, African cultural traditions remain strong, and they are still capable of absorbing external influences and transforming them into a pure democratic republic country.