

**SAVED BY MADNESS: RESPONSES AND REACTIONS TO DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN NOVELS.**

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in French and Italian and the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

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Date approved: April 3, 2014

Abstract

This dissertation studies responses and reactions to domestic violence with special emphasis on madness in three major sub-Saharan francophone novels from West and Central Africa. These novels include Mariama Bâ's *Un Chant écarlate* (1981) (*Scarlet Song*), Myriam Warner-Vieyra's *Juletane* (1982), and Sony Labou Tansi's *Les yeux du volcan* (1988). It studies the concept of madness as a myth and a cultural construction, as well as how women, to serve their own ends, can appropriate madness and inflict violence on others. It not only studies the violence done to women by men, but all forms of domestic violence, which include those done by women to men, by parents to their children, by in-laws and extended family members to wives of the family, and among co-wives. It also studies the role of the community as perpetrator of domestic violence as presented in the novels that studied.

Acknowledgement

It is with exceeding gratitude that I acknowledge the support and help of my dissertation committee members, Professors Tom Booker, Caroline Jewers, Diane Fourny and Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka, without whose help the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible. Given that my dissertation chair died during the course of this work, my dissertation committee worked extra hard and showed more dedication towards ensuring the successful completion of this work. I am extremely grateful for the thorough way they read my work and for their comments and suggestions. I wish to thank Professor Bruce Hayes for his compassion and all the suggestions he gave me, as I worked my way through graduate school. He is an exceptional mentor and advisor. I am also very thankful to my fellow graduate students for letting me run ideas by them from time to time. They were also supportive in substituting for me during the times that I needed to present my work at conferences.

I am deeply indebted to my family who stood by me throughout the process of preparing for, and writing my dissertation. I would like to recognize specifically: Joy Foster, my wonderful mother, who became color blind as she never saw my color or racial difference, but she simply saw the God in me and believed in my abilities to stay focused and get through graduate school. She is my children's beloved adopted grandma, who opened her home and gave my children a real taste of family; my children Ezinne, Ude and Uche; my brother Uche Ukeje and his wife Comfort Ukeje; my sister, Ukanwa Ogele, and my cousins, Mrs Gladys Ekwuribe, Dr. Goodman Okpara, and Mr. Johnson Okorie. Words can never truly express my gratitude to them. I would like to thank my spiritual church family who supported me through their prayers, especially Sisters Ugonma Bright and Glory Jonah Orji. Your prayers are deeply appreciated.

I feel it an honor to thank my dearest friends who listened to me incessantly and provided invaluable help and support. Among these are Ada Oparaku, Udochukwu Ogbonnaya, Tersoo Addingi, Sylvia Johnson, and Ambrose Utin. You all are priceless and I will not trade you for anything in the world.

This acknowledgement can in no way be complete without my mentioning my baby-sitters – Jessica Braden and Sylvie Paluku Yemba, the Early/Head Start programs, the Boys’ and Girls’ club, the principal, nurses, and teachers of Hillcrest Elementary School. Thank you all so very much for providing such safe places for my children that allowed me to find time and concentrate on writing.

Dedication

To God be the Glory for making it possible for me to have come this far and to have been able to put this dissertation together.

Joyously dedicated to my children, Ezinne, Ude and Uche. We took this work together and you made the experience so much fun and bearable.

Fondly dedicated to my two mothers:

Christiana Echerulam Mbonu and Joy Foster.

One gave birth to me and the other unofficially adopted me. Both taught me to trust in God, to be strong, to believe in myself, and to love wisely and unconditionally.

I have a story to tell

Of mothers who loved me so much

Their services cannot be rewarded by me and the world as a whole

Mentors

Orators

Teachers

Healers

Entertainers

Reservoirs of life

their Services cannot be rewarded by me and the word as a whole

My two mothers may be gone, but they will never be dead.

Special Dedication

Additionally, I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my dearly beloved dissertation advisor,

SAMIRA SAYEH,

who saw me through my dissertation defense but could not see me through to the very end. Samira, you are the toughest person I ever met. You are beautiful inside and out and you are one of the most generous souls ever. When I would have found another dissertation chair after you became sick, you refused and promised that you would read my work. That was when our relation became more spiritual. We acknowledged each other's faith. For two years, we both held unto our faith and belief in each other. It became our pact. You accepted my prayers and gave me encouragement as well. Even though the doctors said you did not have long to live, you beat their prediction and lived much longer than anyone expected. You kept your word because you saw me through the successful defense of this work. However, we still had more work to do to get the dissertation corrected, formatted and submitted. I was hoping that we would have more time with you. So you can imagine my shock when you passed on Monday, 3 Feb. 2014. I continue to draw strength and direction from the little things you did and said. You continue to whisper and gently guide me, my friend, my mentor, my colleague and my sister. Thank you for everything.

« Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais partis,
 Ils sont dans l'ombre qui s'éclaire,
 Et dans l'ombre qui s'épaissit,
 Les morts ne sont pas sous la terre
 Ils sont dans l'arbre qui frémit,
 Ils sont dans le bois qui gémit,
 Ils sont dans l'eau qui coule,
 Ils sont dans la case,
 Ils sont dans la foule
 Les morts ne sont pas morts.

Those who are dead are never gone,
 They are in the shadow that brightens,
 And in the shadow that thickens,
 The dead are not under the earth,
 They are in the tree that shudders,
 They are in the wood that groans,
 They are in water that flows,
 They are in the hut,
 They are in the crowd
 The dead are not dead.

Birama Diop¹

¹ du Recueil *Leurres et Lueurs*, Paris : Éd. Présence Africaine, 1960.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Thesis Statement and Definition Of Terms

In this dissertation, I study responses and reactions to domestic violence with special emphasis on madness in three major sub-Saharan francophone novels from West and Central Africa. These novels include Mariama Bâ's *Un Chant écarlate* (1981) (*Scarlet Song*), Myriam Warner-Vieyra's *Juletane* (1982), and Sony Labou Tansi's *Les yeux du volcan* (1988). To do this, I study the concept of madness as a myth and a cultural construction as well as how women, to serve their own ends, can appropriate madness and inflict violence on others. I not only study the violence done to women by men but all forms of domestic violence, which include those done by women to men, by parents to their children, by in-laws and extended family members to wives of the family, and among co-wives. I equally study the role of the community as perpetrator of domestic violence as presented in the novels that I am studying.

The word domestic does not have the same meaning in Africa as it does in the West because of the African family system. In Africa, families go beyond the nuclear unit of a man, his wife, and his children. They includes extended members such as uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, grandparents and sometimes, even members of the larger community. As polygamy is also an acceptable practice, sometimes, a supposedly nuclear family would consist of a man, several wives, and the wives' children. Therefore, everyone dabbles into everyone else's business and everyone knows everything about everyone else. Even friends have a strong say in what happens in families as is demonstrated in *Une si longue lettre*, an autobiographical novel by Mariama Bâ where the griotte², who is not a direct family member, is always trying to

² Francophone West African female praise singer.

influence the decisions that the protagonist, Ramatoulaye, makes. Caliste Beyala describes this African tendency as “une reaction africaine où chacun se mêle des caasserolles étrangères” (*Comment cuisiner son mari à l’africaine* 31). Therefore, domestic violence as used in this book includes the violence perpetuated or committed by family members, those surrounding them or close to them, and the community as a whole.

Domestic violence has many forms, including domestic abuse, spousal abuse, domestic assault, battery, marital discord, dysfunctional relationships [between husband and wife, parents and children, in-laws and wives and among co-wives in a polygamous home], intimate fighting, and mate beating (McCue 3). It can be emotional, physical, or psychological and may include “threats, harm, injury, harassment, control, terrorism or damage to living beings or property” (Hubbard, cited in McCue, 2). It includes embarrassment, insults, humiliation, and neglect, and denial of basic rights and care as well as abandonment. It can also be economical and sexual, and include refusing ownership of property, bride price, controlling money, stopping a woman from working, confiscating earnings, denying inheritance, harassment, forced or sexual coercion, and refusal to use safe sex³.

According to McCue, emotional abuse accompanies and in most cases precedes physical battery. It can severely affect the victim’s sense of self and reality and, “basically, the process is the same as the brainwashing inflicted on prisoners of war” (3). McCue provides training focused on children and domestic violence throughout the United States and in locations throughout the world. In her work, she insists that domestic violence often remains unseen,

³ See Burrill et al, preface and introduction to *Domestic Violence and The Law in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*.

hidden behind the walls of the family home, yet it occurs in all segments of society – among all economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. Its psychological and sociological complexities make it hard to face and even harder to understand.

Consequently, reaction and response are how people handle issues of domestic violence. As used in this dissertation, reaction means how people react to violence happening to or around them. As the word implies, it is re-acting and therefore it is the first actions people take when something happens to them or around them. It differs from response in the sense that response is meditated and calculated. Response is when people have taken their time to think things through before acting on them, hence, response can be said to be premeditated. In the novels that I am working on, some of the victims wait without doing anything; they isolate themselves, go into their shells, lose their minds or buy into the idea that they have lost their minds. They either die of depression, retaliate by attacking others, or kill others or die themselves. In other words, they react or respond through madness.

The people around them sometimes talk to them, but they do nothing more as they do not want to meddle into marriage or family situations since women supposedly belong to their husbands and must submit to them, and children belong to their parents. In her analysis of why victims of domestic violence refuse to leave an abusive situation, McCue writes that “women have been socialized by their culture, their religion, or their families to stay in the relationship. They do it out of perceived love, a sense of duty related to commitment and marriage vows, the need for financial support, or because they perceive that staying is in the best interest of the children.” (18)

Domestic violence is a real issue in Africa and as such in African literature. Patriarchal authorities in African cultures (traditional leaders and institutions) repress women's voices.

Authorities introduced by the West through different religions and Western forms of administration equally impose more silence and segregation on women. Also, according to Gwen Patton (Bambara et al. 2005) the “Victorian philosophy of womanhood” (179), which created certain kinds of inferior works and position for women as opposed to men, doubly made African women the object of domestic violence (179), a concept which Ajayi-Soyinka terms “double patriarchy” (47). African women have to endure the patriarchy of European colonization and cultures in addition to the patriarchal structures of their own cultures.”⁴

My argument however is that cultures, customs and traditions do not perform themselves. They are animated and practiced by people who use them to enslave and dominate others such as men and others who practice them sometimes out of vengeance, as they want others to go through what they have gone through. Therefore, we see women who though they suffered and decried certain situations when they went through them (female circumcision and excision for example), turn around and make others go through the same.

In her introduction to the book, *Men, Women and Violence: A Collection of Papers from CODESRIA Gender Institute 1997*, Oyekanmi states that “being often domestic in nature and in private domain, acts of violence and aggression are seldom reported and leave the victims with no redress, except ‘suffer in silence’ or retaliate with grave consequences” (vii). This is in line with what Horowitz noted in his study of Freud, Reich and Marcuse that “through unconscious

⁴ See Nnaemeka and her article “Black Feminist Criticism and Drama: Thoughts on Double Patriarchy” for a better understanding of the term.

internal repression, the dominated and exploited themselves reproduce and sustain their own oppression” (2). Some African women therefore repress their feelings, resign themselves to their situation, accept the violence done to them as the status quo, and turn around to make others suffer the same violence in the name of culture, custom, and tradition. Herbert Marcuse identified two types of repression – the basic and the surplus. According to him, basic repressions are the “restraints, constraints and suppressions” that are necessary for human growth and development whereas surplus repressions are those that are geared towards domination. (2)

Discovered by Freud, surplus repression serves the “laws of slavery” (*Repression 2*) and basic repression “transforms a small animal conceived by a man and a woman into a human child” (Althusser 205 cited in Horowitz 2). Thus, there is a time that people can ignore certain traditional practices because they are trying to bring about some good such as disciplining a child reasonably in order to make him a better person. In Africa in the past, certain traditional practices fell into the the category of basic repression such as marrying several wives in order to have a large family and have many hands to work on the farms, rear the animals, or defend a village. But in these modern days, such is no longer necessary as polygamy can produce many children that the man cannot provide for and cause so many other problems such as women destroying themselves and their children to get the man’s attention. It is also now a form of domination and a way for men to show off their wealth and virility, making women seem like possessions and objectified in the process. Polygamy is therefore classified as domestic violence in this dissertation.

1.2 Scope

My dissertation examines insanity in abused women. It also studies how they snap and lose their minds in a desperate move and desire to be loved, appreciated, and accepted; and, how madness as response and reaction to domestic violence can be a redeeming grace for women in three sub-Saharan African novels of French expression, two by female authors and one by a male author. All of the novels I have selected for this study have been published between 1981 and 1988, but the story-lines in some of them predate these dates. I chose this period because the 1970s through the 1990s is a particularly important era in the history of the emancipation of women. The United Nations proclaimed 1976-85 the decade for women. This decade also saw a huge increase in literature by African women, and 1995 saw the opening up of economic opportunities for women. Also, one of these novels, *Un Chant écarlate* tells stories of the post-colonial period especially the 1968 period when revolutions are sweeping through the world. The revolutionary spirit of this period represented in *Un Chant écarlate* by Mariama Bâ will enable me to look at how the events happening outside of the continent affected how people reacted and responded to domestic violence.

All of these books are centered on Francophone sub-Saharan Africa or written by authors from the region. In the case of *Les Yeux du volcan*, it is set in a fictional African nation as are most of Sony Labou Tansi's novels. *Un Chant écarlate* and *Juletane* are based in Senegal, which is in West Africa; these novels are also authored by very famous and well-known authors whose works are considered iconic and ground breaking. Bâ is one of the first African women to start writing. Her first novel, *Une si longue lettre (So Long A Letter)*, is an autobiographical work that depicts what Ramatoulaye (the protagonist) went through as a wife in a polygamous family and later as a widow in a Muslim culture. The novel won the first Noma Prize for publishing in

Africa in 1981. *Un Chant écarlate*, published posthumously, has also gained very wide popularity due to the storyline and themes that are treated in it.

Myriam Warner-Vieyra writes with a pessimistic tone as has been noted by Ngate, Lionnet, Midiohouan, and Wilson.⁵ She is one of the first Caribbean women who married Africans, and who writes about Africa. *Juletane* is her most popular novel, which not only portrays the protagonist's geographical trajectory and journey to Africa, but is a psychological journey to alienation and madness. As noted by Françoise Lionnet in her book *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity*, Myriam Warner-Vieyra is one of those female authors whose works show that:

Though victimized by patriarchal social structures that perpetuate their invisibility and dehumanization, black female characters actively resist their objectification, to the point of committing murder. This extreme step is often taken after years of attempting to

⁵ See Françoise Lionnet's article, "Inscriptions of Exile: The Body's Knowledge and the Myth of Authenticity."; Thecla Midiohouan's "Des Antilles à l'Afrique: Myriam Warner-Vieyra"; and Jonathan Ngate's "Reading Warner-Vieyra's *Juletane*."; See also Annis Pratt's book *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*.; Elizabeth Wilson's "Le voyage et l'espace clos - Island and Journey as Metaphor: Aspects of Women's experience in the Works of Francophone Caribbean Women Novelists" in *Out of The Kumbia: Caribbean Women's Literature*. Ed. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, p 115.

survive in an environment where they are, at best, the victims of sheer neglect, and at worst, the object of violent abuse. (102-3)⁶

I chose *Juletane*, Warner-Vieyra's first novel because it is situated in Africa and it allows me to study how African female authors universalize their feminism. Through using characters of foreign nationalities, they expose the defects of some traditional cultural practices in Africa by showing how others perceive them. This novel also depicts how madness can be constructed through labels and belief in sorcery. It shows how madness can be used by women to oppress their fellow women. It equally depicts how oppressed women can appropriate madness and use it to perpetrate evil on others just to get a man's attention. In addition, it shows that women are capable of reacting in a violent way when pushed to the extreme. , more like Virginia Woolf, appropriates her "madness" and uses it to her own selfish end⁷. She succeeds in executing a well-

⁶ Another of her novels, *Comme le Quimboiseur l'avait dit* (Harlow: Longman, 1982) (*As the Sorcerer Said*), also portrays a girl who was taken to France by her mother and sold into marriage to a rich old man after being raped repeatedly by her mother's boyfriend with her mother's collaboration. When she found out about her mother's involvement in her rapes and their plan to marry her off at an exorbitant fee, she attacked her mother and they reported her to the authorities as being insane, which led to her incarceration in a mental home and her interior journey.

⁷ See Thomas Stephen Szasz, *My Madness Saved Me: The Madness and Marriage of Virginia Woolf*.

orchestrated and premeditated vengeance on her co-wives but still loses her husband, proving that there can be no winner in a home where there is domestic violence. Most of all, her insanity allows her to get away with her crimes as she is neither prosecuted nor punished for them.

As for Sony Labou Tansi, he is among male authors who have succeeded in overturning the traditional narrative structure by giving his women a voice. Indeed, in some of the novels that are referenced in this study, he makes them visible and protagonists. They rebel against the authorities and create history. They are undaunted by the patriarchal authorities and courageous even unto death. However, they are used by the author basically to fight for patriarchal values and traditions and not necessarily for real issues facing women. They are made to appear larger than life in their fight for liberty. For example, in *Une Vie et demie* and *Les Sept solitudes de Lorsa Lopez*, both Chaïdana and Estina sacrifice their lives to fight for the restoration of former traditional values of their societies, which are clearly patriarchal. They both belong and are the last members of formerly most influential families who uphold the traditional values before the advent of colonial powers, and both women fight for the restoration of those values. Unfortunately, in each instance, they fail. While the ghost of Chaïdana's father haunts and even rapes her for using her body to lure her family members' murderers to their deaths, Estina destroys her own family. Two of Estina's granddaughters commit suicide alongside their father after Estina mortifies him for wanting to marry off one of Estina's granddaughters in a way that is against their family tradition. Estina is also eventually murdered.

However, in *Les Yeux du volcan*, the female character Alleando is not the main character, neither does she truly have a voice. Her husband, Benoit Goldmann, neglects and refuses her sex by reading the Bible as a means to avoid having sex with her. Finally, she snaps and loses her mind. This novel addresses two major forms of female oppression, religious and sexual abuse. It

shows that lack of sexual gratification can make a woman to go mad. I maintain that Sony Labou Tansi sacrifices his female characters for the national cause and for the restoration of patriarchal order. In this novel however, Alleando goes mad for a cause that is very personal to women. She nearly bites off her husband's lip and later recovers after venting her anger and her husband develops a new respect for her. Does this mean that the author now gives women the position they deserve? Not really, but instead of Alleando dying like Estina and Chaïdana, the novel ends with her still alive. As we shall see, the female authors' works allow their female protagonists to vent their fury without mercy and without looking back. They go all out to destroy the patriarchal order and its representatives, whereas Sony Labou Tansi in this novel allows his male protagonist to have a change of attitude after his wife goes mad and thus averts the full-fledged fury of his wife. Note too that Alleando has to resort to speaking her husband's language of violence and revolution to be able to achieve her aim. By doing so, the patriarchal order of marriage is saved. In other words, even though she has a voice, the voice is only an echo and reflection of her husband's voice. She simply mimics him, conforms to and adopts his ways. This is not giving a woman a voice. However, as the title indicates, people, just like the volcano, can erupt. While Sony Labou Tansi allows the eruption of his protagonist's anger, violence, and madness to be contained, Mariama Bâ and Myriam Warner Vieyra give free rein to those of their female protagonists.

All of my chosen novels are readable as feminist discourses whereby women represent the "other" in a male-dominated world. Their reactions and responses to domestic violence are portrayed as upsetting already established and accepted responses and reactions to domestic issues. The women in these novels, just as the myth of Medea, are all foreigners in the land of their marriages. Medea is a foreign wife used and abandoned by her husband, causing her to

commit infanticide in retaliation to her husband's infidelity and betrayal. Just as she is rescued without facing the consequences of her actions, the female protagonists in these novels are also not prosecuted for their crimes of passion. I chose to study these novels together not only because they cover Francophone West and Central Africa, they also emphasize my reading and conclusion that African women authors subscribe more to universal feminism than just African(a) womanism.⁸ Through the work(s) of Sony Labou Tansi, I am able to demonstrate that true to what earlier African feminist critics observed that African male authors' portrayal of

⁸ Africana womanism, which was first coined by Clenora-Hudson-Weems, is rather Afrocentric and seeks to promote just African ideas and those of its Diaspora. It recognizes the efforts of women from Africa and its Diaspora, while distancing itself from what is considered White Women's issues. Nah Dove (1998) describes African womanism in an article "Africana Womanism: An Afrocentric Theory" as:

A concept that has been shaped by the work of women such as Clenora Hudson-Weems, Ifi Amadiume, Mary E. Modupe Kolawole, and others. African womanism may be viewed as fundamental to the continuing development of Afrocentric theory. Africana womanism brings to the forefront the role of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to regain, reconstruct, and create a cultural integrity that espouses the ancient Maatic principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, order, and so forth. (p. 535)

In the novels as we shall see, it is through the eyes of foreigners as in the case of Mireille de la Vallée, that the condition of African women and the abuse they suffer are exposed.

African women is only in line with patriarchal imagery and for the restoration of patriarchal orders. They do not develop their female characters well enough for the reader to truly know their emotional or psychological states. This is because most of the time, there is a dearth of female characters in male-authored African novels.⁹ Moreover, the victims in my chosen novels do not suffer the typical physical violence where their husbands batter them physically. They suffer other forms of abuse, which are mostly psychological, emotional, and sexual neglect. Therefore I selected the novels based on their genre as post-colonial novels and on the depiction of domestic violence in them. I also chose them based on the popularity of their authors and on the fact that women are not only the protagonists in them, but they also have voices. I equally based my selection of these novels on the communal involvement in them, and their sustenance of my beliefs about male and female authors' depiction of women.

1.3 Research Questions and Methodology

This dissertation will attempt to answer the following questions in the chapters: What is madness? Where does one draw the line between mythology, spirit medium, fairy tales and reality, and their relation to madness? What are the reactions and responses to domestic violence against women depicted in the select Francophone African novels under study – these include the victims, the family members (nuclear and extended) and the community? How do the reactions and responses to domestic violence reflect African values and societal structures? In other words,

⁹ For more see Christine N. Ohale's article "The Dea(R)Th Of Female Presence In Early African Literature: The Depth Of Writers' Responsibility" on *Forum on Public Policy*. Web. 6 Mar. 2012.

<<http://forumonpublicpolicy.com/spring2010.vol2010/spring2010archive/ohale.pdf>>

what is the function and role of tradition in the responses and reactions to domestic violence in francophone West and Central Africa? Since the novels are all post-colonial, what role do Western ideas, education, religion, and influence play in the responses and reactions to domestic violence in the novels? How do Africans construct the other? Most importantly, my dissertation will question the notion of madness in abused women and how people construct madness in women through mythical beliefs as Mamiwata or mermaid worship, spirit exorcism, sorcery, witchcraft, and lunar cycle lunacy.

Paramount to my study and analyses is how madness, insanity, and other mental disorders as responses and reactions to domestic violence can actually save the victim from different oppressive conditions as well as from crimes, and how women can appropriate it voluntarily to achieve their aim. Therefore, the above research questions will enable me to give a clearer and deeper understanding as to how women respond and react to domestic violence through madness and what makes them respond and react differently. They will also allow me to not only delve into literature but to also use ethnographical and anthropological works to study reactions and responses to domestic violence against women in Africa based on sub-Saharan francophone African novels and societies. I believe, as do Albrecht¹⁰, Sartre¹¹, Mariama Bâ¹² and

¹⁰ M. C. Albrecht “The relationship of literature and society has been variously conceived. Three general assumptions are that literature reflects society and culture, that it serves as a means of social control, and that it influences attitudes and behavior of people in ways considered in some respects desirable, in others undesirable.” “The Relationship of Literature and Society” (425-436), and “Does Literature Reflect Common Values?” (722-729).

¹¹ In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?* (1948) Sartre asks : « Quel aspect du monde veux-tu dévoiler, quel changement veux-tu apporter au monde par ce dévoilement? L'écrivain "engagé" sait que la parole est action: il sait que dévoiler c'est changer et qu'on ne peut dévoiler qu'en projetant de changer » (28). Thus for Sartre, it is not enough for a writer to simply expose human and social conditions. S/he must also proffer changes to the conditions that s/he reveals.

¹² In D'Almeida's (D'Almeida 1994, 28) analysis of Mariama Bâ's essay "Fonction politique des littératures africaines écrites" (The political function of written African Literatures) (in *Écritures française dans le monde* 3. 5 (1981) she points out that Bâ "strongly makes the point that in traditional Africa, not only was art deeply rooted in society but it was also made to serve a purpose, it was functional. Contemporary African writers, she contends, have not broken this continuum, and place fiction at the service of society" (3-7). For Bâ, art, which includes literary works must be functional, it must serve a purpose and the artist, especially the female writer, "must, more than her male counterparts, exhaustively depict the condition of African women." D'Almeida's translation in d'Almeida, 1994.

She goes on to say that:

Dans l'œuvre d'édification d'une société africaine démocratique libérée de toute contrainte, l'écrivain a un rôle important d'éveiller de conscience et de guide. Il se doit de répercuter les aspirations de toutes les couches sociales, surtout des couches sociales les plus défavorisées. Dénoncer les maux et fléaux qui gangrènent notre société et retardent son plein épanouissement, fustiger les pratiques, coutumes et mœurs archaïques, qui n'ont rien à voir avec notre précieux patrimoine culturel, lui reviennent, comme une

Aminata Sow Fall¹³ that literature not only reflects society but also influences it. This is why I will not only use literary theories but feminist and African theories in my readings of these novels to show how events of the periods of the publication of these books or the era represented in the storylines influenced how their characters react and respond to domestic violence. As my work delves into mental disorder, I will equally use theories in psychoanalysis, psychology, as well as cultural and mythic theories. The cultural and mythological theories that I will use will be drawn from antiquity – Greek and Roman and from Africa. I will occasionally draw from mythological theories from other places and eras.

1.4 Literature Review

At the onset of Western civilization in Africa, preference was given to men over women in school attendance and this prepared men to be in high political and economic positions. Therefore, when Africans started to write in the Western style, it was mostly men who wrote. The pen became another agent of violence besides other forms of violence that caused women to suffer at the hands of men. Literature and other works of arts were its avenues of expression in the hands of African male authors who depicted African women as they liked and gave them

mission sacrée à accomplir, contre vents et marées, avec foi, avec ténacité. (« Fonctions politique, » 5)

¹³ Aminata Sow Fall, another Senegalese writer is in agreement when she says that; “Art for art’s sake is not my concern and, in that, I feel in harmony with the African Aesthetic” and by African aesthetics, she means using arts for the service of humanity. (Aminata Sow Fall, *Entretiens*, 24)

roles they thought fit for them, just as Westerners have initially done about Africa when Africans do not write. Women are given the role of custodians of African culture and traditions. They are depicted as good when they played those roles or as evil when they did not. However, they are only used for men's political agenda. For example, in Kalisa's *Violence in Francophone African & Caribbean Women's Literature* (2009), a critic of Franz Fanon's landmark works, she states that "It must be noted that much of the early literature deals with the social and political implications of colonialism and man's struggle within, and away from, its confine. Women are usually made peripheral to all of that and function either as symbols or as instruments for the male hero's working out of his problems" (3).

Arlette Chemain-Degrange's *Emancipation feminine et roman africain* published in 1980, not long after women entered the West African literary scene, looks at the image and representation of women in existing books which, of course, are mostly books published by male authors. The objectives are to know the "African woman's image" and to know "what her roles" are. The books studied ranged from those published before the Second World War to books published during the independence struggles of African countries and finally books published during the post-independence era (from the 1930s to the 1970s). The African woman's image during these periods is usually in line with African men's struggle to restore African traditional values, culture, and tradition and to fight against colonialism. Images of women are not just unrealistic and untrue representations, but they go back in history and are used more as propaganda to remind African women of their traditional roles before the coming of colonial masters and their ideas, which African men found unnerving, as some of these conflicted with African practices, such as polygamy and bride price payment. The African woman's image is therefore, used for this end, not for herself, but for a political end as Chemain-Degrange writes in

her introduction that “L’image de la femme noire subit les conséquences de cet engagement. Elle n’est jamais décrite pour elle-même mais élaborée en fonction de l’action politique entreprise” (17).

In traditional arts, the African woman’s image is also used as a sign to communicate with the gods, to ask for their blessings and attract fertility. Hence, women represent an external sign of prosperity and prestige of a Chief. We can see therefore that they are idealized. This idealized image of the woman can be found in the works of such authors as Camara Laye. In Camara Laye’s *L’Enfant Noir* (1958), an African classic, the mother is idealized. Though a wife in a polygamous home, she has almost the same rights as her husband. She has formidable mystical powers that enable her to talk to alligators just like her husband who can talk to a snake. Their powers almost parallel each other even in the home. She is consulted before major decisions can be taken. The only time her advice is not adhered to is when she opposes her son going to study in Paris. Here, the father’s decision is final, yet, the way the news is broken to her is with dignity and respect. She vents her anger and expresses herself. This image of the African woman is very rare and unique. However, here, we see this imagery through the optics of a child who idealizes and idolizes his mother. It is not presented from the perspective of a husband, a brother, or a father.

Another image of the woman presented in Arlette Chemain-Degrange’s *Emancipation féminine et roman africain* is that of a violated, raped, and mournful woman. This image represents the struggle against colonialism. The woman represents Africa who is violated, robbed and abused by the colonial authorities. Here again, the image of the woman is not about her but about the African continent. Male authors use her image to advance their own course and not to really see her as she is as an individual. Such images can be found in the works of poets such as

David and Birago Diop and Bernard Binlin Dadié (18). In Mongo Beti's and Ferdinand Oyono's novels, there are images of the woman as a victim as well as an accomplice of colonialism. In these authors' works, women are presented as prostitutes who flirt with the colonial masters and serve as their spy and their mistresses. They choose white men over black men but they are eventually raped, beaten up, and abused by white men who push them out when they have no more use for the African women. Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy* (1964) is a good example of where this image is well developed¹⁴. Yet, women remain silent, having been robbed of their voices. But this was to change with the call to women to write by French feminist theorists such as Hélène Cixous who encouraged them to do so.¹⁵

¹⁴ In this novel, Sophie, an African girl, chooses to date French men over African men and becomes the mistress of the water engineer. Toundi, an African young man, chooses living with and serving white men to living with his own family. He becomes a "house boy" to the commandant. Soon the water engineer tires of Sophie and when the commandant's wife who is dating another white man, M. Moreau, wants to punish their houseboy, Toundi, a friend to Sophie, the commandant's wife, and Mr. Moreau connive with the water engineer and accuse Sophie of stealing the workers' salary with the help of Toundi and both of them are rough-handled and kicked out. Toundi later dies from wounds he sustained from the beating.

¹⁵ See Hélène Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa"; *La Venue à l'écriture* (co-authored with Annie Leclerc and Madeleine Gagnon) and *"Coming to Writing" and Other Essays*.

Cixous encouraged women to write their bodies instead of allowing men to represent the woman's body as he liked without really having a lived experience of the woman's body. Thus, African women too started to write – slowly at first as D'Almeida (1994) notes:

In 1948, Léopold Sédar Senghor compiled his *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*. This anthology included no female poets because, at the time, there was none in print. In 1972, more than two decades later, *Who's who in African Literature; Biographies, Works, Commentaries* (which includes African writers in various European languages) mentioned seven female writers, though only one of them, Annette M'Baye d'Erneville of Senegal, is from the Francophone world. Another decade later, Ambroise Kom edited *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires négro-africaines de langue française; des origines à nos jours* (1983), an anthology that included twelve women. (4)

Eventually, in the late 1970s, women started writing. Many critiques have studied the entrance of African women into writing and the nature of what they write about. For example, Arlette Chemain-Degrange is not concerned about why African women's voices are not heard, she is only interested in studying the representation of women in the earlier works by Africans (these happen to be mostly men) and the roles these authors assign to women as Africa transits to modernism and independence. However, Odile Cazenave in her work, *Femmes rebelles : naissance d'un nouveau roman africain au féminin* (1996) continues the study that D'Almeida debuts in her *Francophone African Women Writers: Destroying the Emptiness of Silence* (1994). *Francophone African Women Writers: Destroying the Emptiness of Silence* sings the praises of female authors who finally took to writing in order to tell the African woman's story instead of leaving it to African male authors to tell as we have seen it demonstrated by Arlette Chemain-

Degrange in *Emancipation féminine et roman africain* discussed above. *Francophone African Women Writers: Destroying the Emptiness of Silence* lauds authors such as Ken Bugul. In her autobiographical work, *Le Baobab fou*, Ken Bugul writes about her own lived experience as a black student in Belgium where whites flock around her and devour her just because of her color and race and not really because of who she is as a person. Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* celebrates two women who exercise their rights to choose their husbands and also to choose to either stay in a polygamous marriage or not, thus making it a woman's choice and not the society's or the family's. Calixthe Beyala is also praised for her critique of African societies and norms - the new African cities, which are infested with poverty, prostitution, rape, and violence. However, many of her female protagonists run mad or exhibit traits and behaviors of madness as they face the vices that the cities offer them. While Ken Bugul and Calixthe Beyala represent madness in their works, the madness of their protagonists do not necessarily save them from their menace. It stems from identity crisis as they struggle between their self-identity and what the society perceives them to be. I will return to Bugul and Beyala's representation of madness especially in *Le Baobab fou* and *Tu t'appelleras Tanga*, to show how this representation differs from the madness of the female characters of the primary novels under study in this dissertation.

D'Almeida's *Femmes rebelles* studies African feminine novels from 1984 to 1994, and analyzes Francophone African women writers' rebellion. While the author celebrates the fact that African women finally took to writing, Cazenave looks at the manifestations and nature of their rebellion. According to her, these take the form of depicting characters that are marginalized and writing on taboo subject as she puts it:

Néanmoins, c'est en adoptant au départ une démarche de marginalisation de leurs personnages, d'exploration audacieuse de zones interdites, telles la sexualité, le désir, la

passion, l'amour, mais aussi la relation mère-fille, la mise en question de la reproduction et de la maternité obligatoire comme consécration de la femme, qu'elles sont parvenues à s'inscrire au centre, s'assurant ainsi l'appropriation de zones de langage jusqu'ici considérées comme la prérogative des hommes. (14)

These acts of rebellion are what Cazenave tries to prove in the works of major Francophone African Women Writers.¹⁶

I consider Cazenave's contribution to the debate a good and interesting one because she is able to clearly show how African women writers can be called rebellious as they have not only "destroyed the emptiness of their silence" as Calixthe Beyala has it in *Tu t'appelleras Tanga* and as D'Almeida later develops it into the thesis statement of her book. They have equally stepped into "dangerous and taboo zones" where only men are allowed to tread. They have shown these in their choice of language and semantics, in the themes they treat in their works, and in their

¹⁶ such as Mariama Bâ, *Un Chant écarlate* (1981), Aminata Sow Fall, *L'appel des arènes* (1982), Myriam Warner-Vieyra, *Juletane* (1982), Angèle Rawiri, *G'amatakano, Au Carrefour* and *Fureurs et cris de femmes* (1989); Ken Bugul, *Le Baobab fou* (1983), Werewere Liking, *Elle sera de jaspe et de corail, Journal d'une misovire* (1983), Aminata Maïga Ka, *La Voie de salut suivi du Miroir de la vie* (1985), Gad Ami, *Étrange héritage* (1985), Évelyne Mpoudi Ngolle, *Sous la cendre, le feu* (1990), Philomène Bassek, *La Tache de sang* (1990), Veronique Tadjou, *A Vol d'oiseau* (1986) and *Le Royaume aveugle* (1990), Tanella Boni, *Une Vie de crabe* and almost all the works of Calixthe Beyala, *Tu t'appelleras Tanga* (1988). *Seul le diable le savait* (1990), *Le Petit prince de Belleville* (1992), *Maman a un amant* (1993), *Assèze l'Africaine* (1994).

critic not only of the society but also of men. However, Cazenave's focus and that of others before and after her has not been one of responses and reactions to domestic violence in the books studied, and this is what the study of this dissertation will contribute to the field of sub-Saharan Francophone African literature. An image of women that has been appropriated by female writers, which I will focus my attention on in this dissertation is the image of the rebellious woman as insane and mad. And instead of reading these women's madness as the worst that can happen to them, I choose to read their madness as liberating, redeeming, and sometimes, a choice.

In the novels studied, I place emphasis on how madness is constructed in the female protagonists through certain mythical beliefs such as in possessive spirits, witchcraft, sorcery, lunar effects, spirit exorcism, and historical events. Madness from Antiquity forward has been personified as female and many goddesses in Greek, Roman, Asian, and African mythologies are always shown to be fighting one another and exhibiting mad behaviors for the love of a man or a god. These same tendencies have not changed in our time. The gods and goddesses have not ceased to exist, they have simply changed their looks, languages, physique, careers and experiences. According to Phyllis Chesler in her book *Women and Madness* (1983) where she analyzes the transformations and the many faces of Demeter's daughters Persephone, Artemis, Psyche and Athena, "Goddesses never die. They slip in and out of the world's cities, in and out of our dreams, century after century, answering to different names, dressed differently, perhaps even disguised, perhaps idle and unemployed, their official alters abandoned, their temples feared or simply forgotten" (xviii).

Chesler goes on to describe some of these transformations. According to her, Demeter, the revered queen, has now become "a step mother, often a cruel one, or a witch, often an evil one,

come to haunt children in their fairy tales and nightmares” (xix), and she has of course been burned countless times at the stake, spat upon, and cast off. In Africa, I believe, many a rotten egg has been thrown at her and she has been cast into the evil forest and ostracized beyond count. Persophone and Psyche have ascended to the status of Virgin Mary (and Fatima), then they become Cinderella, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, each of them “turned to princes and white knights to rescue them” (xix). But in our time, Psyche has been very depressed and recently, “she never gets up before noon; the Virgin Mary is an alcoholic, hiding behind drawn shades, Persephone is frigid – and worries about it, and Cinderella is anxious, paces back and forth a great deal and has twice tried to kill herself” (xix). What about Artemis and Athena? According to Chesler’s observations:

Today both Artemis and Athena have increasingly been caught at violence – at crimes of passion, greed, even of honor. Most often, they do whatever is required of them, these proud and lovely two, do their jobs well. Sometimes Athena, sometimes Artemis, is well known for some accomplishment – envied, admired, misunderstood – until she turns on the gas, poisons herself, drowns – and is done with once more. (xx)

The possibilities of the goddesses’ transformations are endless. Just imagine the new goddesses in a polygamous marriage. There is no limit to the havoc they can wreck. In antiquity, Hera uses “Madness” (Lyssa) to afflict her rivals and those who slight her. What would she have done in the 1980s? What about Medea, who murders her children because her husband Jason has abandoned her? Would she have spared them in the twenty-first century when Nembutal and other barbiturates are at the beck and call of psychiatric patients? These drugs are supposed to calm the nerves and help someone when administered in smaller doses, but are fatal when given in larger doses. They are now being used in executing death row prisoners. Has the relationship

of the goddesses and their gods changed or are goddesses still vying among themselves and undermining one another to get the attention of their god or to have them solely to themselves? When unleashed, how does the inner goddess manifest: as madness and mental illness or as myth?

In 1960, Thomas Szasz made a claim that there is no such thing as mental illness. He claimed that mental illness is a myth and a constructed phenomenon that those in power use to subjugate and oppress those inferior to them thereby marginalizing them. Later in another work, *The Manufacture of Madness*, he compared madness to witchcraft, but still maintained that it is a myth. In 2006, he applied this claim to the life of Virginia Woolf, the Victorian mad genius who is famous because of her “madness” and creativity. He concluded that Virginia Woolf is never mad, as she carefully avoided going to the right places to get help, but instead, that having been labeled “mad” by a patriarchal system, she chose to appropriate it and play that role. Madness afforded her the opportunity to live the life she wanted. Virginia Woolf has all the makings of a goddess. She is smart, intelligent, and beautiful and of course, she is believed to be mad. To cap it off, she supposedly took her own life. A perfect goddess indeed. I will use Szasz’s approach to the issue of mental illness in my analysis of the novels and show how madness is constructed in them and how the “mentally ill” female characters are saved by their “madness”.

As mentioned before, many African female authors including Ken Bugul and Calixthe Beyala have written about women’s madness in their works. Ken Bugul writes about her own madness while studying in Belgium. But she shows that her madness is a result of her losing her identity both as an African and as a Muslim, and when she returns to her village and the symbolic baobab tree, she is restored. She later becomes the twenty-eighth wife of an Islamic Marabout in her village. So for her, straying from the patriarchal traditional norms caused her

derangement and returning and resubmitting to them restores her to sanity. Hence, her madness did not help her to gain her freedom or to avenge herself, but only subjugated her once again. For Calixthe Beyala in *Tu t'appelleras Tanga*, Tanga's madness is a result of her rebellion against patriarchal norms. But instead of liberating her, she is imprisoned and in a surreal experience, her spirit or soul transmigrates into Anna-Claude, a French psychology teacher, who herself exists on the margins of her society and is also imprisoned as a result of her aberrant behavior in the unnamed African nation where the story is based. The two become one as she accepts to become Tanga. However, by the end of the story, Anna-Claude-Tanga is still in prison. When she introduces herself as Tanga to Tanga's mother, the latter believes that she is raving mad to claim to be Tanga, to whom she bears no physical resemblance whatsoever. So in these works, though madness allows Tanga to finally die physically, thereby liberating her body from prostitution, we are not sure that Anna-Claude-Tanga will even make it out of prison. If she succeeds in getting out of prison, there is no guarantee that anyone will believe her story or that she stands any chance of making any changes whatsoever since the fused souls still exist in the body of Anna-Claude. In *Juletane* as we shall see, Juletane, appropriates her madness and not only avoid living a life of servitude to her husband like the other co-wives, she lives in total freedom. She does whatever pleases her as well as executes a well-orchestrated vengeance on her husband for all that he did to her.

1.5 Chapter Outline and Description:

This introduction gives a general overview of the history of violence against women in Francophone African novels starting from the pre-colonial through colonial times and down to when women break the emptiness of silence through writing. It also introduces my arguments

and contributions to the discourse after appraising the works of my predecessors. It contains an outline and table of contents for each chapter.

In the following chapter, I define madness both in the Western concept and African concept. I also discuss in-depth, Szasz's concept of the myth of madness and show the link he makes between madness and witchcraft. I, however, show how this differs from the African idea of witchcraft, which Africans practice. According to Szasz, witchcraft ceased to exist in the fifteenth century and, of course, the practice is considered negative. In Africa, this is not totally true because some witch doctors are healers. In this chapter as well, I compare witchcraft, mythology, and religion when it comes to evil spirit possession and exorcism. This second chapter is particularly important to the dissertation because it lays the foundation for chapters three, four, and five. In these chapters, I show through novels how madness is invented or manufactured in Africa. I also show how concepts such as *Rab*, *Mamiwata*, witchcraft, lunar cycle lunacy, and other mythological spirit possessors, which have all been relegated to the status of fairy tale or myth in the West, are still used by African's to *other* women and drive them to the point of madness.

Chapter three centers on how the "other" is constructed in interracial marriages. It looks particularly at the notions of self and other in post-colonial West Africa as depicted in Mariama Bâ's 1981 novel, *Un Chant écarlate*. In doing so, it looks at how West Africans 'other' [Western] women through certain cultural and religious practices that depict women as insane and possessed by spiritual forces through such beliefs as the *Rab*, *Jinniee* (genies), or *Mamiwata*, (*mermaid*) spirits. The *Rab*, *Jinniee*, or *Mamiwata* spirit can be both beneficial and harmful spirits. When they are perceived to be harmful, certain rituals are performed to exorcise them. Thus this third chapter shows how, by constructing the [Western] woman as *Rab*, West Africans

assume to be the *self*, “essential, authentic, real, true, genuine, and that requires the elimination of the ‘Other’, the foreign, the not-I, the corrupt, the fake” (Bacigalupo 33). This chapter equally shows Mireille, the female protagonist’s dilemma and how she is driven to madness, violence and infanticide, which eventually causes the French embassy to fly her back to France, thus enabling her to escape from her abusers, her bad marriage, and her crimes.

In chapter four, I analyze the violence and madness in *Juletane*. I demonstrate how wives in a polygamous family, in order to win a husband’s heart and cast another wife off, can label her as mad, thereby constructing her madness. So here, the use of language and verbal abuse is treated in-depth. Also, I analyze the role of sorcery and witchcraft in polygamous homes and showed how Juletane appropriated her madness in order to avenge herself on her husband. Here too, the role of the community is highly considered as well as the role of social workers.

In chapter five, I show how the protagonist’s madness is constructed through sex and intimacy denial by her husband. However, though we know that Alleando runs mad, we do not really understand her inner psychological and emotional suffering, unlike characters like Juletane and Mireille, created by female authors. This thus enables me to critique the representation of the responses and reactions of female characters by male and female authors. I demonstrate how the practice of marrying young girls to old men can constitute abuse, as in the case of Benoit Goldmann, an old man who has already married eight times before marrying Alleando who is just about thirty years old. She might be considered an adult, but the age disparity still gives the man an edge over his young wife, thus allowing him to perpetuate abuse against her as well as control her.

In chapter six, I explore more indept the madness already introduced in the proceeding chapters with special focus on madness as a saving grace. In *Juletane*, I introduce the character

of Helène, the social worker, the first reader of Juletane's diary. I insist that she is also saved by Juletane's madness, as reading her diary and her experience helps Helène in making her own decisions and in breaking the ice in her heart. Again, in *Un Chant écarlate*, I introduce Ma Fatim, a character in the novel who suddenly has a spiritual attack just at the moment that her co-wife is winning over her in a fight, and I stress how Alleando's problems and madness end after she attacks her husband through her madness.

Finally, in chapter seven, I reveal the notions of insanity plea and mitigating circumstances by tracing their genesis to mythology when the Erinyes refuse to prosecute Oreste after he murders his own mother based on pleas from Artemis. Artemis proves that Oreste is not in his right mind, having been driven to commit the crime because his mother has broken her vow to her husband and has murdered him after committing adultery with his brother. This is the case with Medea; she is not prosecuted because Jason has broken his vows to her. The same repeats itself in the cases of the characters in my chosen novels, insanity helps them get away with their crimes while freeing them from their abusive conditions. I conclude by reviewing the evolution of goddesses and women from Antiquities to our present age to show that despite changes, on the inside, women are still the same, be they African, Western, or women from other races. They still feel the same things as well as react and respond the same way to emotional issues and to domestic violence as they did in Antiquity.

Chapter Two

The Myth and Cultural Construction of Madness

Give me your pardon, sir: I've done you wrong;
 But pardon't, as you are a gentleman.
 This presence knows,
 And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd
 With sore distraction. What I have done,
 That might your nature, honour and exception
 Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
 Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet:
 If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
 And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
 Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
 Who does it, then? His madness: if't be so,
 Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
 His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
 Sir, in this audience,
 Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
 Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
 That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
 And hurt my brother.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* Act 5, Scene 2.

2.1 Madness: Fantasy or Reality?

This chapter studies the cultural, mythical, religious, and traditional constructions of women's madness in general and African women in particular. In Africa, madness is believed most of the time to be caused by witchcraft, sorcery, or spirit possession as well as other manipulations by gods, goddesses, and ancestral spirits. According to Flora Veit-Wild, this tendency of Africans to "blame" external forces whenever something does not seem right has caused some Western critics to view Africans as "self-absorbed and morally lazy" (13). As she

notes in her book, *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature*¹⁷, Carothers identifies Africans in general with schizophrenics as well as claims that Africans live in the world of fantasy. According to Carothers, if something goes wrong, the African would place blame on an external force such as gods, enemies, or ancestors, never on himself; hence, he does not have a sense of responsibility or guilt. “He sees no sharply defined aspects of reality. Wish and truth, possible and impossible, dreams and waking thoughts, phantasy, and reality are one to him” (Veit-Wild 13-14). However, Carothers chooses to ignore the fact that all cultures, religions, including Western religious traditions, as well as mythology be it Roman, Greek, Asian, or African, do the same. After Heracles kills his wife and children, it is believed that the goddess, Hera, sent Lyssa,¹⁸ the goddess of violent rage, to afflict him with madness¹⁹. Thus, it is believed that he did not commit the crimes of killing his children in his right mind. How then can one differentiate between reality and fantasy when dealing with the issue of madness? How can one separate myth from reality?

¹⁷ in which she studies the writings of J. C. Carothers, a colonial doctor in Kenya who practiced Western medicine. He was “a district medical officer [who] has no formal training in psychological medicine” (McCulloch 1995: 1), but who is appointed to that position due to the dismissal of the then senior medical officer.

¹⁸ *Rabies* when she possesses animals

¹⁹ Note that though he is believed to be mad, his madness is placed outside of him whereas Hera and Lyssa take the blame for being the cause of his madness.

Recently, the study of gods and goddesses is reemerging²⁰ in feminist and women studies and people are beginning to pay closer attention to them, their implications, and their symbolism again. In mythology, gods and goddesses are believed to have the power to influence people and to use them to carry out their own wills. When such happens, people under the influence of such gods and goddesses are oftentimes viewed as mad. In Africa, there is a belief in ancestral spirits; and in many religions, there is a belief in evil spirits, possessive spirits, and demons as the cause of many deviant behaviors. Thus this chapter traces the invention of madness through the ages and show the influence that mythology, religion, and other western ideas have on the African belief system. It also shows similarities in ideas and concepts of madness in both the West and in Africa, in view of showing that the case of Africa is not isolated and that it is not only Africans who manifest this tendency. In fact, Erich Good observes in *Drugs in American Society* that:

For millennia, humans have asked, why do they do it? about a variety of anomalous, unconventional, or deviant behaviors. The ancient Greek philosophers began thinking about the forces and factors that lead some of us astray. But, for the most part, until just a few hundred years ago, the dominant theory for wrongdoing was **demonology**, meaning the devil (or evil spirits) made them do it. Demonology has not disappeared from the popular or public mind, however. Toward the end of a course on criminology taught at a small Bible Belt college, Frank Schmalleger asked his students to speculate on which theory of crime they thought made the most sense: biological, psychological, or sociological. The overwhelming majority of the class chose none of these three, and instead agreed that “the devil made them do it” was the most valid. (59)

²⁰ See *The Witches' Goddess* (1987: 1)

Thus Erich Good demonstrated that there are many people (Westerners, Americans, Evangelicals, and others) who do still believe that demons cause deviant behavior. My study in this chapter will also show how madness is used by individuals to oppress others. This chapter is particularly important as it will not only define madness, but lay the foundation for the chapters that will follow. In the chapters that follow, I will show how these beliefs systems are applied and made manifest in some sub-Saharan African novels such as *Juletane* (1982), by Miriam Warner Vieyra, *Un Chant écarlate* (1982), by Mariama Bâ and *Les Yeux du volcan* (1988), by Sony Labou Tansi.

2.2 What is Madness?

The meaning of madness is highly contested as it means so many different things to many people. When referencing it in a dictionary²¹, madness has many meanings: from uncontrollable emotions to anger and violence. “While it can mean an agitated state of mind such as frenzy, rage, rapture or recklessness, it is also used as synonym for insanity” (Veit-Wild 2). For Thomas Szasz, madness is an idea and mental sickness. It is a “psychiatric symbol [which] shapes the behavior of family members toward one another, of politicians and legislators toward the citizen, of judge and lawyer toward the criminal, of journalist and writer toward his subject, and, in the end of every one of us toward everyone else” (*Insanity* 2). In other words, Szasz believes that madness is just an abstract idea, not a tangible thing. As an idea, it is therefore highly subjective, as different people conceive and react to it differently. It is also a behavior inducing phenomenon which has the tendency of “making” people act in a certain “abnormal” way. As just an idea, it can also be said to be not a fact but fiction, thus not a *bona fide* illness or disease. For Donald D.

²¹ *Online Etymology Dictionary.*

Jackson²², madness is also not a disease, but a mental disorder since it operates in and through the mind.

Besides the clinical meaning of madness as a behavior inducing phenomenon, madness is equally been personified in literature and art as a goddess. “Madness” can therefore also mean the goddess of madness, fury, violent rage, or anger, for example called *Lyssa* or *Rabies* (when in animals) who in Greek, Latin, and Roman mythologies, is believed to possess people, drive them crazy, and make them do things that they would not have done in their right minds. When expressing anger, the goddess is called *Ira* by the Romans (*Irae* - plural); when expressing rage, she is called *Furor* in Latin (*Furores* - plural); and when expressing craziness, she is called *Maniai*. She is the goddess of madness, mania, battle fury, anger, violent rage as well as animal madness. She is often pluralized and used as a host of *Irae*, and *Furores*. In this form, she is probably the demon that Jesus Christ exorcises from a madman who gives its name as *Legion*²³ because it claims that there are many of them living in the man’s body. After leaving the man’s body, the demonic spirits go right into some pigs (animals) by the river and in their madness, they rush into the river and drown. Another example is the Greek Heracles²⁴ whom I have referenced before who murders his children in a mad frenzy when *Hera*²⁵ the wife of *Zeus* commanded *Lyssa* (Madness) to use her goddess powers to cause Heracles to do so as a form of

²² Donald D. Jackson. *Myths of Madness; New Facts for Old Fallacies* (1964).

²³ The Gospel according to Mark, chapter five.

²⁴ Roman Hercules.

²⁵ Roman Juno.

punishment for being *Zeus'* son²⁶. In the works of the Greek playwright Aeschylus²⁷, she appears as the agent Dionysus sends to drive the *Maenads*²⁸ crazy. One of them, *Agave*, tears her own son *Pentheus* to pieces, limb by limb, without recognizing him or heeding his cries for mercy.²⁹

Hence, madness can be used to describe someone who is or acts “different” or “not normal”. Someone who refuses to conform to the norms or established and dictated roles can be considered as mad by those who conform. Thus a non-conformist can be considered mad or someone acting out his or her anger and emotions can be considered as mad.

Madness can also be considered a sign of ingenuity and creativity, such as the concept of the “mad genius”. People express their creative abilities through arts and at times alienate, exclude, and behave in a certain way in order to process their thoughts and express what is on the inside through creative imaginations and through such arts as writing, poetry, songs, painting,

²⁶ See *Euripides, the Complete Greek Drama* lines 815-1015

²⁷ See “Aeschylus/Sophocles”. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, vol 14, 1967.

²⁸ See Philip Vellacott (816). *Lyssa* equally means "canine madness," and she is a Greek underworld goddess who is believed to have induced the intoxication of the *Maenads* turning them into destructive fury. She is the daughter of *Nyx*. The *Maenads* are originally Dionysus's nurses, but the power of *Lyssa* (madness) transformed them into *Maenads*, which means demented or enraged. (Smith, 36)

²⁹ For more on *Lyssa*, the *Erinyes*, as well as other goddesses of madness, see Ruth Padel's *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self*, New Jersey (Chapter 8, “Blood on the Mind”)

drawing, sculpturing etc. In this sense, one can begin to classify madness under different categories such as manic depression, which it is said that artists like Edgar Allan Poe or Baudelaire suffered from or we can think of a particular case of a female mad genius: Virginia Woolf who though “mad” is able to write many great books.

However, the notion of madness as an illness took center stage at a certain moment in time, and for many centuries afterwards mad people began to be incarcerated to enable them to be treated and possibly restored back to health. In most cases, as Michel Foucault notes in his book, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, during the classical period in Europe, mad people are shipped off to other shores in “ships of fools”. Their alienation is supposed to help eliminate madness just as segregation, quarantine, and alienation have succeeded in eliminating leprosy, another illness that plagued people before this time. Several authors have however contested the idea of madness as a mental illness, arguing that illnesses afflict the body or its parts and can thus be treated by medicating the patient; as for madness, they have argued, it is a myth. Such is the position of Thomas Szasz in several of his books including *Myths of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*, *The Manufacture of Madness*, and “*My Madness Saved Me*”. In each of these books, he maintains that the idea of madness as a mental illness is a myth.

2.3. *The Myth of Mental Illness and Madness*

In 1961, Szasz published *Myths of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (hereafter *MMI*), in which he first presented his idea of mental illness being a myth, which has since revolutionized how people perceive mad people. In fact the idea is so controversial that the then Commissioner of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene demanded in a letter citing specifically *The Myth of Mental Illness* that Szasz be dismissed from

his university position because he did not “believe” in mental illness (*MMI*, vii). According to Szasz, an “illness meant a bodily disorder whose typical manifestation is an *alteration of bodily structure*: that is, a visible deformity, disease, or lesion, such as a misshapen extremity, ulcerated skin or a fracture or wound” (*MMI*, 11 my bolding). Mental illness on the other hand is none of those. It is personal conduct that causes the “alteration of bodily function” and this is detected by observation of the patient’s behavior and termed ‘mental’ as opposed to the established criterion of other illnesses, which cause “the alteration of bodily structure”. Illnesses are detected by observing the patient’s body and anatomy, and are thus termed ‘organic’ and treated by medicating the patient to restore that part of the body. This is not the case with mental illness. Szasz thus distinguished between the two forms of illnesses, referring to mental illness as “functional”, and bodily illness as “structural”. Szasz went further to insist that “whereas in modern medicine new diseases were *discovered*, in modern psychiatry, they were *invented*. Paresis was *proved* to be a disease; hysteria was *declared* to be one” (*MMI* 12).

The idea of “declaration” of a disease made Szasz wonder about who declares whom as mentally ill and the criteria that this declaration is based on. Over a century since the time of Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), a neurologist and neuropathologist, hysteria has come to be known as a major symptom of madness. Charcot legitimized hysteria “as a medically legitimate illness” (*MMI* 17) because it is believed that people do not “will” it to come to them, that it “happens” to people. Mentally sick people are thus not considered responsible for their “illnesses”. Soon other conditions such as neurasthenia, depression, paranoia, and many more are also regarded as diseases. However, it has also been acknowledged that there are malingerers, people who fake their ‘mental illness’ to escape their situations or avoid certain events, situations, or people or to even avoid performing certain duties in life as well as to avoid

receiving due punishment for their crimes. So we hear in legal cases of insanity pleas in which insanity can be real, assumed, or invented.

Mental illnesses are seen as forms of deviations from behavioral norms. Since behavioral norms are usually set traditionally, culturally, or socially, it therefore means that mental illnesses are traditional, cultural or social inventions. Clinically, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts determine who should be considered mad. However, in most cases, it is the patient or her family who decides that s/he is not behaving according to the norms and traditions of the family or of the society and needs to be checked out. Then s/he is taken to the doctor who asks questions and diagnoses the 'illness' based on the history of the behavior described. Thus mental illnesses are culturally, traditionally, and socially invented. I will expound on the invention of mental illness mostly in Africa after discussing Thomas Szasz's *The Manufacture of Madness* and Don D. Jackson's *Myth of Madness*.

In *The Manufacture of Madness*, (hereafter *MM*) Szasz tries to show how and why the ethical convictions and social arrangements based on the concept of madness as an illness constitute an immoral ideology of intolerance. Still insisting on the inexistence of mental illnesses and that doctors, family, and friends invent the mental illness in a patient, Szasz argues that doctor sometimes become employees of the patient's family, or of the state and can thus diagnose a patient as mentally ill based on whatever they are told as having been the behavior of the patient. Thus, when people cannot stand or tolerate someone's behavior, they can sway the doctor's opinion through their tales and, in that way, succeed in getting rid of the person³⁰. A

³⁰ May I point out here that despite Szasz's argument, a doctor does not merely rely on "hearsay", on what others tell him. He and a team of other medical practitioners will observe,

person's reputation in society can thus be destroyed. Some people also voluntarily accept or even cause themselves to be considered as mad in order to escape an intolerable situation. They can begin to malingering or fake mental 'illnesses'. Szasz also compares the belief in witchcraft and the persecution of witches with the belief in mental illness and the persecution of mental patients (*MM*, xv) just as Foucault compares the isolation and alienation of madmen to that of leprosy people (*Madness and Civilization* 3-8). Szasz bases his idea on what Henry Sigerist, a Swiss medical historian, has written, that "In the changing attitude towards witchcraft, modern psychiatry was born as a medical discipline" (*MM*, xxiii). Sigerist continues by saying that people thought to be witches were actually mentally sick, and that instead of being persecuted for heresy they should have been treated for insanity. As opposed to Szasz's generalizing statement that, "in the fifteenth century, men believed that some persons were witches, and that some acts were due to witchcraft, in the twentieth century, men believe that some people are insane, and that some acts are due to mental illness" (*MM*, xix), I hope to show in chapter three that, the concept of witchcraft in the West today varies somewhat from its concept in Africa, as witches are still considered malevolent. They are not considered as mad. They are feared, excommunicated, and even killed. Hence there are witchdoctors such as the *ndeupkat*, who are believed to have the power to destroy the powers of witches and to exorcise the spirits or demons operating through them. Witch doctors are revered and consulted for different reasons, especially

conduct interviews, and run tests, among other procedures. However, tales and hearsay equally play a great role in establishing history and therefore in the diagnosis. As we shall see in two of the novels, *Juletane* and *Les Yeux du volcan*, the doctors rely heavily on the husbands' tales in making their diagnosis.

to exorcize spirits, be it of madness or of other controlling spirits that cause both structural and functional illnesses in people. However, being also patriarchal, they do have the power to label women as mad or possessed by certain malignant spirits, such as *Rab* or *Mamiwata*, and have them ostracized from the society.

For Don D. Jackson, there is no such thing as madness, but there is a mental disorder. He agrees with Szasz that "mental disorders cannot be diagnosed by such anatomical or chemical means as urinalysis or blood pressure or X rays" (*Myths of Madness* 4). In other words, mental disorders are not determined like other structural illnesses. They are also not healed like other structural illnesses, such as by medicating. To treat a mental illness, as Szasz insists, one needs to have the social or emotional cause eliminated. In "*My Madness Saved Me*": *The Madness and Marriage of Virginia Woolf* (hereafter *MMSM*), Thomas Szasz applies his theory to the life of Virginia Woolf, "alleged victim of manic-depressive illness" (*MMSM*, 1), a Victorian female writer, a genius who was believed to have been touched by fire. Virginia Woolf was believed to be mentally ill because she threw tantrums, refused to sleep with her husband and finally committed suicide. Yet she sanely authored many books. Szasz believes like Shakespeare that the entire world is a stage and that people are assigned roles even before they are born, such as, gender, sex, name, families to be born in, etc. These roles make up people's identities. People play these roles at different times of their life or simultaneously during their lifetime. However, some protest against these roles while others go along and even invent roles for themselves and others.

As for Virginia Woolf, Szasz believes that she was never mad, but chose to appropriate the role of madness that her family, friends, and patriarchal society she grew up in as well as her husband ascribed to her in order to live the type of life that she wants. It was not her desire to

marry or have sex with a man but the society and her family demanded that she do so. Therefore marrying someone she loathed and considered inferior, a Jew³¹, afforded her the opportunity. Her husband also played along with her as Szasz notes because tending to an invalid or mad wife afforded him the opportunity to avoid performing his military duties. So instead of either of them consulting psychotherapists, such as Freud, whom they knew at the time, or Virginia Woolf's brother who was also a psychotherapist, they decided to consult a medical doctor whose business should be to diagnose structural illnesses and not functional ones, thereby medicating her for the wrong ailment. Szasz also maintains that the doctor's diagnoses were influenced by Virginia's husband's tale of the history of Virginia's illness. Eventually, Virginia overdosed on a sleeping medication, which was conveniently left at her disposal even though she was heavily under the influence of drugs. By overdosing (probably by mistake), she committed suicide, which finally convinced everyone of her "madness". There are similar occurrences and roles of doctors in the novels that are studied in this dissertation as I plan to demonstrate.

In chapter four of this dissertation, I shall show how the madness of the eponymous protagonist of the novel *Juletane* is invented as well as how she appropriates the status of the madness assigned to her by her co-wife, her husband's third wife. Under the guise of madness, she is able to avoid playing her wifely roles in the Mamadou household. Though she has some form of education, she does not get a job. She executes a well-orchestrated vengeance on her

³¹ In nineteenth century France, Jews were accused of Usury and the abuse of other privileges that Louis VI had accorded them during their emancipation in 1791. In a letter to his brother Jerome Napoleon, King of Westphalia on March 6, 1808, Napoleon branded them "the most despicable of mankind". (Loyd, 71)

husband by poisoning the first wife's three children, which causes the first wife, Awa to commit suicide. Later she pours boiling oil on the face of Ndèye, the third wife, which causes their husband Mamadou to drive off the road due to so much stress and confusion and he dies in a car accident. Finally, Juletane escapes punishment for all her crimes as she is never tried nor brought to justice, but she is incarcerated in a psychiatric home where she dies. However, I will like to discuss the mythological aspect of madness in the section that follows, and I will discuss it further in chapter three.

2.4. Mythology, Religion, Witchcraft and Madness

In this section, I will investigate the relationship between mythology, religion, witchcraft, and madness in both ancient times (Greek, Roman, and Hebrew) and in Africa. This will help us understand that even though myth may probably be considered as fantastic tales, they are often times built on reality. First, I define *Myth* and *Mythology*, and then, I show how ancient mythology and religion have viewed and described madness. Then, I show how Africans do the same. Finally I show how African mythology might relate to that of myths of Western Antiquity.

The word “myth” is from the Greek word “mythos” (muthos) and means “traditional stories” (Ifie and Adelugba 1). According to the extensive research and findings of J. E. Ifie in a book he co-authored with Dapo Adelugba, *African Culture and Mythology*, from which I will be drawing a lot in my attempt to define myth and mythology, “some scholars still feel strongly, that not all traditional stories can be regarded as muthoi. For example, G. S. Kirk believes that ‘myths are one of the primary manifestations of non-literate culture’ ” (Adelugba 1) hence he believes that as such, myth covers a diversity of subjects, style as well as feelings and thus deduces that the nature, function, purpose as well as origin will also be diverse. In other words, not all traditional stories will be the same and so one should not expect to have a common

definition or a single theory of what a myth is. However, Kirk still asserts that not all traditional stories should be taken as myth. For a traditional story to be a myth, it should have some basic qualities such as “profundity, imagination, other worldliness, universality or larger-than-lifeness” (Adelugba 1-2).

According to Robert Graves, who is one of the foremost mythologists and who is now considered an authority in mythology, myths must have a religious side, as he strongly believes in the ritual origin of myths. He defines myth as:

The reduction to narrative shorthand of ritual mime performance on public festivals, and in many cases recorded pictorially on temple walls, cases, seals, bowls, mirrors, chests, shields, tapestries and their like. [...] their subjects were archaic magic-makings that promoted fertility or stability of a sacred queendom or kingdom – queendom having it seems, preceded kingdoms throughout the Greek-speaking area – and amendments to these, introduced as circumstances required. (*The Greek Myths 10*)

The female is believed to be linked more to creation of life and life is the most essential thing in existence, thus we have the earth mother as the queen of all creation. However as Graves shows in his book, patriarchy takes over, as gods such as Apollo, Zeus, etc. usurp power from their female counterparts. For example, Apollo takes over power from the Priestess of Delphi by slaying the Python at the oracle and declaring pagan worship illegal. Of all the definitions that are out there about myth, I find Stephen Harris’ and Gloria Platzner’s (1985) the most appealing. According to them:

The word myth taken from the Greek *mythos* literally means “utterance,” or “something one says.” Myth is commonly expressed as a story involving gods or heroes. Although some people today may equate myth with falsehood, modern scholars use the term more

respectfully. Myth has a truth of its own that transcends mere facts. Conveying realities that cannot be verified empirically, ancient tales typically articulate a culture's worldview, including its understanding of life's goals and the dangers attending them. In the origin, myth was essentially an oral phenomenon, a product of storyteller's art that was transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation before being written down. In the process of oral transmission, myths became extremely fluid and open to spontaneous change at every retelling. As a result, most myths survived in several different, even contradictory versions. (*Classical Mythology: Imaged and Insights* 8. Also cited in Ifie and Adelugba 2-3)

Though myths may not be believed to be true based on lack of verified empirical evidence, they transcend mere facts and they show how people view the world. Now I will show how ancient people viewed madness mythically as well as how Africans do the same. In doing so, I will show how both relate to one another.

2.4.1 Ancient Mythology: Demons/ daimonics (goddesses- *Lyssa*, *Rabies*, *Furor*, *Irae*, and *Mania*)

Earlier, while attempting to define madness, I mentioned that madness can refer to certain mythological personae such as goddesses, demons, or daimonics in Greek, Roman as well as those found in African mythology who are believed to possess people and cause them to behave in an abnormal way. Such goddesses include *Lyssa* or *Rabies*, which is a goddess or daimona of violent rage. When she afflicts animals, she is called *Rabies*; she is *Furor* when she is expressing or causing fury and blind rage; *Mania* when she is expressing or causing mania and madness in people or other gods and goddesses. She is also *Ira (irae)* when she is expressing anger, causing those she is afflicting to act out anger, fury, and madness etc. In the epigraph at the beginning of

this chapter, Hamlet blames his action of wrong doing towards Laertes on his madness, which he places outside of himself and calls it his enemy. He uses this insanity plea to exonerate himself of his criminal actions, which resembles the present day use of insanity pleas by people to avoid being prosecuted for their crimes. Other such examples of madness-inducing entities include the *Sirens* who in the *Odyssey* are portrayed as seductresses who lure sailors to shipwreck and destruction through their singing. They are linked to waters. There are also the “greek triads of the darker kind ... the *Erinyes*,³² goddesses of divine vengeance and justice (called the *Furiae* by the Romans) and the terrifying Gorgons,³³ whose gaze turned men to stone” (*The Witches*

³² In Greek mythology the *Erinyes*, also known as the avengers and infernal goddesses, pursue and persecute criminals. They are usually invoked by an oath hence they punish people for swearing false oaths as well as for breaking their oath as in the *Iliad*. According to Burkert (1985), they are "an embodiment of the act of self-cursing contained in the oath" (198). According to Virgil, they are three in number: *Alecto* (unnameable) who appear in the *Aeneid*; *Megaera* (grudging), and *Tisiphone* (vengeful destruction). The heads of the *Erinyes* wreath with serpents like those of Medusa of the Gorgon sisters and their eyes drip with blood. Sometimes they are depicted as having wings like a bat or a bird and as having the body of a dog. They correspond to the *Furies* or *Dirae* in Roman mythology. When the Titan Cronus castrated his father Uranus and threw his genitalia into the sea, the *Erinyes* emerged from the drops of blood. Other accounts claim that like *Lyssa*, they emerged from *Nyx* (night).

³³ The Gorgon sisters are Medusa, Sthenno, and Euryale. They are winged creatures and of the three, only Medusa is mortal and it is her head that Perseus fetched at the order of King Polydektes of Seriphos.

Goddess 31). These mythological beings will be further developed and discussed in chapters three, six, and seven.

2.4.2 African Mythology: Witchcraft: Ancestral Spirits, *Rabs*, and *Mamiwata*.

These entities and goddesses are today merely treated as antiquity in Western literary tradition of ancient myths. However, in African mythology, there exist today, possessive spirits who are believed to have the power to bless and to harm men and who are still very much believed in and even worshipped. They can take the form of beautiful women and can be spirit brides. Sometimes, they are considered to be ancestral spirits which possess people and make them behave in abnormal ways. Such spirits include the *Mamiwata*, which is more like the Western *Mermaid* or *Siren*. In Senegal, there are also *Rabs*, *Tours*, *Seytané* (*Satan*), *Mama Coumba* (the name for *Mamiwata* in Senegal), and *Jinnees*. For this particular work, I will limit my study to *Mamiwata*, *Rabs*, *Sirens*, and *Jinnees*. This is because, *Rabs*, *Siren*, and *Jinnees* are expressly used to refer to a major character in one of the novels I am studying, *Un Chant écarlate*. During an exorcism ritual, *Coumba* is invoked and sacrificed to when Ma Fatim is believed to be afflicted by a *Rab* she has neglected. *Coumba* is called the queen of the waters. It is important that we have a clear understanding of what these terms and entities are, and how they operate, to enable us to understand what using them as labels for a character means.

According to their usage and application in Mariama Bâ's *Un Chant écarlate* (*Scarlet Song*), *Rabs* are "spirit-brides, who are said to be as beautiful as the moonlight, with huge luminous eyes and long silky hair that hung down their backs as far as their knees" (10). Like *Lyssa* (*Rabies*), who is described as "a winged wielder of snakes" (*In and Out of the Mind* 163) as are the *Erinyes*, *Rabs* are also winged creatures. This is evidenced in Mariama Bâ's description of the main character of *Un Chant écarlate*, Ousmane's relationship with a perceived

Rab when the author wrote that “He (Ousmane) can have a little respite and enjoy the discreet company of this invisible friend who **winged** her way to him so fast when he called her! He had all the more excuse for a little respite as he was certain never to see her again” (16 (my bolding)). The word *Rab* is probably derived from *Rabies (Lyssa)* just as *Seytané* is a deformation of Arabic *Shaytan* (Satan). According to Lilyan Kesteloot, in her book, *Introduction aux religions d’Afrique*, among the Wolofs of Senegal, *Rabs* are attached to royal families (88-92). For the Khalom people the *Rab* is a great python considered to be a great mother and they offer sacrifices to her in her pit. This echoes the Oracle at Delphi, whose priestess and totem is a python that is later slain by Apollo to usurp the oracle’s powers. Among the Lebu, there are many *Rabs* and they are believed to live both on land and in water (82-87). Cows and other animals as well as milk and other food items are sacrificed to them so that they can bless the harvest and multiply the fish in the water. However, it is believed that when they are angry, that fish become scarce, that marine accidents multiply, and there is an increase in sicknesses and death. In Senegal, religious practices are syncretic as those who practice the Islamic faith also worship these genies, and religious leaders such as marabouts perform rituals including both beliefs. In other words, native ancestral worships and rituals are incorporated into Islam and survived the islamization of the people.

Mamiwata is also a wielder of snakes, like *Lyssa*. She looks foreign and expresses Western notions of beauty. Her features include fair skin, long hair, and blue eyes. Sometimes, she has Indian looks or dons Indian accessories. Sometimes she is portrayed combing her long hair and looking into a mirror, which she uses to seduce men. She is beautiful, sensuous, and can be very jealous and destructive when transgressed or disobeyed. She, like *Lyssa* in the form of *Irae* and *Furores*, is also often pluralized into *Mamiwatas*. *Mamiwata* literally means water

mother(s). She is believed to marry men as a spirit bride (just like the *Rab*) and bless them with wealth; however, she gets jealous when they try to marry human wives, as she does not share her men. She can then drive them crazy and take back all the blessings she gives them, as well as make them sick or kill them. She is celebrated throughout most of Africa and its diaspora and is often portrayed as a mermaid, a snake charmer, or both.³⁴ Her representation has been highly influenced both by its original imagery as well as by European mermaids, Greek *Sirens*, Hindu goddesses, and even Christian and Muslim saints. Many believe that she also has the power to heal, hence, there are many shrines dedicated to her where people consult her priests and priestesses through whom she speaks (just like the oracle at Delphi, which interestingly has a python – a snake), and gives messages to her worshippers. Her shrines are usually close to water.

Mamiwata is also believed to possess women whom she wants to serve her. She intoxicates them and renders them ecstatic and hysterical during their ministrations just like Lyssa did to the *Maenads* who worshipped Dionysus. In their frenzy, they act like mad or insane individuals and can actually be harmful and destructive to others until the possessive spirit leaves them. Those who refuse to serve her or who are rebellious against her also suffer the same fate, as she is believed to drive them insane until her spirit is either exorcized or they accept to serve her.

2.5 Madness as Resistance

It is noteworthy that these possessive spirits and daimonics of violent rage, fury, and madness are all female personae. It is also worth noting that these originated under patriarchal systems. As has been shown, African mythology is profoundly influenced by foreign ideas due to

³⁴ See Henri Drewal (2008): 60.

foreigners, who infiltrated the continent with the advent of colonialism. The foreign look of *Mamiwata* and *Rabs* and their connection with water can well be attributed to Western and other foreign religious beliefs. It could also be attributed to foreigners coming and going via the waters that surround the continent. If this be the case, all these stories can be linked back to the early Greek and Roman mythologies such as we find in Homer and Aeschylus who wrote the first epics and tragedies that are handed down to us. These authors are men and they always cast women in a negative and evil light. Whenever a male protagonist does something wrong, the blame is always attributed to a woman, thus making the man look like a victim instead of holding him responsible for his actions. Ruth Padel in her book, *In and Out of the Mind*, asserts

Violence is generally female and not-self, madness, its most extreme example, inevitably has a female form and source. Homer and tragedy have two nouns for madness, both feminine, both daemonically personified: *Atē* and *Lyssa*. *Atē*, the older personification, means in Homer a disastrous state of mind: inner confusion, delusion, ruinous recklessness, shading into ‘disaster’, which this recklessness can cause. (162)

Stephen Diamond insists, in his book, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Psychological Genesis of Violence, Evil and Creativity* that “one of the most persistent forms of demonization in human history has been the misogynistic demonization of women by men. Man has always projected some evil upon womankind – seeing in her his own ‘negative anima’ or ‘shadow’” (43). He goes on to add: “For most men, women symbolize sexuality, and sexuality has long been linked to fate, temptation, sin, and evil. In the biblical Garden of Eden, it was the satanic snake - that daimonic symbol of libido, eros, or raw sexual energy –, which convinced the first female, Eve, to taste the “forbidden fruit” (45). Thus men’s fear of the female, of the “unknown”

about women, has cast women in a negative light, brainwashed women into buying into the same negative idea about themselves, and succeeded in controlling them.

As is seen in the lives of mythological gods such as Zeus as well as in African cultures, men believe that they are polygamous in nature whereas women are constrained to monogamy and forced to share the same man. In the Islamic faith, men are allowed to marry up to four wives provided they treat them equally. Gods and men are free to do whatever they like and women are ignored, left to wallow in bitterness and expected to submit and support men in all things. Unfortunately, just as we have seen *Lyssa* used as an agent to inflict madness on the *Maenads*, fellow female creatures equally attack and hurt one another for the benefit of a male. In African cultures where women are brainwashed into accepting male dictates, they become the agents of patriarchy and are the ones who also inflict pains, stigma, violence, and shame on other women. In polygamous homes, women vie against each other for the attention of a man. They rival, plot, connive, and even kill one another for men's attention.

As can be deduced, there is an important connection between anger, rage, violence, and madness. As Stephen A. Diamond asserts, "most violence – 'senseless' or otherwise – stems from the fiery human emotions of anger and rage" (9). Rage, he maintains, "in its purest and most primitive form, is an instinctual, defensive reaction to severe stress or physical threat, an autonomic response to serious threat, anxiety, or stress" (9). For Darwin, as noted by social psychologist Carol Tavris, in her book, *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*, rage is "the motivation to retaliate" (Diamond, 11). It is the emotion resorted to when one's privacy, dignity, rights, or person have been violated. Thus "anger, rage, and violence may be very appropriate reactions to intolerable violations" (Diamond, 19) but they can be "healthy, positive, adaptive reactions to the inherent frustrations, stress, and the banality of modern life" (16). Through them,

one is able to make a statement and bring about changes to one's situations. As for Gianni Scalia, cited by Tcheuyap in an article entitled, « Folie et création romanesque en Afrique »,

[...] à la limite, la raison se “renverse” radicalement, se pense comme *limite de la raison*, exprime la fureur et l'horreur de la raison défaite par la nature ou société « méchante », féroce, atroce. C'est l'horreur décrite par Sade, c'est l'accusation et la condamnation des fous. *On se fait fou* pour s'opposer à la société devenue rationnellement folle [...]. (Scalia 149)

Therefore, taking a position against society or fighting the injustices of society means turning or becoming mad. When a woman seeks her rights or protests against her husband, she is automatically considered mad, because she is not expected to have a voice or speak her mind. After a long period of having one's voice suppressed, when it finally bursts forth, it comes out in hysteria, which is now considered a bonafide symptom of madness. Wirth-Cauchon in her book, *Women and borderline personalities disorder: symptoms and stories*, states that “It is important to read symptoms as signs not only of individual women's suffering or dis-ease, but also of the culture – its contradictions, tensions, and oppressions” (200). So again, she is suggesting that it is cultural contradictions, tensions and oppressions that drive women insane. In other words, a mad woman cannot be cured by medicating the person alone, but by eradicating the cultural causes as well. Susan Bordo agrees with the same conclusion as she too in her approach to analyzing anorexia as the “crystallization of culture” sees psychopathologies that develop within a culture not as anomalies or aberrations but as characteristics of what is wrong with the culture. Therefore, symptoms of madness should be read as keys to cultural self-diagnosis and self-scrutiny (Bordo, 141).

Cixous and Clément, also see the complex negotiations of experience that women's madness represents in their analysis of women's madness as a form of resistance; while appearing to collude with the disciplinary networks of power within which they find themselves. Women's madness also represents a form of unconscious resistance. However, in the case of Juletane, I argue that her madness is a conscious form of resistance. She appropriates the madness ascribed to her by her co-wife Ndèye, and plays within its parameters to achieve her aim such as avenging herself against her husband and Ndèye. She also avoids being part of the oppressive society in the sense that she does not play her expected roles within and according to society's dictates. She has others serve and provide for her needs as well as do the household chores.

Not everyone reads madness as resistance. Some see it as the ultimate surrender and as a sign of hopelessness and helplessness in a woman's situation. For example, Marta Caminero-Santangelo's critique of women's madness as a form of protest is concrete proof of this notion. She disapproves of feminist literary readings of women's madness as potentially liberating. Instead of valorizing women's madness, she argues that madness is a sign not of protest or resistance, but of women's ultimate powerlessness. The point at which women lose their minds is to her the moment of capitulation to male power. Caminero-Santangelo challenges the long-held feminist belief that historically women have utilized insanity as a means of cultural resistance. She insists that women textually represent insanity as a loss of voice, rather than a liberating experience. In the novels that I am studying, however, women have a voice. Juletane resorts to writing, which is considered therapeutic for oppressed women. She speaks her mind whenever she wants to. For example, she explicitly tells her husband to send away Ndèye, whom she considers the source of their problems. As for Mireille de la Vallée in *Un Chant écarlate* (1981)

by Mariama Bâ, she speaks her mind and stands for what she believes in. As a Western woman, she considers herself liberated. She does not want to live life like her mother who has no voice. However, she finds herself in a situation in which she could neither go forward nor backward owing to her child who is neither black nor white. Considering her rebellion to her father in the way she marries her husband, she cannot just move back home with a child that her parents will despise. Her madness saves her in the sense that under that influence, she kills her child, which ensures that she will not have to deal with his issue again, she nearly kills her husband, and is finally flown back to France without having to face the consequences of her crime like Medea, another powerful female character in mythology.

2.6 Understanding Women's Madness and Violence

Concerning female possessive spirits such as the *Rabs*, *Mamiwata*, and other goddesses and women as being capable of both blessing and destruction, Janet and Stewart Farrar writes in *The Witches Goddess*:

One of the major weaknesses of patriarchal thinking is that it debases the concept of the creative polarity of complementary opposites (male/female, light/dark, fertilizing/formative, intellect/intuitive and so on) into mere conflict of good and evil, of God and the Devil [...]. In fact, this internal polarity of the Goddess, which is intrinsic to her cyclical nature, is the key to all life and all renewal. Life is a process, not a state. The Goddess is both the womb and the tomb; she gives birth, she creates form, she nourishes, and she reabsorbs the outworn preparatory to its reshaping and rebirth. If she were not the destroyer, she cannot be the renewer [...]. That is the fundamental mistake. The devouring Dark Mother is not evil; she is our friend, if we are not to stagnate and thus

truly die. She urges us forward to new life, and to her other self, the Bright Mother”. (18 - 19)

In many cultures, in Antiquity, the West, and Africa among others, woman has been compared to the earth. Just as the earth creates lives, produces nourishment for the lives that take their roots in and roam its surface, and also has the responsibility of reabsorbing the lives that it has created, women also have the power to create and to destroy. And, as the movement of the earth also causes ripples on the surface of the deeps as well as eruptions in mountains when it has to deliver its lava, which causes destruction, so woman’s emotions can erupt and have a violent and destructive effect. Woman is always arranging life and making provisions for it. She creates and protects, however, in her bid to protect, she can take away and reabsorb the life that she has brought forth, thereby sending it back to the source and away from the destruction that lurks outside of her confines.

This is demonstrated in *Un Chant écarlate*, where we see Mireille de la Vallée take a drastic action to prevent her child who is neither accepted by her husband’s people nor by her own people due to his being a mulatto, thus neither White nor Black, from suffering from such stigma and identity crisis by taking his life. The child has already lost his name as her mother-in-law, Yaye Khady, would not even refer to him by his given name, but referred to him by the derogatory name of “Gnougoul Khessoul” (neither white nor black) and her husband does not even spend time with him. At his naming ceremony, the atmosphere is like a funeral lacking the pomp that goes with naming ceremonies in the African society where he belongs, whereas his half-brother, born to an African mother, Ouleymatou, has a well-planned, well-orchestrated, and lavish naming ceremony.

When Mireille realizes that her husband has abandoned her and her son for an African wife, she realizes that she has made a huge mistake. She realizes rather late in a moment of self-reflection that her parents are right and knowing her father, she knows that her son will not be accepted in her French family. Staying on in Africa in a loveless marriage is no longer going to work for her and she knows that her child will suffer the worst kind of fate if she leaves him for her husband. Faced with this dilemma, she is torn apart and she “loses her mind” momentarily. She feels herself pushed against the wall and she decides that it will be better to end it all and spare her child a horrible fate. Therefore, in a bid to save him, she overdoses her child on sleeping pills, allowing him to die without suffering in his sleep, as she prepares to end her husband’s life as well. Her husband has made her so many promises to spend his entire life with her, but he not only cheats on her, but also takes advantage of her by using up her entire savings to set up his new wife in a lavish and cozy home, leaving Mireille destitute. The feeling of betrayal leads her to act out her anger.

In *Juletane*, having lived and suffered many injustices, lies, and betrayal at the hands of her husband and co-wife, Ndèye, who is the one who “invented” her madness by branding her a “mad woman,” and having been condemned to a physical barren state, she believes that Awa’s third child is her own child. She develops a huge love and affection for him and always sees him as the child she lost in a miscarriage. Her “ascribed madness,” which she appropriates, provides her the opportunity to silently and quietly observe the lives of African men and women. For example, she adores and respects Awa, her husband’s first wife, because of her gracefulness, self-control, and gentleness. She sees her as being unfairly treated by their husband, since she is the only wife who is actually physically fertile in the household and who is able to give him three children, yet, she is never recognized, nor appreciated. She is the only person in the entire

Mamadou household who is nice to Juletane, yet, Juletane poisons her children, which make her to commit suicide. Why will Juletane do such a thing? Indeed, Juletane is mostly concerned about the children. She clearly does not want them to suffer the same fate that their mother as well as Juletane herself are suffering at the hands of African men. She decides to liberate them from suffering the same fate. However, she has not envisaged Awa's reaction to the death of her children or that Mamadou will die in a car crash as a result of the stress he suffers from all these events. So she is eventually robbed of her final victory, which is to have Mamadou read her journal in order to let him know how much she has suffered at his hands.

2.7 The Subjectivity of Madness.

As one can see, trying to answer the question, of whether madness is a fantasy, a myth, or reality is one that requires some serious probing. The question is also one that might not have a definite answer as to what constitutes madness from culture to culture. Madness is a phenomenon that is fluid since it is not a structural disease, but a functional one. Thus, determining its reality in a person becomes subjective. However, one thing we know is that since Antiquity there has been a tendency for people to distance themselves from their mad behavior by blaming their actions on external forces such as spirits, goddesses, the moon or other things. These things are usually assumed to be feminine in nature, hence the belief that madness is feminine.

In this chapter, I have defined madness as an invention and shown how madness is constructed culturally and through mythology. I have also shown how patriarchal authorities have used feminine imagery to represent madness and how, when women try to protest against what is considered the norm, they are automatically suspected of madness. I have equally shown how women are tricked into becoming agents of such oppressions and labeling against other

women. Finally, I have shown how medicating a presumably mad woman cannot be effective unless the cultural cause of her state is removed.

In the next chapter, I will examine how Africans treat Western women as the ‘other’ in interracial marriages through such mythological constructions and beliefs as *Rabs* in Mariama Bâ’s *Un Chant écarlate*. So far, we have shown that *Rabs* and other genies are believed to take on a woman’s form to operate. In *Un Chant écarlate*, I will show how Mireille de la Vallée is ascribed the role of *Rab* by her husband’s family and how she is eventually “exorcized” by abandonment and alienation and how she finally suffers a melt down during which she commits infanticide and near homicide. However, I will insist that this moment of insanity also saves her from her situation.

Chapter Three

Crossing Borders: Responding and Reacting to Domestic Violence in Interracial

Marriage in Mariama Bâ's *Un Chant écarlate*

“Like some insidious virus, insanity ... invades the mythology of woman, finding there a semiotic fund that it may use for the purpose of self-definition.” (Philip Martins, cited in Ussher, 1)

“Frequently, notions of *self* refer to that which is essential, authentic, real, true, genuine, and that requires the elimination of the Other, the foreign, the not-I, the corrupt, the fake. Self refers to patterns of identity and sameness, while Otherness refers to difference. (Minh-ha 371; Ana Mariella Bacigalupo 33)

In chapter two, I defined madness and discussed the various ways that madness can be constructed culturally, mythically, and religiously. I said that in Africa as well as in other parts of the world, abnormal behavior is usually attributed to external forces that are believed to have the ability to possess humans and make them do things that they would otherwise not do. I also discussed Szasz's and Donald D. Jackson's ideas that madness is not a sickness, but an idea and an invention which a patient, family members, doctors, or legal officers can invent to describe behavior. I mentioned too that some malingerers appropriate madness and use it to perform violence and get away with their crimes. This chapter studies and analyzes the perpetration of psychological and emotional domestic violence/abuse and the responses and reactions to them within interracial, intercultural, and international marriages in post-colonial Africa as depicted in Mariama Bâ's 1981 novel, *Un Chant écarlate*. In doing so, I will look at the role of community in perpetuating domestic violence when Africans 'other' Westerners through cultural or religious inventions and beliefs such as the *rab*, *tour*, *jinnee* (djinn/genies), or *sirens* (*mamiwata* or *mermaid*) spirits. I further study how belief in or ignorance of the existence of these beliefs can affect an interracial marriage. I also look at the role of madness in the novel.

3.1 *Self and Other*

In Africa, spirit worship and belief is part of everyday life, as people believe that external forces such as ancestral spirits as well as other malignant spirits control destiny. According to Masquelier “[t]he visible and the invisible are necessarily complementary in African understandings of reality” (99). While Africans believe that there is a world of good and bad or evil, there is sometimes not a Manichaean clear-cut world of good versus evil. In many African beliefs, good and bad can be two faces of the same coin, in other words, good and bad lodge within the same being. If a spirit is disobeyed, it can change its character. Nevertheless, humans still find ways to counter their effects and control. The process of exorcism that traditional herbalists, marabouts, witch doctors as well as Islamic³⁵ and Christian religious leaders practice is believed to drive away the presence of the malignant spirit and stop its effect and control over humans. Thus, these spirits can be both beneficial and harmful and when perceived to be harmful, certain rituals are performed to exorcise them. These possessive spirits include marine spirits such as *rab*, *mamiwata*, and *sirens* as well as others which are not necessarily marine spirits and they include *tour*, *jinnée*, and *ancestral* spirits among others. Hence, the chapter will show how by constructing the Western woman as a marine spirit as is done in this novel where the female protagonist is believed to be a *rab*, West Africans assume the self, which is, as Bacigalupo puts it, the “essential, authentic, real, true, genuine, and that requires the elimination of the ‘Other’, the foreign, the not-I, the corrupt, the fake” (Bacigalupo 33). This way, they perpetrate abuse. They inflict psychological and emotional abuse on the *other* who is the *outsider*

³⁵ Among the Sufis only

and cause her to react. Because a whole group of people usually commits this form of abuse, it becomes communal.

3.2 Defining Limits and Terms:

Though *Mamiwata* worship and belief are practiced in most of sub-Saharan Africa and the African diaspora in the Caribbean, Central and Latin America, and though the novel in question is based in Senegal, a French speaking country in West Africa, I will limit or extend my analysis to the whole of West Africa where *Mamiwata* worship is predominantly practiced. West Africa is made up of thirteen countries out of which one is Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking - Angola), five are Anglophone, and seven are Francophone. The novel under study is originally published in French and later translated into English. Most of my quotes will be derived from the English translation *Scarlet Song* or subsequently denoted as (SS). However, I will first define some of the important terms and spirits that will be discussed in this chapter.

3.2.1 Jinnees (Djinn)

The term *jinnee* is of Arabic origin (*Djinn*). One can easily think of the genie in “Aladdin” of the *One Thousand and One Arabian Night’s* tales. Between the seventh and ninth centuries, a good deal of Africa came into contact with Islam and though Senegal is later colonized by France, 95% of Senegalese practice Islamic religion and are therefore influenced by Arabic beliefs and culture. The *Jinnee* are “invisible beings” (Cited in Nathan 26) capable of both good and evil and have the power to occupy the bodies of humans and animals and often take on the shape of natural phenomena such as whirlwinds. They can control the psychological functioning of a person, a family, or a community. According to Tobie Nathan³⁶, the word *Djinn*

³⁶ Ed. Roy Moodly and William West.

relates to *janna*, which means womb or uterus (*hystera* in Greek), thus it is associated with the earth and to fecundity as they are believed to “arise from women and spring forth from gardens” (27). “The plural of *djinn*, *jenoun*, or *jnoun*, yields *junan* or *jenan*, which means “madness” (27). The Muslim Mende people of Africa refer to them as *jina* and *mamiwata*, the African *siren* and *mermaid* is considered a female *jina* or spirit by the said Muslim Mende people. (Boone, 50, 170.) However, *mamiwata* spirit is a blanket term for all possessive marine spirits, and is therefore plural. I prefer to work with the term of *mamiwata* in this dissertation and I will show the striking resemblance of the *mamiwata* and the *rab/jinnee* as used in the novel in question. *Jinnees* are used to simply mean spirits and they can operate in any medium whatsoever.

3.2.2 *Rabs (Lyssa, Rabies)*

As I showed in chapter one, *Rabs* allude both in sound and character to the goddess or spirit of madness *Lyssa* in Greek and roman mythology which when in animals is called *Rabies*. *Rabies*, whether considered a virus or a possessive spirit can cause its host to behave abnormally and in a violent way. *Rabs* themselves according to the African cultures where they are believed in, such as among the Wolof and the Lebus, are spirit wives who bring riches and greatness to their earthly husbands; however, they become very aggressive and destructive when their husbands are unfaithful to them. They then have the power to drive such people mad and make them to behave in ways unintended.

In *Un Chant écarlate*, *rab* is used interchangeably with *siren* and *jinnee* to describe the female protagonist, Mireille de la Vallée. *Rabs* are said to have fair skin, blue eyes, and long hair and when Yaye Khady meets Mireille for the first time, she is positive that Mireille is a *rab* since she fits the same description. Yaye Khady believes that she had escaped from her world and come to marry her son and so she believes that nothing good will come out of the marriage.

3.2.3 Sirens

Next in my definition of terms is *Siren*. *Sirens* are daughters of the river god *Achelous*, but they are also considered to be winged creatures like *Lyssa*, *Rabs*, and the *Erinyes* because Helen in beseeching them for help in Euripides' *Helen*³⁷, referred to them as such. *Sirens* are also believed to be seductresses who lure mariners to destruction by their songs. In fact, in the *Odessey*, Odysseus had to be tied to the mast of his ship in order to prevent him from running to the *Sirens* and to destruction. However, "the *Sirens*, though they sing to mariners, are *not* sea-maidens," Harrison (198),³⁸ has cautioned; "they dwell on an island in a flowery meadow" (198). In Marie de France's *Lanval*, as well as in other Anglo-Norman, Celtic and Arthurian literature, this island is called *Avalon*. Lanval's mistress who bears close resemblance to a mermaid because of her wealth and beauty, and who out shone earthly kings and queens eventually took

³⁷ "HELEN: Oh, these are great sorrows. I launch upon and great is the pity they merit!

What manner of lamentation should I utter, what inspiration seek for my tears, my dirge, my anguish? Ah, me! Come you *Sirens*, winged maids, virgin daughters of Earth, come, I pray, bearing the Libyan flute or pipes or lyres to blend with my lament, with tears to suit my cries of sorrow, rief matching grief, song matching song! Oh, send me your music to harmonize with my laments, music of death, so that down in her palace of night Persephone may receive from me as my tribute a tearful hymn for the dead and departed! (*Heracles and Other Plays by Euripides* 162. trans. John Davie, 2002.)

³⁸ See Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*.

Lanval away to her queendom in *Avalon*. Ousmane refers to Mireille as a *Siren* claiming that she has lured him with her *Siren* song, but that he is escaping unharmed.

3.2.4 Others

Another marine spirit that can be likened to the *Siren* is the *Melusine*, one of the daughters of *Pressyne* who is cursed with becoming part serpent from the waist down on Saturdays as a punishment for the role that she and her sisters play in taking revenge on their father without their mother's consent and involvement. *Melusine* is also a winged creature just like the *Siren*, the *Rab*, and *Lyssa*. *Melusine* and her sisters are raised in *Avalon* (Smith et al, 150; Flori, Láinez, Boria, and Maddox). The Lady of the Lake (Holbrook) also of the Arthurian literature is said to have taken Lancelot to *Avalon* where she raises him before presenting him to King Arthur's court. King Arthur's sword, *Excalibur*, is said to have been forged in *Avalon* and given to him by the Lady of the lake, who also takes his body and the sword back to *Avalon* at his death. In this regards, *Sirens* are like the African *Mamiwata*. There have been tales of *Mamiwata* adopting people (van Stripriaan 325) and disappearing with them into rivers, seas, and oceans and of those people reappearing after many days and sometimes even years. She is believed to make her lovers wealthy but she is also known to afflict them as well when they disobey or are unfaithful to her (Higgins 105-106, 113, 117; Winters 50-64).

Beside marine spirits, Mireille is also likened to the *Furies*.³⁹ *Furies* are the roman goddesses of vengeance and they are the Greek equivalent of the *Erinyes*. Like them, they are believed to be three – hence- the plural form *Furies*. The three *Furies* are Alecto, Tisiphone, and

³⁹ When in Mireille's moment of insanity, which jolts her husband back to reality, he refers to her as Fury.

Magaera and they are the children of Gaia and Uranus. They are believed to have emanated from a drop of Uranus blood that fell to the earth. Virgil places them in the underworld where they live and torment evil doers and sinners. Other Poets also portray them as torturing sinners on earth. Though considered cruel, they are also believed to be very beautiful and winged creatures. So they likewise share many features with *Lyssa (Rabies)* and the *Mamiwata*.

These analogies support my claim that African mythology is influenced by Roman, Greek, and early Western Antiquity mythologies. In the next section, I expound on possessive spirits such as the *Rab*, *Jinnie*, and *Mamiwata* spirits. I also discuss how Bâ constructs a Western woman, as personifying these spirits, which supposedly possess Ousmane, the male protagonist and they are exorcised from him. However, at the end, his love for Mireille completely dies and Mireille in a moment of insanity commits infanticide and almost homicide.

3.3 Rab, Jinnie and Mamiwata Spirit Worship and Exorcism

Rabs, *Jinnees*, and *Mamiwata* spirits are just some of the spirits that are believed to have the power to possess people and use them as media to carry out their desires and wishes. More often than not, spirits are invincible and need media to operate, hence, they possess other entities such as humans, animals, and even trees. Africa practices pantheism, therefore there are many gods and goddesses in existence and there are many shrines and oracles. However, among the gods and goddesses, some are more prominent. In the realm of possessive spirits, the *Rabs*, *Jinnees*, and *Mamiwatas* stand out. Of these three however, *Mamiwata* is known throughout Africa and its diaspora as a whole. Madhu Krishna describes *Mamiwata* in his article “Mami Wata and the Occluded Feminine in Anglophone Nigerian-Igbo Literature” as “a general name used for the hybridized river and sea goddesses popularized across Africa and the African diaspora in the nineteenth century” (2). *Mamiwata* goes by other local names according to the

language of the people. For example, among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, she is locally called *Idemili* which means Lady of the water. Among the Lebu of Senegal, she is also called Mama Coumba and Queen of the water. In the next section, I will take a closer look at these three possessive spirits as well as how they can be controlled or how someone can receive deliverance from them through spirit exorcism.

3.3.1 Spirit Worship

The term *Mamiwata* (water-mother or bride) is the blanket name for a pantheon of water goddesses in Africa. It is the term for most possessive marine spirits that are believed to take on human forms and marry people or just marry them in the spirit realm, and control them. They usually become aggressive once any of their prohibitions are transgressed. They are controlling spirits that can bless and favor the possessed as long as the latter remains faithful and submissive to the spirit. I am particularly interested in showing how the description of *Mamiwata* reflects Western notions of beauty, showing therefore that *Mamiwata* is a way Africans construct the Western “other.” I am also interested in how, after Ousmane is told by a native healer that he is possessed by a *Rab*, he does not know whether it is the ‘spirit’ of Mireille or Ouleymatou (his African second wife) who has possessed him, but he is told that after the exorcism, that he will feel himself detach from the person with the possessive spirit. However, after the exorcism, he realizes that he feels nothing more for Mireille, whereas, his feelings for Ouleymatou intensified, indicating further that Mireille is truly believed to be the one with the *Mamiwata* spirit.

According to several authors who have researched the *Mamiwata* phenomenon, a great deal has been written about the spread of *Mamiwata* veneration throughout sub-Saharan Africa (See, for example, Szombati-Fabian and Fabian; Cole; Salmons; Drewal; Bastian; Gore and Nevadomsky, Masquelier, Kramer). Most of this material, however, has emphasized the visual

component of *Mamiwata* devotion focusing on what we might call *Mamiwata* style, a syncretic mixture of West African iconography and Western commodity fetishism. In this literature, and in parts of West and Central Africa as a whole, the spirit is described in her appearances to humans as a beautiful woman with 'fair' skin, large compelling eyes, and long hair. Sometimes her gender is ambiguous, but is more likely to make herself known as a feminine person.

For Henry John Drewal who has carried out extensive research on the worship of *Mamiwata*:

In their worship of Mami Wata, a water spirit believed to be 'foreign', African peoples from Senegal to Tanzania take exotic images and ideas, interpret them according to indigenous precepts, invest them with new meanings, and then recreate and re-present them in new and dynamic ways to serve their own aesthetic, devotional, and social needs. In so doing, they evaluate and transform external forces, using them to shape their own lives. ("Interpretation" 101; "Performing" 160⁴⁰)

Thus the 'Other', in this case, foreigners, particularly, colonial migrants are re-invented, objectified, or reified as higher beings, worthy of worship. Just like *Mamiwata* worship, Ousmane and Mireille's relationship tends to flourish most when they are away from each other. Ousmane will spend his whole days dreaming about her. However, in *Un Chant écarlate*, Bâ turns the tables somewhat in that the othering of the Western woman lacks the worship flavor, the good side of the *Rab* (read *mamiwata*) is downplayed and more focus is placed on its spirit exorcism. Ousmane's mother refuses to accept or see any good in her daughter-in-law and does

⁴⁰ In "Performing the Other: ...", Drewal starts : "In their religious practices involving the water spirit *Mamiwata*"

everything in her power to oust her from her son's life, from physically frustrating her to consulting charlatans. This forms a counter-discourse to what is already taken as a given, such as the binaries of good and evil, black and white, where black is evil and white is good; even along racial lines. Instead of an object of worship, the *mamiwata* becomes a purely evil spirit that should be exorcised. Instead of the prototypical idea of blacks being the mad ones, it is a white woman who runs mad in the novel.

3.3.2 Spirit Exorcism

In Africa, certain rituals are performed in order to exorcise a malignant spirit. Some spirits which are considered ancestral are easily calmed down by appeasement. These spirits register or express their discontent with what the living are doing by afflicting them with sicknesses, famine, poor harvest, etc. Once these predicaments are linked to ancestral spirits, they can be appeased and the troubles will stop. However, in the case of the *rab* and *mamiwata* spirits, more serious rituals must be performed to get them to leave. *Ndeup*, which is a traditional exorcism dance and is not particularly encouraged by Islamic leaders is performed especially among the *Lebu*. The participants include the traditional leader and initiates. According to Bâ, it is now used “as a healing trance incorporated into modern psychiatric practice” (SS, 170). Lilyan Kesteloot affirms this as true in her book *Introduction aux religions d’Afrique* (84-86). According to her the *Ndëp* (Ndeup), is the most spectacular of all *Lebou* (Lebu) religious rituals and as such, has attracted the attention of the psychiatric department of Fann hospital in Senegal. Doctor H. Collomb has also written many articles about these rituals in special psychiatric reviews (Kesteloot, 84; SS 145) The *Ndeup* is a highly efficient therapeutic ritual used to care for mental sicknesses:

des cas de paranoïa, ou les psychoses provenant de frustrations familiales ou sociales, interprétées par les maladies comme attaques de sorciers ou colères de *Rab*, peuvent être valablement traités par le *Ndëp*. Pour la Faculté, ce rite favorise la réintégration d'un individu qui manifeste ses problèmes psychologiques par des crises de type épileptiques, des paralysies, des anorexies, des mutismes prolongés, des délires, etc. (84-85)

During the ritual, the healer (*la Ndëpkat*) and his or her aides or initiates slaughter an animal favored or demanded by the *Rab* or spirit in question and the afflicted person is soaked or prostrated in the blood for hours. For those who the *Rab* has chosen as followers, the initiation of the neophyte is followed by frenetic dancing, during which other people, mostly women, also fall into a trance, convulse, and contort themselves, and also perform frenetic dances which the *Ndëpkat* controls to prevent them from going into total madness or orgy (86).⁴¹

As one can see, it is the person who is believed to be possessed by a malignant spirit that undergoes this cleansing and deliverance ritual to set him or her free from the controls and afflictions of the spirit. However, malingerers also take advantage of this ritual to attract sympathy and attention to themselves by making people believe that they are under a spiritual attack and thus causing their families to pay for these expensive rituals. As this diagnosis is also subjective and cultural, it is not based on scientific evidence, it can therefore be constructed and manipulative as friends and families can label someone as being under the attack of a *Rab* thereby forcing the person to submit to this ritual. In *Un Chant écarlate*, during a fight between Ma Fatim, the oldest wife of Pathé Ngom and the newest wife, Maïmouna, perceiving that the

⁴¹ Again, this ritualistic dance resembles the frenetic dance of the *maenad* described by Euripides in his work *Bacchae* or *Bacchantes*.

younger wife is gaining the upper hand and is going to embarrass her by beating her in the fight, Ma Fatim quickly faints and becomes motionless, so that her children have to carry her into the house. Her sister comes immediately and diagnoses her as being possessed by a *Rab*, insisting: “You know perfectly well that if an angry *Rab* hadn’t interfered, Fatim could have smashed three Maïmounas. Fatim has been neglecting the *Rab* and devoting all her time to her business and he’s getting his own back. We’ll have to organize a *ndeup* to appease him” (SS 142). To “keep up appearances” (SS 142), Ma Fatim has to go into hiding until the day that the *ndeup* is performed and “Mama Coumba, the Queen of the Waters” (SS 142) is appeased. Ma Fatim is suddenly energized and she snaps out of her affliction in a miraculous way.

Another case of exorcism in the novel is when Ali, Ousmane’s friend, believing that Ousmane is possessed by a *Rab* or has been given a love potion by Ouleymatou, also takes him to see an *ndepkat*. “A swelling in the shape of two horns indicated that Ousmane had been bewitched by someone, at whose beck and call he now was” (SS 146). The officiant confirms that a woman is bringing him bad luck and performs an *ndeup* for him. However, at the end of the ritual,

They got back into the car and Ousmane took the wheel. He drove with great care. The purifying bath had not driven Ouleymatou from his mind. He was troubled by the desire to see her. The need to hold her in his arms was overwhelming ... He no longer saw Mireille as the goal of his desire. Mother Fatim, who had been put back on her feet thanks to the *ndeup*, had been more fortunate than him. (SS 147)

Ousmane believes and knows that he is no longer in love with his wife, Mireille, but his friend believes that he is out of his mind and subjects him to a *ndeup* ritual. The result suggests that Mireille is truly the *Rab* who has possessed him and that her spirit is exorcised during the ritual.

This is because the *Ndepkat* did not specify which woman is bewitching him and bringing him bad luck. Instead of the ritual making him to dislike Ouleymatou, he rather no longer see Mireille as the object of his attention.

3.4 Bringing it all together in *Un Chant écarlate*

Mariama Bâ's *Un Chant écarlate* presents a post-colonial case of an interracial marriage between a black man, Ousmane Guèye, and a white woman, Mireille de la Vallée, which goes awry and in fact becomes tragic due to the couple's ideological divergences and external influences. While the two might well be madly in love with each other, their relationship lacks depth and a clear understanding of each other's socio cultural, and historic backgrounds, as well as convictions. As Jeanne-Sarah de Larquier puts it, "Le conflit entre Mireille et Ousmane est plus complexe qu'il ne paraît et qu'il provient de deux idéologies mutuellement exclusives: une Négritude radicalisée pour Ousmane et un égalitarisme oublieux des différences pour Mireille" (1092). Hence, while Ousmane maintains his insistence on not losing his African identity, Mireille proceed to adopt Ousmane's without completely denying her own identity.

There are a few things that are worthy of note in how Mireille and Ousmane's relationship come to be, in its evolution and in its deterioration. Ousmane meets Mireille just when he is rejected by Ouleymatou because of the fact that he "sweeps the house, fetches buckets of water and smells of dried fish" (SS, 10). The need to prove that he is a true "Guèye, of pure Lebu stock" (10) and a descendant of a great Guèye who is strong enough to seduce a *Rab*, determines him to befriend Mireille whose physical qualities resembles that of a *rab*. Mireille has silky golden hair, and long lashes over grey-blue eyes. Like a *Mamiwata*, Mireille first appeared like an invisible apparition and a creature with wings when Ousmane is in difficulty during an exam and she helps him out. Later, she disappears for a period of three months during

which time Ousmane agonizes and dreams of his “princess” (16), hoping for the day when “he can have a little respite and enjoy the discreet company of this invisible friend who *winged* her way to him so fast when he called her” (16). Hence, to counter his rejection by Ouleymatou, Ousmane can only aspire to find someone whose beauty and exotism Ouleymatou cannot equal. Is it then love or infatuation that Ousmane feels for Mireille or is he just looking to prove his manhood and worth in order to revalidate and redeem himself and his ego?

Ousmane’s relationship with Mireille can be compared to some medieval characters such as Marie de France’s *Lanval*, heroes who are rejected by people only to be loved by spirit beings, who enrich them. These spirit beings, however, eventually become jealous of the heroes’ involvement with real humans and either take them away or destroy them. However, Bâ deconstructed this in her own tale by adopting and incorporating African cultural and ritualistic way of dealing with such, which is having the spirit exorcised, in other words, having Mireille go mad so that she destroyed her only child while Ousmane escaped from her without life-threatening injuries.

Another way that the author deconstructed her own tale is by making Ousmane to refuse to go and study in France where he might have learn more about Mireille’s culture, thereby enabling him to know and understand her more. Instead, he chooses to visit France only to marry Mireille and bring her back to Senegal. Just like his medieval antecedents, “Ousmane was entranced. His fairy princess was more bewitching than ever, here in her own environment” (SS 63). But, unlike these antecedents, he manages to bring his princess back with him to his home country and land instead of staying in her own environment with her. Unfortunately, just like a *Mamiwata*, *Jinnie*, or *Rab* who cannot survive very well on land, Mireille finds it hard to adapt

to her new culture even though she makes efforts to change by adopting her husband's religion and denying her own family and friends.

Now let us return to the fundamental issues in Ousmane and Mireille's relationship. I have mentioned the fact that Ousmane is his mother's errand boy, which is frowned upon by many, notably his father, Jibril Gueye, and Ouleymatou. But this only proves the amount of influence and power that his mother, Yaye Khady, has over him. Yaye Khady is a powerful woman who manages to keep her husband all to herself in a culture where men marry several wives. In fact, Ouleymatou's father has more than four wives whereas "Yaye Khady is the only 'lady' in [her] compound! She's the only one in charge in her own yard. There, she's the mistress of all she surveys..." (SS 8). Thus she keeps her son under her control and makes him run errands that other boys are not allowed to run in order to effectively run her household. She makes him do chores that are shared by several women in other households and she puts all her hopes in the fact that Ousmane will marry a wife who will come in and take over the chores while she continues to reign over the household as Queen.

For this reason, Ousmane revalidating himself is essentially crucial to establishing the fact that he is not a *gôr djiguène*, which literally means 'man-woman'; a homosexual and transvestite often employed as 'housekeeper', sometimes as procurer, or in other menial functions. It is therefore very crucial to Yaye Khady to get her son a good African wife, mostly since he is not showing interest in girls except for his veneration of the picture of Mireille whom Yaye Khady believes to be a "film star" and whom she dislikes from the very beginning, as she indignantly exclaims when she hears about his son's marriage to Mireille:

A *Toubab*⁴² can't be a proper daughter-in-law. She'll only have eyes for her man. We'll mean nothing to her. And I who dreamed of a daughter-in-law who'd live here and relieve me of the domestic work by taking over the management of the house, and now I'm faced with a woman who's going to take my son away from me. I shall die on my feet in the kitchen. (SS, 66)

To Yaye Khady, Mireille is a “*Jinniee* who had escaped from its own world” (67). To her, Mireille is a “she-devil’ who uses her magic to bewitch and seduce her son. She therefore decides that “she would defy this she-devil, with the golden hair of a *Jinniee*” (SS, 74). She decides that she will not allow herself to be supplanted or let herself be destroyed.

So, while Ousmane marries Mireille de la Vallée to assert himself, Mireille on the other hand marries him to prove a point to her family and culture. She never for one day stops to question where Ousmane is coming from or what his background is like. She discusses her family without reservation, while Ousmane treats his family as a secret because of the inferiority complex that he feels in regard to Mireille. He keeps comparing his childhood to that of Mireille, while Mireille, having no skeleton in her cupboard, divulges everything.

3.5 Differences between Mireille and Ousmane

From the study thus far, it is obvious that Mireille and Ousmane share very little in common. The differences between them are overwhelmingly many. Among them, one can count socio-cultural differences, ideological differences, and gender differences. These differences

⁴² *Toubab* is how Senegalese people refer to White/Western people. The feminine form is *Toubabesse*.

make it difficult for them to really bond, force them apart, and cause deep dissatisfaction that caused Ousmane to seek solace in Ouleymatou.

3.5.1 Socio-Cultural Differences:

Among the socio-cultural and socio-historic differences that exist between Ousmane Guèye and Mireille de la Vallée are their own lived experiences, such as their childhood, family status and national differences. While Ousmane is born to a poor war veteran who is wounded while fighting for France (Mireille's country), and has pretty much been raised in a shack where he has to help his mother run errands, Mireille on the other hand is the daughter of a French diplomat. She is also from a bourgeois family and she has maids and servants who help around the house. All she ever does is to bring her parents breakfast in bed out of fondness, not that she is required to do so. She is the only child of her parents, and thus, always has more than enough. This is not the case with Ousmane because he has siblings and lots of cousins as well as hut-brothers, to whom, he considers himself indebted and attached to for life.

While Ousmane grows up observing African rituals, dancing to the frenzy of the beats of tam-tam and talking drums, Mireille grows up listening to Mozart and other classical music. She is raised in the Christian faith, which preaches monogamy, whereas Ousmane is a Muslim and his faith allows him to marry up to four wives if he can treat them equally. The other difference in their childhood and growing up, which I think is very important if not the most important because it is usually overlooked in stereotypes, is that while Mireille grows up under a very authoritative father and a weak, docile, and submissive mother. The reverse is the case in Ousmane's family as his father is a wounded war veteran who can no longer work because he has a bad leg. Ousmane's father lives on his humble pension that he receives quarterly. He devotes himself to his Muslim faith, which he gently tries to inculcate in his children. He never

insists on anything but gently tries to persuade people, while he resigns to the will of *Allah* when things do not go as he expects them to. For instance, when he receives Ousmane's letter announcing his marriage to Mireille, though he is devastated, he simply tells his wife that they must accept it as the will of God. He never makes efforts to change anything. But his wife Yaye Khady, on the other hand, has to have her way in everything. She makes most of the decisions in the family and goes against her husband's wishes for peace as she stirs trouble wherever she goes especially in her son's family.

Therefore, coming from such different family backgrounds, we see Mireille who is intoxicated by her feelings for this black young man, whom her father hates so much, turn around and revolt against her father's authority. Her father's authority is representative of the colonial or neo-colonial powers that oppress, exploit, and reduce black men to "a thing", a term, Mireille's own father uses to refer to Ousmane. Her father thus becomes the enemy and she proceeds to fight against all that he represents. Ousmane on his part also sees colonial and Western ideas as enslavement. He therefore does not want anything to alter his African identity in any way and he refuses to be assimilated.

3.5.2 Ideological Differences

Even before they get married, Ousmane clearly states, as he makes his decision to marry Mireille, that "I will never split myself apart for you, I will never lose my identity for you" (SS, 39). While with his friends, he screams it to the high heavens that he is all for the general doctrine of Negritude, for returning to one's roots and keeping the door open. In this regards, he sounds ambiguous because it shows that he is selective in the doctrine of Negritude he wants. Keeping the door open can usher in a whole lot of things that are not part of one's roots. According to J.O.J Nwachukwu-Agbada in his article, "One wife Be for One Man': Mariama

Bâ's Doctrine for Matrimony", Mariama Bâ demonstrates in her works how modern African men are selective in which Western ways they choose. For example, they denounce all things African, including traditions and customs, but when it comes to polygamy, they revert back to ancient African and traditional ways. They go for modern wives and later revert back and crave the rusticity of uncivilized, uneducated, and unsophisticated wives. While this may be true for Mariama Bâ's *Une si Longue Lettre*, it is not completely so in *Un Chant écarlate* where Ousmane is fixed in his desire not to lose his African identity. While as Nwachukwu-Agbada observes, African men choose what Western ideologies to select, what Ousmane looks at is which Negritude ideologies to select, hence his recommendation to keep the door open.

Ousmane sees colonial and Western ideas as enslavement. He therefore does not want to alter his identity in any way and he insists on Mireille adopting the Islamic faith before marriage. In fact, the revolution of 1968 serves to expose each person's core convictions. Though both participate actively in the revolutions in their respective countries, they each revolts for completely different reasons.

For Mireille and other French students who already have basic amenities such as electricity, water, good roads, and accommodation, all they are revolting for and rebelling against is the French authorities. Workers under Marx and Lenin's ideas are clamoring for better working conditions and remunerations. They are also demanding for a better condition for immigrant workers, especially African immigrant workers. In this regard, they choose to represent and be the voice of Africans. But in Senegal, students are clamoring for basic infrastructure such as accommodation and transportation so that they can get to school from their interior and far away villages. Most of all, they want neo-colonialists to be removed and they are

equally demanding for foreigners to leave. According to Andy Stafford in his article “Senegal: May 1968, Africa’s Revolt”:

Famous posters appeared in Paris in 1968 that linked the revolt with the former colonies (“brisons les urnes colonialists [Smash colonialist vote-rigging]; Travailleurs français immigrés unis” [French immigrant workers united], etc.) (129) [...] At the same time, Senegal’s revolt expressed a critique of neo-colonialism with respect to France and the wider international community. Much of the political content of the demands from the movement was phrased in anti-French, anti-foreign language. ... Senghor⁴³ used it to suit his divide-and-rule policy; the students isolated their own struggle by lining up (behind Senghor, ultimately) to decry France and its “neocolonial project. (133) [...] Thus, May ’68 in France had an enormous effect – politically, social, economic, and ideological – in parts of Africa. It was a conscious strategy by Senghor to isolate the movement, precisely by blaming outside influence. In other words, Senghor played his last card: using a rhetoric of “The Third world against Europe”, of the new Senegal fighting against French neocolonialism, [and] his tactic worked. (134)

Thus, while Senghor, one of the fathers of Negritude, blames France for the problems in Senegal, in France, French students demand for immigrant rights. But Mireille in particular is rebelling specifically against her father and the masculine/patriarchal authority that he represents.

⁴³ Leopold Sedar Senghor is the president of Senegal at this time. He is also one of the founding fathers of *Negritude* with Léon Gontran Damas of the French Guiana and Aimé Césaire of Martinique in the Carribean. However, Cesaire’s Negritude is a movement that demands for the return of Africans to their roots.

Later, Ousmane will also want to subject her to similar patriarchal and masculine authorities. In other words, Ousmane the Black man is pitched against Mireille the French/Western woman. Without knowing it, they are fighting against each other, even before they begin their marital journey. Each is set in his or her own ways. While Mireille accepts the Muslim religion, it is not with conviction. She has already lost faith in her own Christian religion since she sees it as oppressive. Therefore, accepting the Islamic religion makes no difference to her. As she writes to Ousmane “The religion that you wish me to adopt is neither more nor less suited to me than the one you ask me to abandon. But I will accept it ... without enthusiasm” (SS 41). Digging in her heels, she goes on to write: “I am determined to retain my own identity as far as essentials are concerned – the values that I believe in, the truths that light my path” (SS 41). Each person’s insistence on sticking to his or her identity without rubbing off of the other or blending, causes their marriage to become an ideological battle ground.

As I have already mentioned, their relationship is superficial as neither of them takes any time to actually study the other and their convictions deeply. Their attraction is purely physical and like the proverbial seed that fell on a rocky soil, their relationship is not deeply rooted enough to stand the test of time.

3.5.3 Gender Differences:

Concerning gender differences, Bâ’s counter-culture discours is seen in my earlier discussion of how Ousmane’s mother is the one in control in her household and even continues to wield her control and manipulative influences in her son’s household in contrast to the man being the head and in control. Faced with his mother, Ousmane is docile and effeminate, but he wants to be the man in his own household. He is not about to let another woman, and in this case, a wife to control him. He is going to do whatever he choses. He even states it when he tells his

friends that he can marry another wife if he so desires since his wife is also a Muslim in principle.

On the other hand, Mireille is not going to let herself be treated like her mother who lives in fear while anticipating and satisfying every whim of her father's. For her, marriage is about partnership. She seeks equality in marriage and in everything. Here is what Bâ writes about her: "As her husband's equal, she would challenge his ideas and decisions when these did not suit her. She considered she was his partner in the marriage. She would discuss matters on an equal footing. She honored her obligations but she knew her rights and stood up for them" (SS 148), and the list goes on and on. Unfortunately, she is dealing with people who clearly see her as a *Jinniee* and as a usurper who should be driven out. Mireille knows nothing about how she is perceived and even if she had known, she can probably not have taken them seriously. I say this because of her superficial belief in things. She is so overly confident in herself and in her abilities that she does not even take time to learn about African women and their seductive skills. So when it finally dawns on her that she has lost to an "uneducated" African woman, she cannot believe it, and she loses her mind, kills her child and attempts to kill her husband.

For Ousmane, when Mireille is not able to submit completely to him, and when Ouleymatou starts running after him again, he weighs the odds and realizes that in Ouleymatou, he will have everything he ever wants. An African woman who will worship and venerate him, who will allow him to be himself without criticism and with whom he shares the same heritage and history. The old flame that he feels for Ouleymatou rekindles and he falls headlong in love with her without considering the consequences. Explaining it to his friends, he says:

I love Ouleymatou, that's the important point. I realize now that she has always been the only woman I have ever loved and that I never stopped loving her. What about Mireille?

What was I trying to prove? My manhood? My ability to attract someone so far above me? I was excited by the difficulty of the enterprise. Once I had reached my goal, I felt the immense void that separates me from Mireille. When I rediscovered Ouleymatou everything became clear. The truth may seem outrageous ...". (SS. 136)

He also sees Mireille as a *Rab* and is willing to accept only the wealth that she can provide. Hence, he depletes Mireille's money and uses it to set up Ouleymatou in a home of her own, while ignoring the fact that a *Rab* as well as a *Mamiwata* and other *Jinnees* do not like to share.

As I mentioned earlier, *Jinnees* are spirits that are able to appear in human and animal forms and have supernatural power over humans. There are different types of *Jinnées* such as the *Rabs*, which are considered invincible, supernatural creatures of either sex, who can protect or harm mortals, particularly by 'possession' of those who neglect or displease them. When such happens, they are considered evil and jealous spirits who destroy their lovers. *Mamiwatas* are also believed to have the power to bless and to destroy their lovers when they get jealous. Mireille who is seen as all these entities put together ends up murdering her own child and trying to murder her husband when she finds out that Ousmane is being unfaithful to her. By doing so, she disproves Ousmane's daring exclamation when his friends warned him of what might be Mireille's reactions if she finds out about Ouleymatou that "Oh! I was led astray, when I was a young student, stuffed with reading and slogans, bewitched by the novelty of the *Siren*-song that lured me on! The trap-door opens up. I am escaping unharmed" (SS 150). He does not quite escape unharmed.

J.P. Little in his article "The Legacy of Medea: Mariama Bâ, "*Un Chant écarlate*" and Marie Ndiaye, "*La Femme changée en bûche*,"" draws a parallel between Euripides Medea and Mariama Bâ's Mireille de la Vallée in that both of them are strangers in their countries of

marriage. Both of them are taken advantage of, and cheated on by their husbands. Both eventually commit infanticide because both feel trapped by their children and feel that leaving them alive with their fathers while they go back to their countries of birth will constitute worse fate for the children than dying. So while Medea kills her two children, Mireille kills her only child. However in describing both women, Little's claim that Mireille's beauty is not described as a *Siren*-like beauty as that of Medea is erroneous because, she is indeed referred to as a "*Siren*" by Ousmane himself. Her beauty is described as that of a *Rab* and she is indeed called a *Rab*. Medea used magical powers as well as got help from her grandfather, *Helios* (the sun) who sent her a chariot to bear her and the bodies of her dead children away and out of Corinth. She also got help from King Aegeus, the king of Athens, who offered her protection in Athens. For Mireille, she like Medea has burnt bridges with her family as she insulted her parents by her choice of a husband. She too is eventually taken away by officials of the French embassy in Senegal.

3.6 Mireille, the Rab: Communal Perpetration of Violence

As we have seen through the course of this chapter, Mireille, the western wife of an African man, is considered a *Rab*, a *Jinnie*, as well as a *Siren*. The blanket term for these spirits is *Mamiwata* in West Africa. These spirits are capable to bless and to destroy. They are madness incarnate, and the duality of their nature makes them quite formidable and forces that one cannot deal with in Africa without spiritual aid. Mireille is not described as being possessed by these spirits, but as being them, thus as derailing her husband from his society's cultural normalcy. By everyone maintaining and treating Mireille as a malignant spirit, the community becomes her abusers as well. For example, her mother-in-law, Yaye Khady, and her husband's friends would all come and mess up her home, pushing her to react even though they would not allow their own

homes to be messed up the same way. She makes several efforts to meet her in-laws half way, but they make no effort whatsoever in her favor or consideration. Given all these frustrations, she finds herself at a loss as to what to do when she finds out that her husband has depleted the money in her her bank account, and abandoned her for another wife, she therefore loses her mind.

As we have seen, *Jinnie* comes from the womb or springs from the garden (earth). The earth creates, supports, and takes back life at its expiration just like the womb bears and supports life. It is from the earth that man is made if we go by the biblical as well as coranic accounts of creation, the earth bears and supports man and all of creation by growing the food that man eats as well as supporting him in all entireties. However, turmoil within the earth also causes lots of disasters that make the earth to erupt, to pour out its hot furious content which destroys life and yet, it is to the earth that the human body returns. Drawing from the writings of Janet and Stewart Farrar:

The Goddess (earth, but read woman) is both the womb and the tomb; she gives birth, she creates form, she nourishes, and she reabsorbs the outworn preparatory to its reshaping and rebirth. If she were not the destroyer, she cannot be the renewer [...] That is the fundamental mistake. The devouring Dark Mother is not evil; she is our friend, if we are not to stagnate and thus truly die. She urges us forward to new life, and to her other self, the Bright Mother.” (*The Witches Goddess* 18 - 19)

Thus, not only does the earth create lives and produce nourishment for the lives that take their root in and roam its surface, it also has the responsibility of reabsorbing the lives that it has created at their expiration. Woman, like the earth to which she has been likened, is always arranging life and making provisions for it. She creates and protects, however, in her bid to

protect, she can take away and reabsorb the life that she has created, thereby sending it back to the source and away from the destruction that lurks outside of her confines. Just like earth's movement has the power to cause ripples on the surface of the deeps as well as eruptions in mountains when it has to deliver its lava, which causes destruction, so woman's deep emotions can cause her to erupt and be violent, giving her the power to both create and destroy.

In *Un Chant écarlate*, we see Mireille de la Vallée take a drastic action to prevent her child, who is neither accepted by her husband's people nor by her own people due to his being a mulatto, thus neither White nor Black, from suffering from such stigma and identity crisis by taking his life. The child has already lost his name as her mother-in-law, Yaye Khady, would not even refer to him by his given name, but refers to him by the derogatory term of "*Gnouloule Khessoule*" (SS 164) (neither white nor black) and her husband does not even spend time with him. At his naming ceremony, the atmosphere is like a funeral, lacking the pomp that goes with naming ceremonies in the African society where he belongs, whereas, his half-brother, born to an African mother, Ouleymatou, has a well-planned, well-orchestrated, and lavish naming ceremony.

When Mireille realizes that her husband has abandoned her and her son for an African wife, it occurs to her that she has made a huge mistake. She realizes rather late in a moment of self-reflection that her parents have been right and knowing her father, she knows that her son will not be accepted in her French family. Staying on in Africa in a loveless marriage is no longer going to work for her and she knows that her child will suffer the worst kind of fate if she leaves him for her husband. Being faced with such dilemma, she is torn apart and she loses her mind momentarily. She feels herself pushed against the wall and she decides that it will be better to end it all and spare her child a horrible fate. Therefore, in a bid to save him, she overdoses her

child on sleeping pills, allowing him to die in his sleep without suffering. She then prepares to end her husband's life as well. Her husband has made her so many promises to spend his entire life with her and has not only cheated on her, but has also taken advantage of her by using up her entire savings to set-up his new wife in a lavish and cozy home, leaving Mireille destitute. The feeling of betrayal leads her to act out her anger. According to Thomas Szasz :

The term 'madness' refers to a potpourri of emotions and behaviors, expressed verbally or more often non-verbally, composed of a variety of ingredients, any one of which maybe dominant in any one case. The ingredients are anger, aggression, fear, frustration, confusion, exhaustion, isolation, conceit (megalomania, narcissism, self-dramatization), cowardliness, and difficulty getting on with others". (*My Madness Saved Me* 12)

Though all these are evidently the cause of Mireille's break down, she is not the cause of them. It all happens because of racial profiling, unattainable demands, and her ignorance of certain cultural beliefs as well as of how her in-laws perceive her. This ties exactly to the saying that knowledge is power or as the French philosopher Michel Foucault (*Mental Sickness and Psychology*) says it and paraphrased by Ussher (2011), "power is irrevocably connected to knowledge which in turn has a regulatory function." (4) Thus, because of her lack of knowledge of the cultural and religious beliefs of her husband's people, she ignorantly believes that she has everything under control. She trusts her husband completely and when she eventually gets that knowledge, it fuels the power of her madness.

As has been argued by many authors, madness in a person can be an indication of a societal insanity since, most of the time, madness is culturally and socially constructed to label deviants from what the society and culture consider "normal". In the case of Mireille, who is from another culture quite vaguely known to her husband's people, her husband making no effort

to try to understand her, and the entire community taking a stand against her, clearly indicates that something is wrong with the society. Ousmane eventually recognizes this when Mireille finally goes mad as the author writes:

She was trembling. She hiccupped. Fear triggered off a belated surge of reason in Ousmane's mind. A light of humanity finally pierced the thick darkness. A feeling of nausea and self-disgust flooded over him. *It was he who had been mad and had contaminated Mireille.* Only madness can explain his blindness and his actions. [...] had he thought of what he was doing? Unthinkable to take a beautiful young woman, intelligent, virtuous, hungry for affection and offering love in abundance, *and turn her into a fury. And what fury!* Her fury⁴⁴ that was still shrieking insults at him... (SS 165 – italics mine).

By making Ousmane, who is representative of this culture, accept that he is the one who is mad owing to what he has done, Bâ acknowledges that it is the society that is of unsound mind. She indeed accepts that it is the society that constructs people's madness and so madness is relative and culturally constructed.

3.7 The Changing Notion of Self

I end this chapter with the quote by Minh-ha: "Frequently, notions of *self* refer to that which is essential, authentic, real, true, genuine, and that requires the elimination of the Other, the foreign, the not-I, the corrupt, the fake. Self refers to patterns of identity and sameness, while

⁴⁴ This is the only time that Mireille's madness is placed outside of her. *The Furies* is another name for the *Erinyes* who are goddesses of vengeance. They avenge murder and broken oaths among others. I will expand more on them in chapters six and seven.

Otherness refers to difference” (33). As history has shown, usually Whites see themselves as the authentic, the real, the good, and the self while other races are seen as the others, the outsiders, the evil, and the fake. However, such is not the case in *Un Chant écarlate*. Mariama Bâ’s counter discourse makes the Africans represented in this novel the authentic self and the western Mireille becomes the other, the fake, and the evil. By equating her to a *Rab*, *Jinnie*, and *Siren*, she is subjected to emotional and psychological abuse by an entire community, by her husband’s immediate family as well as by her husband. Hers is a clear case of calling a dog a bad name to hang it. Thus the notion of self is fluid and subjective. Every *self* is authentic and no one *self* is the definitive *self*. Hence the one who is the *self* at this point may be the *other* at the next point depending on the point of view and on the narrative voice and perspective.

In the next chapter, I will explore some of the complex constructions of madness in women in Africa and how women appropriate their ascribed madness to perpetrate violence on their abusers, in Myriam Warner-Vieyra’s *Juletane*. Juletane like Mireille is a foreign wife and is forced into a polygamous situation because her husband refuses to tell her that he has a wife back in Senegal when he marries her in France. When she acts out her anger by refusing to sleep with her husband any more, he goes and marries a third wife who brands Juletane a mad woman. Unlike Mireille who makes a great effort to be accepted by her in-laws, we will see in Juletane a defiance against the culture and an eventual retribution on the entire family.

Chapter Four

Staging Madness: Construction and Myth of Madness in *Juletane* by Miriam Warner

Vieyra.

“When one woman strikes at the heart of another,
She seldom misses, and the wound is invariably fatal.” (93)
— *Dangerous Liaisons, The Film: A Screenplay* by Christopher Hampton (1988) based on the
novel by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*.

In the preceding chapter, I examined how African’s ‘other’ women through such mythical, cultural, religious and traditional constructions and beliefs as the *Rab*, *Mamiwata*, *Siren*, *Jinnie* and *Furies*. However, due to the foreign features associated with these beings and daemons, they fit the description of Mireille de la Vallée, the French wife of the Senegalese man, Ousmane. What interests me the most in the novel is how the case of spirit possession is dealt with traditionally and religiously through exorcism. However, even after Ousmane undergoes the *Ndeup* ritual to exorcise the spirit of the spirit bride who has possessed and marries him in the spirit world, with the hope that he will stop loving Ouleymatou, his African wife, it is surprisingly Mireille that he loses all feelings of affection for. But her insanity finally jolts him back to his senses, which makes to conclude that the author, Mariama Bâ believes that it is the society represented by Ousmane, that is mad and that Mireille’s madness is culturally, traditionally, mythically and religiously constructed. In chapter three, I turn to Myriam Warner-Vieyra’s *Juletane* where I intend to show that Juletane, the eponymous character’s madness is both a construction and a myth.

4.1 Setting the Parameters: Elements of the Construction of *Juletane*’s Madness.

The novel *Juletane* tells the stories of two Caribbean women living in Senegal: Juletane, marries a Senegalese man, Mamadou, and is deceived into a polygamous marriage situation,

while the other, Helène, works in Senegal and is planning to marry a Senegalese man. They never really have the chance to meet each other, but Helène, a social worker attached to the psychiatrist hospital where Juletane is treated for insanity is given Juletane's diary after her death and through the diary, she learns of the life, experiences, sufferings, actions, and death of Juletane. Through Helène's reading of the diary, we learn of how she destroys her husband's family in retaliation for the wrongs done to her. Juletane's experience also serves as an elixir for Helène, causing her to take a critical look at her own life and the decisions she makes. Helène has been in a nearly similar situation to Juletane's, but has made contrary decisions to those of Juletane. Other important characters of the novel include Awa and Ndèye, Juletane's co-wives.

Many people have critiqued Myriam Warner-Vieyra's novel, *Juletane* and concluded that Juletane's madness is as a result of her abuse and neglect at the hands of her husband and her co-wives, especially, Ndèye. It is Ndèye who labels her a mad woman (*Juletane* 40), refers to her as *toubabesse* (*Juletane* 42), which Juletane considers one of the worst insults she ever received from her⁴⁵, and the only one to attack her physically (*Juletane* 49 - 51) in the Mamadou family. These actions of Ndèye are what trigger the vengeance that she executes on the entire household⁴⁶. Many also judge Awa innocent of all that happens to Juletane, casting angry looks

⁴⁵ "This insult wounded me deeply and increased my antagonism towards Ndèye. I knew that from that day on, I would feel nothing but contempt and resentment towards her" (*Juletane* 43).

⁴⁶ "I cannot just accept a slap in the face. If I do not retaliate Ndèye will quickly make it a habit to hit me whenever she feels like. Until now, she was satisfied to make vane threats. ... I am going to become more than spiteful. Ndèye will pay very dearly for the two years of insults

and accusing fingers at Ndèye, but I plan to dig deeper as I approach Juletane's madness construction from many angles. There are direct, indirect and remote elements that all factor in the construction of Juletane's madness. The direct ones are elements in her immediate environment such as direct abuse and neglect as well as her self-alienation and effacement that she imposes on herself. The indirect elements include her own history and the history of her people, and the remote ones include elements of African and Caribbean cosmology and mythology such as witchcraft, sorcery and superstition that might have played into her psyche.

First, I hope to show that admittedly, Mamadou's neglect to inform her of his first wife and her daughter is devastating and part of the direct causes of her madness, but is it enough to lose her mind especially as she realizes at the very beginning of their marriage when she could have made a life away from Mamadou? Secondly, I will show how her madness is historically constructed through a look at the history of violence, infanticide and other crimes, among the Caribbean female slaves. Thirdly, I will show how naming and labeling can constitute a psychological construction of madness as names and labels alter a person's psyche and cause him/her to become what s/he is named or labeled as in the case of Ndèye labeling Juletane, a mad woman. Fourthly, I will demonstrate how sorcery and superstition, which play a great role in African cosmology and religion, including the African diaspora features in the construction of Juletane's madness; this is a remote element in the complex construction of her madness that I am trying to unravel. Finally, the choice of three wives contesting for a husband's attention

that I have just been through in her presence without saying a word in reply. That slap in the face was the last drop that made my cup of passivity overflow and transformed my patience into a raging torrent" (*Juletane* 50).

alludes to the mythology of the three goddesses. I will look at how the Mamadou wives are representative of the three goddesses and phases of womanhood. All these will prove that Juletane is a malingerer, who, consciously or unconsciously, voluntarily or involuntarily, appropriated the madness ascribed to her by her co-wife. She soaks in all the negative aspects of the history and beliefs of her people, in order to carry out a horrendous act of violence against her husband in her quest for self-assertion, recognition and control and in her quest for a life of myth.

4.1.1 Does The End Really Justify The Means?

In her article, “Geographies of Pain: Captive Bodies and Violent Acts in the Fictions of Myriam Warner-Vieyra, Gayl Jones, and Bessie Head,” Françoise Lionnet defines literature as:

A discursive practice that encodes and transmits as well as creates ideology, as a mediating force in society: it structures our sense of the world since narrative or stylistic conventions and plot resolutions serve to either sanction and perpetuate cultural myths, or to create new mythologies that allow the writer and the reader to engage in a constructive re-writing of their social contexts. (132)

Using Harriet Jacobs *Incidents In The Life of a Slave Girl* as a starting point⁴⁷, Lionnet analyzes the works of the above authors to prove that, just like Harriet Jacobs, they also chose characters who go against the norm of what is acceptable in a bid to gain their freedom. Thus, for them, all

⁴⁷ in which “Jacobs stresses the right of her character, Linda Brent, to choose to act in a deliberately calculated way with a single purpose in mind: freedom, even if some of Linda's actions (sexual activity outside of marriage) are socially unacceptable, and morally reprehensible to her readers” (132).

that matters is freedom, and “the end clearly justifies the means, even if the means are morally suspect” (132). In *Juletane*, we see this clearly demonstrated through a female protagonist who deliberately appropriates the label of madness in order to perpetuate horrendous, unthinkable and unspeakable acts against her husband in a bid, not to gain her freedom from him like Jacob’s Linda Brent, but to gain his attention and to control and solely possess him. In *Juletane* we see a complex construction of madness as we are shocked at the violence that Juletane proves to be capable of. The author uses narrative and stylistic conventions as well as plot resolutions to sanction and perpetuate such cultural myths as, sorcery and infanticide as well as create new mythologies through the construction of Juletane’s madness. The author thus engages the reader in the creation of these myths but also allows him or her power to see that the protagonist has other options, thus showing that she does not sanction the decisions taken by the protagonist.

4.1.2 Defining Dependence: Putting All of One’s Eggs in One Basket:

The novel tells the story of a young Guadeloupian girl, Juletane who meets and falls in love with a young African man in France. Their relationship blossoms to the point that when the young man, Ousmane, finishes his education and announces that he is leaving for his country, all Juletane wants to do is follow him back to Senegal. This desire is so strong that Juletane has to ask him his plans for her when he is not saying anything yet. To this, he tells her that that he is taking her back to Senegal and asks her to marry him. A few months later, they are married and make plans to return to Africa. On the homebound ship, another Senegalese girl who knows Mamadou from Senegal, makes a comment, which causes Juletane to start questioning Ousmane about his family and he admits that he was married before coming to study in France and that he has a five year old daughter. Juletane cannot stomach the news and refuses to reconcile herself to the idea of sharing her man, but lacks the courage to leave him, even though she describes

herself as being heady and independent. Yet everything she does proves the contrary, everything proves how deeply attached and dependent she is to things and people. First all, she is very dependent on her godmother, that even after her death, she continued to frequent her old friends and to dress as she would have wanted. When she eventually decided to get herself some summer cloths, she would not cut her hair for fear that her godmother would come from her grave and hurt her as her godmother once threatened to do. Later, she would transfer her dependence to Mamadou and cannot fathom a life without him and finally, she becomes dependent on her diary, which she considers her friend and confidant, and a tool for getting to / at Mamadou. So while on the inside she sees herself as tough and independent, outwardly, she is dependent on anything or anyone she is close to. Even though the story says that she is working in France with her *brevet* before she married Mamadou, she chooses to sulk, throw tantrums, and alienate herself from others in order to manipulate her husband into rejecting his first wife. Awa, the first wife has patiently waited for him during the years that he is studying in France and welcomes Juletane with open arms, offering her choice meat and even making clothing for her. Juletane however, does not like seeing her husband mixing with his own people or helping to provide for them. Ousmane who assumes the role of patriarch in his household and who truly shows that he cares deeply for her will not let her leave, since he is aware of her story and that she has no one to go back to in France.

When she loses her baby through a miscarriage after being involved in a car accident, Ousmane advises her to take Awa's children as her own, thus offering her an avenue to exercise her maternal instincts and qualities. Awa even offers her newly born son to Juletane, telling her that he belongs to her, yet nothing can appease her. Juletane stops fulfilling her wifely roles by moving out of the room she shares with her husband, moving into the room reserved for the

children and by refusing to allow her husband into her bed even on days that it is her turn to do so. Ousmane, being a Muslim and, being entitled to marry as many as four wives, takes a third wife, Ndèye, who is somewhat educated and with whom he attends social functions. Ndèye being less tolerant of Juletane than Awa and judging Juletane different owing to the deliberate negative actions, brands her a mad woman. Juletane withdraws even more into herself as she makes her diary her companion, confidant and friend. Initially, she is keeping the diary so that she can one day show Ousmane how much she has suffered. Gradually however, as she read and re-read her entries, the diary became a sort of witness and evidence of all her sufferings, making it harder for her to forget or forgive certain things and pushing her into deciding to avenge herself on her husband and his household. However, the last straw that breaks the camel's back is when Ndèye breaks her Beethoven's ninth symphony record and slaps her as well. She knows that she must savor her vengeance and she proceeds to unleash her fury on the family. First, she poisons all of Awa's three children, which causes Awa to drown herself in a water well; then she pours hot oil on Ndèye, thus disfiguring her face and blinding her. Due to all of these horrendous actions, her husband dies in a car wreck on his way to see the family of his deceased wife, after taking Juletane to a psychiatric hospital. She dies three months later because her heart cannot go on and we do not know what become of Ndèye who is in the hospital when the husband dies. Juletane does not realize her dream of having her husband read her diary or abandoning his other wives.

Françoise Lionnet claims that «though victimized by patriarchal social structures that perpetuate their invisibility and dehumanization, black female characters actively resist their objectification, to the point of committing murder. This extreme step is often taken after years of attempting to survive in an environment where they are, at best, the victims of sheer neglect, and

at worst, the object of violent abuse» (133). However in the case of Juletane, we see this to not be entirely true as she is the one who sets the stage for how she is perceived by members of her husband's family. Juletane is not a victim of patriarchal social order, she could have left if she wanted to. She is indeed offered three opportunities to repatriate to France (*Juletane* 32, 38 and 41), but she turns all of them down. She is the person who perpetrates her own invincibility, dehumanization and objectification as she hopes to get her husband's attention through self-destructive methods such as banging her head on the wall, refusing to eat and even locking herself up in her room. Indeed, it is Juletane who actually tries to objectify Ousmane by making him her possession.

By alienating herself from others, she creates an aura of mystery and fear around her, which can only be interpreted as ab-normal, or madness. Juletane is an extremist who rather destroys what she cannot have than let anyone else have it. She turns herself into a dog in the manger that does not eat grass and does not allow other animals that do to eat the grass. Even though she claims to be educated, she only judges being educated by one's ability to speak French and she fails to realize that education goes deeper than that. In fact the way she conducts herself shows that she is not adequately educated, especially concerning her husband. For example, she dates Ousmane in France and agrees to marry him without ever trying to research into life in his country in order to understand him better before deciding to marry him. The first day they go to a cinema, Ousmane chooses the movie they watch while she sits there bored and yet does nothing about it. It is as if she is already scared of losing him should she complain about the movie. In an interview, the author offers this explanation⁴⁸:

⁴⁸ Mildred Mortimer. "An Interview with Myriam Warner-Vieyra"

MORTIMER: Are you saying that her personal problem is in not holding her own life in high esteem, in trying to identify with someone else? She bets everything on one man.

WARNER-VIEYRA: Of course this is only my perception but we see that with so many young girls. That is why there are suicides. Women bet everything on a man. It is absolutely ridiculous. (113)

Helène, the other protagonist who is also a Caribbean woman, suffers disappointment at the hands of a fellow Caribbean man, but instead of destroying her life, she chooses to give herself options. She chooses to pursue her education, to seal her heart to emotions for men and to become indifferent to men. She chooses to work in Africa as opposed to returning to work in Guadeloupe where the man who has disappointed her resides with his family. Thus she extricates herself from the object of her anguish and from her own family members who could have probably tried to influence her into getting involved in another adventure with a man, probably of their choosing. In so doing, she is able to put it behind her and heal; she also chooses to give herself several home options. Beside her apartment in Senegal, she owns a house in Guadeloupe and another apartment in Paris, thus giving herself varied options for escape. Even as she prepares to marry Ousmane, she already educates herself enough about the possible events that might happen in the relationship and she takes steps to protect herself and her future against certain outcomes. Unlike Helène however, Juletane takes no such steps. She is so naïve and idealistic that she just believes that Mamadou will be hers and hers alone and that nothing will ever come between them. She does not take time to consider all the odds and to give herself options nor does she make any plans for rainy days. Therefore, a major part of her problems is

her inability to educate herself about her husband's culture and about the vicissitudes and difficulties of a life in another country.

I would also disagree with Juliette M. Rogers who claims that "She (Juletane) has no community in Senegal with whom she may share her language--neither the Senegalese women's groups nor her husband's semi-westernized male friends will accept her particular cultural discourse" (598). The novel provides another protagonist, who is the first reader of Juletane's diary, Helène. Helène is also Caribbean as Juletane and even Helène mentions trying to connect with Juletane, but she refused. On the other hand, as she wrote in her diary, when she arrived in Senegal, she is received with open arms:

The day I arrived in the county, nothing happened the way I had imagined it would, I is not coldly received by the family, quite the opposite. As soon as we had disembarked, a whole crowd of aunts, cousins, sisters, and even my rival, took me by the hand and kissed me. The women were all talking at once. The national language mingled with French. One of the aunts tapped me on the cheek, showering me with what were certainly words of welcome ... The women took charge of me. For a moment I managed to forget my troubles. All around me were nothing but smiling faces. (*Juletane* 21)

Unfortunately, instead of trying to understand and adapt to her husband's culture (since she allows herself to be convinced to stay) (*Juletane* 22) she reads the culture through a Western prism and applies Western paradigms to the African culture: "I cannot understand that he can have married someone simply to please his family" (*Juletane* 22). This goes back to what I already said about her inadequate education about her husband and his culture before marrying

him. As Irling Francois and Jennifer Bess⁴⁹ rightfully note, she is in search of a Utopia, an Africa that only exists in myths and tales. She wants everyone to change to conform to her own needs while neglecting the needs of all others. She is friendly with Awa's children who are in a good position to teach her their language if she had wanted to learn it, but she speaks and even teaches French to Awa's son, Alioune (*Juletane* 40). If she had wanted, she could have created her own community of friends by visiting the French embassy. The author counters all of her claims by providing the character of Helène who like Juletane is also Guadeloupian, maintains an apartment in Paris and works in Senegal. Instead of exploring the community and culture of her marriage, Juletane becomes provocative and annoying as she deems herself untouchable owing to her perceived madness.

Due to her stubbornness and her desire to get her husband's attention by all the wrong means, she lacks the ability to introspect, internalize and interrogate herself to see how she is coming across to other people or if there are things she should be doing differently. So she cannot understand it and takes it as an affront of the worst kind when Ndèye refers to her as a "*toubabesse*" meaning a European or white woman. She takes it that Ndèye is stripping her of her black identity, while in essence, Ndèye is alluding to her Western attitude, independence and individualism and not her skin color. Like Westerners, she sees herself as being better than everyone else especially better than her co-wives; she does not see why or understand why her husband should show his appreciation to the man who supported him through college. If she

⁴⁹ Irling François and Jennifer Bess. "Paradise Deferred: Utopia, Eutopia and Dystopia in Myriam Warner-Vieyra's *Juletane*"

loves Ousmane as she claims, do women not work to support their husbands? Why does she not put her self-acclaimed education to good use by finding a job to help her be able to take care of herself or regain her independence. Even Ndèye starts learning to type in order to get a job as a secretary. All Juletane does is criticize everyone in the household.

4.2 The Historical Construction of Juletane's Violence and Madness

The next step in my attempt to decipher the construction of Juletane's madness and subsequent violent reaction and destruction of an entire family, is to call attention to the history of violence among slaves in the Caribbean, especially female slaves that seems to have marked and continues to mark Caribbean women as is evident through Caribbean literature. This theme is included in the works of Myriam Warner-Vieyra, Maryse Condé and Gisele Pineau among others. According to Hanetha Vete-Congolo:

The Caribbean is the product of violence. It is, therefore, not surprising that Caribbean writers who rely heavily on real Caribbean sociology, anthropology, politics, and above all, history to weave their fictitious stories accord an important place to this theme in their writings. Indeed, physical and psychological violence is at the core of many Caribbean narratives. More interestingly, women writers tend to articulate acts of physical violence perpetrated by women on other women more frequently than their male counterparts. ... The physical and psychological frailty generally attributed to European women do not always apply to Caribbean women whose psychology, values, codes of behavior and customs are derived, in many respects, from a history based on violence. History records that they were more numerous than men in sugar cane field work where the task was the harshest. (in Victor Schoelcher, *Des colonies françaises*, Fort-de-France, 1976:1)

The master-slave relationship that existed in the Caribbean made it such that masters exploited slaves, especially female slaves who became breeding machines for their masters to bear more slaves who would continue to work on the masters' field and enrich them. This caused many female slaves to resort to atrocious and violent crimes such as infanticide in an attempt to stop the masters' moves and to stop their own offspring from slaving for the masters. Infanticide and abortion were therefore not considered by them as crimes, but as acts of grace or "coup de grace" geared towards saving their children from the same fate of slavery their entire lives. Many female slaves are also accused of witchcraft and sorcery, which left their mark on the subconscious mind of Caribbean women and continues to trigger and push them into perpetuating violent acts. As also noted by Hanetha Vete-Congolo "Violence and witchcraft have left their mark on Caribbean history and psyche as both are intertwined with power and the unbalanced relationship of dominating-dominated between masters and slaves" (3).

Maryse Condé and Gisèle Pineau often write using female characters who perpetuate violence. For example, Maryse Condé's *Célanire cou-coupé*, which would translate into cut neck in English and Gisèle Pineau's *Chair Piment* (pepper skin) both tell stories of female characters who commits acts of violence. *Célanire cou-coupé* is inspired by a true story, which Condé has read in a Guadeloupean newspaper about a baby who is found in a pile of trash with his throat slit and with the mother as the suspect of this infanticide. Condé changes the narrative by making the baby saved by a doctor and who later grows up to commit many violent crimes and cruelties in an attempt to find her parents especially her father. Her acts cause the community to believe her to be a witch.

For Pineau, her female character, Suzon Mignard commits so many crimes to recapture the love of Melchior, with whom she has fallen in love at the age of sixteen and who abandons

her. She thus commits many atrocious crimes against several women. Hanetha Vete-Congolo believes that “By using violence as a theme in their novels and women as the direct agents of crimes, Maryse Condé and Gisèle Pineau both highlight one of the main characteristics of Caribbean history. The region is developed out of unspeakable violence brought about by colonization and slavery” (2). Genevieve Leti asserts, too, that “This violence is widespread and affects all social classes. ...this violence is so ingrained in this society that it is often never questioned” (38-45).

Juletane alludes to the fact that she has been marked and that she carries the weight of the history of her people when she writes that “At birth, then, I was already a victim of the elements, not to mention three centuries of our people’s history which my frail shoulders were to inherit” (*Juletane* 2). Not only does she inherit being orphaned and nameless as are many slaves who are transported from Africa to the Caribbean as noted by Irlin François and Jennifer Bess “After she has been re-christened the madwoman, she, like many of her enslaved ancestors, is orphaned, having no parents and no name” (74). She also inherits their accompanying violence. That being the case, it is no wonder that perpetuating violence does not mean much for her. She probably feels that she is doing the children a favor by saving them from a society she judges unfit, and cruel for them. While in Africa, it is possible for women to cohabit happily, as wives of the same man, Congolo insists that “Women inflict violence on one another, irrespective of their social status, either to assert their power or to assuage their jealousy” (7). And Gilbert Pago points out that “their common gender does not instill any common goal or sense of solidarity among women” (cited in Congolo 7). Therefore, while Ndèye and Awa may cohabit peacefully as Mamadou’s wives, Juletane cannot envisage a life of sharing her husband. Moreover, just like

Suzon has the wives of Melchoir, her lover, murdered, and her children destroyed, Juletane destroy the entire Mamadou family.

The other aspect of Caribbean history that weighs heavily on Juletane's shoulders is the myth of Africa as the mother continent. Ever since the time of slavery, Africans in the Caribbean always nurse the hope of one day returning to Africa. From the Nègre-Marons who ran off the plantations and drowned in the swamps to Aimé Césaire's negritude, all painted Africa in a hopeful light. However, just like in Condé's works such as *La Colonie du nouveau monde* (1993) in which the protagonists make plans to move back to their roots in Egypt but finally realize that this is an illusion and decides that home is where they are at the moment in time. Juletane has this great hope that marrying an African and moving back to Africa with him is the best thing ever to happen to her. She fails to do her own homework to know more about him before marrying him, and thus the entire illusion is shattered when she realizes that Africa and Africans have a different reality from that of Caribbeans; though they have the same color, culturally speaking, they are different. This shock is difficult for her to handle leading her to resort to violence. In the next section, I look at the psychological construction of Juletane's madness by looing at the impact and influence that names and labels have on people.

4.3 The Psychological Construction of Madness, And Ascribing and Appropriation of Madness:

Naming and Labeling

There is power in names and naming that exercises strong influences over those who bear them. "A good name is a thread tyed about the finger, to make us mindful of the errand we came into the world to do for our Master" (qtd. In Feldman 237). William F. Murphy, M.D., a psychiatrist in Boston, Massachusetts, tells of many stories of emotionally disturbed patients whose illnesses are somehow informed by their names. He speaks of a young college student

suffering from excessive underarm perspiration with accompanying odor. This problem prevents the young man from making and keeping friends. It so happens that the young man's name is Stankey and at a much younger age, in the elementary school, he was labeled "Stinky" by his classmates who mockingly held their noses when he was around them. His mother also belittles the family name and the parents hate all forms of undesirable odor. The result of his psychoanalysis made him realize that he has unconsciously blamed his parent for his stinkiness and other social problem because of his name.

In Africa, names are very important. It is believed that names influence people's behavior and as such, children are named carefully in an attempt to help shape their future and destiny. According to Mthobeli Guma in an article, "The Cultural Meaning of Names among Basotho of Southern Africa: A Historical and Linguistic Analysis", in Africa, "names are also a socio-cultural interpretation of historical events and they embody individual life experiences, social norms and values, status roles and authority, as well as personality and individual attributes. It is, indeed, through the process of socialization and culture that these are inculcated to the individual" (265). Thus, naming is very important and is usually done with pomp and festivities during a 'naming ceremony'.

The person who names or labels has power over who or what is named or labeled as the namer confers identity on the named, and as such also ascribes and inscribes accompanying qualities, behaviors and moods on the named. By so doing, a different personality, an alter ego is constructed and it can be positive or negative depending on whether the label or name is positive or negative. Once this reality is constructed, others accept it and it begins to have effect on the named. Numerologists and other mystics use names to decipher a person's destiny and future and to even control same. Some people change their names when they grow up because they believe

that their names are affecting them negatively. Eagleson (cited in Ellis and Beechley 337) found that “14 of 77 Negro college women who disliked their names felt that these names has them sensitive, shy, and easily embarrassed whenever they were mentioned as they were being introduced to strangers” (337).

Labeling is also a powerful tool in controlling people’s minds. In their study of the stigma of mental illness, Angermeyer and Matschinger found that labeling leads to stigmatization and prejudice, which leads to discrimination and behavioral reaction. “People who are prejudiced endorse these negative stereotypes and, as a result, generate emotional reactions” (305). In the book of Genesis, God first imagines things, then names them through speaking before they come into being. The imagination period is the period when the image is conjured and created in the consciousness of the creator and then the spoken word gives it flesh and brings it into being. “The Spirit of the Lord hovered over the deep And the Lord said ‘let there be light’ and there was light”. The period that the Spirit hovers and broods over the deep, is the period he imagines the imagery and essence of light, but imagining it does not bring it into existence, speaking it does! Later, after God makes man, he confers on him the ability to name and label the rest of creation and whatever he names them, they become. Thus, it can be inferred that it is the maker, the constructor, the creator or a superior who names the product, the created, the constructed or the subordinate. The namer has power and control over the named. Some people consciously appropriate the inherent qualities in the names and labels ascribed to them and start living these out.

Juletane seemed to be one such person who lacks any identity and who appropriates every name and label ascribes to her. In her self-introduction she described herself as having nothing “not even a name any more ... it was only a borrowed name and I fear I have forgotten

it. My real name I have never known, it was erased from the register of time” (2). Thus, not having a name and failing to give herself one or create a name for herself either through her deeds or through child bearing makes her open to being named and labeled. “Here they call me ‘the mad woman’ not very original” (2) she writes. So, she allows herself to be named. But why the mad woman and not something else? According to her, she chooses silence, self-alienation and self-denigration over communication and involvement with other. Instead of communicating her discontent amicably, she acts out her rage. On one occasion when she senses herself being watched by Dairy, Awa’s ten-year-old daughter, believing that it is Awa who has sent her daughter to watch her, she loses her cool and serenity:

“I lose all the feeling of serenity I had in the morning, drop the cup and its content and go back to my room. I want to scream. Why this sudden anger? I tear a bigger hole in my sheet at a spot where it was not properly mended. I like the noise the fabric makes as it rips. So I carefully tear the sheet into tiny pieces. That keeps me busy, entertains me and calms me down I come out of my room. Around the family “bowl” silence descends. I sit down, eat and go back to my room, lie down and fall asleep, calmed ... I wake up sweating I take my strips of sheet and tear them diligently into tiny squares. How long did I spend doing that, my mind is a complete blank? The volume of cloth torn up like that is impressive. I made a bundle by tying the four corners of the second sheet together, go out and scatter all of it over the yard.” (16-17)

All of this happens because a little girl is watching her and she suspects it is the mother who instigates her being watched. Instead of calling Awa out on her suspicion and clearing the air, she chooses to self-destruct (since she is destroying her own property) and be a nuisance to others. She never reports ever cleaning up the yard or contributing in any way in running the

household. She simply made herself a burden. Others see her do these things and they fear her, as they cannot imagine a sane person behaving that way. Awa tolerates it, but Ndèye cannot stomach it and brands her the “mad woman”. Ndèye does not like Juletane because she believes that Juletane is getting away with her behavior. Even though Juletane initially doubts her own madness, believing herself to be the only lucid and wise person in the household, she proceeds to “project the responsibility onto others”⁵⁰. However, she quickly appropriates it and believes it to be a personal property of the Mamadou household; she proceeds to destroy the entire household. Christenfeld and Larsen⁵¹ believe that “Names have meanings ... that transcend the individual, and while people do occasionally change their names to match their characters, the most intriguing hypothesis is that they change their characters to match their names” (210). This is because, names are not just a way of telling people apart, they are an inherent identity. Hence, from being called a “mad woman”, Juletane becomes a “mad woman”. Though she struggles with accepting such a label initially, according to Ngate⁵²:

By "accepting" the label of madwoman, Juletane is, in effect, "domesticating" madness, as it were. It is no longer just madness "in the sense that a life of total isolation is a form of madness" but also madness as the only way for her to behave in the situation she finds

⁵⁰ Warner-Vieyra 1987, 62 cited in *Rebellious Women: The New Generation of Female African Novelists* 75.

⁵¹ Nicholas Christenfeld and Britta Larsen, “The Name Game”.

⁵² Ngate, Jonathan. “Reading Warner-Vieyra's Juletane”

herself in. And to the extent that no one really pays much attention to what a madwoman has to say, it affords her some protection. (556)

I have mentioned that labeling creates an alter ego in people. This alter ego can make it look like they have a multiple personality disorder which can make them perform acts and not remember having done them. This too is evident in Juletane's report of events. For example, she feels and in fact knows that she has killed Awa's children, but she does not recollect doing it. She wonders if she has intentionally given the children her medication, which could prove fatal if overdosed on as Mamadou is hoping she would do, hence, instead of administering it to her, he gives her the entire bottle of it and Juletane wakes up the morning when the children are discovered dead, to find it empty. She prefers to think that she could not have done it intentionally. Many times too, she vividly imagines murdering Ndèye before finally deciding to permanently disfigure her with boiling oil so that she might live long enough to suffer as she herself has suffered. She is thus mad and sane at the same time and can switch between the two personalities at will.

4.4 The Mystical and Mythical Construction of Madness in Juletane.

The construction of Juletane's madness as has been shown, has so many facets to it. Some of them can be easily explained and understood, but others involve certain elements of mystery and myth. In this section, we will explore some of these mysteries and myths involved in the construction of her madness.

4.4.1 Sorcery, Witchcraft and Other Superstitious Beliefs

Africa has passed through different stages of existence – empires, enslavement, colonization, decolonization, postcolonization and modernization among others. However, what these phases have succeeded in doing is create confusion between modernity and traditionalism, reality and unreality. Thus, while Africans embrace new concepts such as the religious

monotheism, they also hold on to certain traditional and cultural beliefs, such as witchcraft and ancestral worship as “the visible and the invisible are necessarily complementary in African understandings of reality” (Masquelier 99). Africans believe that things first happen in the spiritual realm before being manifested in the physical realm, so it is in the spiritual realm that real changes can be made; otherwise, everything one does to change a situation will prove abortive. Indeed, everything is explained through supernatural interpretations, both good fortune and misfortunes. According to Pitman in his 1929 article, in which he described the syncretism of fetishism, witchcraft, and Christianity among Caribbean and Antilles slaves: “In the thought of primitive men nothing just happens; a phenomenon is always the work of some spirit acting through material agents. To the Negro the world is animated with malicious or benevolent spirits and man's chief concern is to exorcise malevolent "duppies" or ghosts and secure aid of friendly spirits” (650).

People feed off other people’s fears and thus control them. However, many people also fight back as well and seek salvation through the same means. Sorcery, witchcraft, *Mamiwata* worship in all its forms, marabout practices, herbalists, native doctors as well as other superstitious beliefs are all means used to manipulate, subdue, control, and oppress people.

Women dabble in these areas of supernatural control as they seek to control their husbands without appearing to be doing so. For example, in *Juletane*, the protagonist described one of the co-wives, Ndèye, as taking “endless baths with all sorts of dubious ingredients acquired from the Marabout and aimed at keeping our husband permanently in her bed” (4). In a polygamous family, in the end, it is every woman for herself as they vie for their husband’s attention and many of them resort to means of controlling the man spiritually, mentally, and psychologically in order to gain the upper hand, and to be his favorite. For this reason, in African

relationships, people are always very skeptical and suspicious of others in a relationship. According to John Alan Cohan in his article, “The Problem of Witchcraft Violence in Africa,” “Africans of all walks of life utilize witchcraft as a means of gaining advantages, often at the expense of others, such as to ensure success in warfare or in sports, to thwart a romantic rival, to win a political race, or to exact vengeance against an enemy” (804).⁵³ Hence, when something is not working out as expected, people immediately suspect that there is foul play going on and the victim is no longer acting in his or her right senses and thus consider the person “blameless in the eyes of society” (Diwan 355). It is believed that sometimes the person can forget himself or herself and commit crimes that s/he does not intend to commit without realizing it. Some children are believed to be initiated into these practices and that these children carry these practices on. In fact, a 2010 study by the United Nations International Education Fund (UNICEF) titled “Children Accused of Witchcraft: An Anthropological Study of Contemporary Practices in Africa,” insists that belief in witchcraft and its practices is still very much in vogue and that people considered to be witches despite their age are still severely punished. “Behaviours commonly associated with accusations of witchcraft include violence, mistreatment, abuse, infanticide and the abandonment of children” (1).

Among practitioners of Voodoo in the African diaspora such as in the Caribbean, Brazil, Cuba, and other countries, belief in witchcraft is also quite pervasive because “their cultural heritage consisted of the fetishism of the West African tribes with all the magic, sorcery,

⁵³ See also Andrew Sanders, *A Deed without a Name: The Witch in Society and History*, Cyprian F. Fisiy, *Containing Occult Practices: Witchcraft Trials in Cameroon*, Daniel D.N.

Nsereko, “Witchcraft as a Criminal Defense, From Uganda to Canada and Back”

exorcism, folk-lore, dances, and music associated with it” (Pitman 650).⁵⁴ Many slaves are lynched and killed because of the belief that they are witches and that they caused mysterious deaths on the plantations. Witchcraft is never tolerated anywhere both in Africa and in its diaspora.

Some people refuse to acknowledge the existence of witchcraft such as C. K. Meek, who stated that “Witches and witchcraft do not, of course, exist, but the belief in their existence is one of the most potent in the lives of most African people. And it is a belief which cannot easily be exorcised, for it is not an isolated factor, but an integral part of the whole psychological and magico-religious system”. (79)

Witchcraft is in fact recognized by the legal system of many African countries including Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania. The 2002 Witchcraft Act of Tanzania, which refers to the various previous versions/editions (1928, 1935, 1956, and 1998) denoting the numerous amendments it has gone through, describes witchcraft as including “sorcery, enchantment, bewitching, the use of instruments of witchcraft, the purported exercise of any occult power and the purported possession of any occult knowledge” (Mesaki 136).

I do not wish to validate or invalidate the existence of witchcraft or even witches. In this section, I examine these practices as invoked in *Juletane*. I insist that belief in them also contributes to the mythical construction of Juletane’s madness and agree with Roger that

⁵⁴ For West African fetishism and folk-ways and folk-lore see W. H. Barker and Cecilia Sinclair, Richard C. Bundy, “Folk-tales from Liberia”, A. M. H. Christensen, *Afro- American Folk-lore*, Boston, 1892; A. B. Ellis, *Tshi-speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa*, Lond., 1887; Ellis, *Ewe-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa*, among others.

“Although Juletane is not fighting a "colonizer" in the traditional sense of the term, she is overcoming those forces that have led to her years of oppression, namely a combination of patriarchy, capitalism, and religious and cultural traditions in Senegal” (601).

In *Juletane* many references are made to practices such as sorcery, superstition, Maraboutism, curses, and witchcraft. For example, Juletane believes that she is cursed because she is conceived during the lent period since she is born on December 25th. Instead of believing that her birthdate, which corresponded to the date Christians believe that Jesus Christ is born, influenced her life, she believes that her conception date, which corresponds to the period of penance, is what impacted her life negatively. She believes that she is being punished because her parents failed to abstain from sex during the period of abstinence thus placing a curse on her as she claims in her first journal entry:

Born the twenty-fifth of December, a day of rejoicing, in a small village on a little island in the Caribbean, I was, by virtue of this fact, conceived one night in Lent, a period of fast and abstinence. Contrary to popular belief, which attributes a definite ascendancy to the signs of the zodiac prevailing at the time of one's birth, in my case, it was the date of conception which must have influenced my personality trait and the course of my life. My father, in paying homage to his young wife, has flouted tradition and begot me with all the condemnation of the village church. At birth, then, I was already a victim of the elements ... (2)

So already Juletane sees herself as “abnormal” and cursed because of the time of her conception. This mindset alone can cause someone to act differently, have an inferiority complex, be introverted in order to hide from others, and to see oneself as a victim. Thus, it is not only in the Mamadou family that she perceives herself as different, she also sees herself as different from

birth and from her own people. This shows that her problems do not start with her marriage, but she has deeply rooted psychological issues. This can explain why she does not want to go back to her native island nor have anything to do with them. This can also explain why her relatives whom Helène is able to contact refuse to take her back. To them, she is already marked. This mindset alone can construct madness in someone.

The events surrounding the loss of Juletane's baby are also unusual and unexplainable in a rational way and are equally attributed to sorcery and witchcraft activities by Awa, the "naturally soft, generous and submissive" (39) wife, the "simple, sweet and self-effacing" (36) woman. Can it be that she is not all that innocent after all? Can she have used witchcraft, an act believed to influence the lives of other people by occult means, an act that is usually malevolent and which affects people's spirits, minds, and bodies? Let us examine these events. According to Rosemary Ekosso in her study of witchcraft in contemporary Bakweri society:

A person might give a potential victim a malevolent look, utter threats, give presents of food, drink, etc., or otherwise bewitch the victim. Upon receiving, such evidence that an attempt to bewitch him is being made or has been made, a person goes to see a diviner (a *ngambi*) and medicine man to determine whether this is the case, and subsequently to obtain protection. The medicine man will then perform a divination rite to determine whether there has been a case of witchcraft." (3)⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Rosemary Ekosso, "Witchcraft in Contemporary Bakweri Society", *Bakwerirama: Spotlight on Bakweri Culture and Society*. Web. 21 Nov. 2012.

<http://www.bakweri.org/files/Witchcraft_ekosso.pdf>

As we read in the novel, upon her arrival, Awa, Juletane's rival and Mamadou's first wife and mother of his children, offered Juletane choice pieces of meat and food. It is interesting to note that Juletane thinks that this gesture is suspicious, as she writes: "I wondered if it were from kindness or mockery" (22). However, Juletane does not take any preventive, protective, or precautionary measures to prevent herself from being bewitched.

After that, a series of strange things start happening to Juletane. First, Mamadou becomes a different person, a total stranger whose reactions she can no longer understand. This causes her to suffer a nervous breakdown and fits of delirium and to be committed to a psychiatric hospital for four days. As Juletane explains, she does not know what happened to her and she vaguely remembers being overcome with a sudden, desperate rage during the night (25). Later, Juletane becomes pregnant, which stops Mamadou's weekend visits to the village to see Awa, his first wife. Awa marries Mamadou, a cousin, because the family has arranged it, but she has no formal education, nor other social attributes to entice a man or make her very companionable. Her only real attribute is her ability to bear children and this is being usurped by Juletane. As Mamadou confesses, the reason why he did not want to divorce Awa is because he is afraid that Juletane might not be able to give him children. As he maintains, "children was the greatest blessing in a marriage" (33). So far, we have seen in Africa that sorcery and witchcraft are usually used to resolve issues or influence their outcome. Rivals use them to control and manipulate the person in contention as well as harm each other. Can Awa have caused Juletane's miscarriage and inability to bear any more children? Can that be why she offered her own child to Juletane and asked her to accept him as her own child? Is it guilt? What about Ndèye who cannot bear any children either? Can Awa's sorcery be the explanation for her barrenness? Could she have acted out of bitterness and a jealous heart?

According to the novel, which contains journal entries by Juletane based on what she heard, saw, experienced, witnessed, perceived, and subjectively entered, she came out from the market and stopped in the middle of the road to admire the beautiful deep, cloudless blue sky when she was hit by a car. There is no question of her being depressed or going through any emotional turmoil. Things are finally working out between her and Mamadou. They have moved into their own home and she is going to be a mother. Mamadou is paying her all the attention she needed. At last, they are going for walks, in the midst of people, Mamadou no longer speak in his native language, but speak in French for her benefit. He is no longer visiting Awa. So why would she come out and of all places decide to stand in the middle of the road where cars drive, to admire the sky? According to what she is told by Mariama, one of Mamadou's niece's, "the accident is the work of the Marabout that Awa has been visiting in the village, since Mamadou has stopped going to see her" (35). If this is truly the case, then even the idea that Awa remotely caused her barrenness is enough to agitate someone, push her over the edge, and cause her to lose her mind, thus constructing her madness.

Even if Awa does not bewitch Juletane and possibly Ndèye and cause them to be barren, it still remains that everything around Awa is unproductive. There is a tendency for anything she touches to go barren. For example, the mango tree that Mamadou planted in the middle of their courtyard, and which Awa watered and added manure to daily just like she fed and cared for Juletane, is also barren. In her journal, Juletane does indeed compare herself to the tree, saying that "I too was that barren tree" (74). Again, the only denominator between them is Awa and Mamadou planted all of them in the family, yet, only Awa is fertile. It is hard to fathom Awa, the gentle, self-effacing woman, but the manner in which she takes her life speaks volumes, as it takes a strong will and lots of courage to take one's life, and this speaks to the kind of hard heart

and determination she has. She enjoys being the mother and caretaker and when she loses that opportunity, she takes her own life.

Actions, it is said, have consequences and it is believed that people reap the seed they sowed. If indeed Awa has through witchcraft murdered the unborn child of Juletane, caused her to be eternally barren as well as to be mad, then, there is no doubt that Juletane would, out of the same madness, kill Awa's own children, causing Awa to take her own life. In Africa, witchcraft and sorcery are punished severely. Sometimes, witches and wizards are lynched, burned, publicly humiliated, or fed poison to determine their innocence, in which case, it is believed that if they are innocent, they will vomit the poison and not die from it; at other times, they are killed (Essien 525). Juletane is raised a Christian and she prays at different times in her journal entries. She is from the Caribbean and she is therefore familiar with witchcraft and sorcery beliefs, activities, and punishments. She is also probably familiar with the verse in the Bible, which states that "thou shall not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22:18). Based on this verse, many real or perceived witches have met with different horrible and devastating fates. Juletane herself reminds us that "He who creates a monster should not be surprised if one day he is destroyed by it" (*Juletane* 75). It is not clear that Juletane killed the children intentionally, but it is clear that certain forces caused it to happen just like the forces that caused her to lose her mind in the first place and those forces cause the death of the children, using Juletane as an agent.

For so long, Juletane does nothing about everything she is going through and respects Awa, but the moment she is slapped by Ndèye and Awa approves of the act (53), Juletane's passivity leaves her. Her patience is turned into a "raging torrent" (50) and she is determined to take her revenge (51) on the entire household as she writes: "I am preparing my vengeance like a very special dish. After I have carefully prepared it, seasoned it, I will savour it slowly, very

slowly and carefully. It will be my last meal and my madness will vanish” (62). This is exactly what happened. After she hears of Mamadou’s death, her madness and violence end. In the section that follows, I will expound on the mythical construction of Juletane’s madness by exploring the concept of the three goddesses, which, I shall show, exist in different mythologies. Since I am using mythology to read the novels that I am studying, I am intrigued by why there are three wives in this household and if there is a mythical symbolism to their representation.

4.4.2 The Mythical Construction of Juletane’s Madness: The Three Goddesses

We have already seen that both Awa and Ndèye consult Marabouts in order to advance their courses in the Mamadou family and to gain their husband’s favor as well as to control the outcome of events in the family. These forms of manipulation are witchcraft and sorcery especially when it makes people do what they would not have done in their right minds. All through history, there have always been tales of women vying for a man’s attention. Even among the Olympian goddesses, powers – nefarious and occultist, have been known to be employed in contests. People have always been known to use what they have to get what they need – ruse, manipulation, beauty, youth, fertility, wisdom or fame, among others things.

In an African mythology, which originates among the Yoruba of Nigeria, but which is even more popular in the diaspora, specifically in Brazil and Cuba, Shango, a great warrior, marries three wives: Oba, Oshun (*Osun* in Nigeria, but still pronounced as *Oshun*), and Oya. Oba is the oldest wife who does all the work, but Shango seems to love Oshun more. One day, Oya the youngest wife, after observing how badly Oba is treated, asks her to find out from Oshun what she uses to cook for Shango. So Oba asks Oshun and Oshun tells Oba that she adds her ear to her yam porridge. She tells her so with the hope that she will do it and that Shango will send her away allowing her to have him more to herself. So excited is Oba that she does so the very

next time that it is her turn to cook for their husband. However, when Shango sees the ear, he asks Oba what she has done and Oba confesses that Oshun is the one who has told her to do so, having done so herself. But when Oshun removes her headtie, she has both of her ears intact. This angers Shango who thunders and bellows and turns into the god of thunder. All three women run away from his sight in terror. Oya stamps her feet and dissolves to become the river Oya (now river Niger). Oba is so mad that she fights Oshun. Both of them fight until they both dissolve and turn into rivers as well. Oshun becomes river Oshun, which flows past Oshogbo in Oyo state of Nigeria, and Oba becomes river Oba, a tributary of river Oshun that flows past Ogbomoso. It is believed that both of them continue to fight to the extent that where both of them form a confluence, their water do not mix and that if one is crossing one river and mentions the name of the other, the person will drown. There are about sixteen versions of this myth according to the findings of William Bascom (1976), who has carried out extensive anthropological research into the myth and who has travelled to Nigeria, Cuba, Brazil, and other Caribbean countries collecting the different versions of the myth, which he has published in an article. Among the versions of this myth, one claims that it is a witch doctor who asks Oba to cook her ear for her husband. However, the witch doctor is only speaking figuratively and by asking her to cook her ear for her husband in order to be loved more by him, the witch doctor is only asking her to listen more to him and carry out his wishes.⁵⁶ Presently, women, especially

⁵⁶ This version is not one of the sixteen versions discovered and recorded by William Bascom. I heard it directly from a Yoruba person whom I interviewed and with whom I discussed Bascom's article.

those in polygamous situations, consult these goddesses through witch doctors and their priests and priestesses. They make sacrifices to them to help them in their marriages.

Witchcraft studies in the West term male witches *Wicca* or Wizards and the female are called *Wicce* or *Witches*. Robert Graves, a neo-pagan, and other Wiccans talk about the triple moon goddesses, which represent the three phases of the moon as well as of the woman. The myth of the three goddesses exists in different civilizations and ancient mythologies. In witches studies and neo-paganism, they are called the triple goddesses and are known as the maiden, the mother, and the crone. The triple goddess is an archetype of the myth of the different stages of a woman's life.

In Greek mythology, they are represented by Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite and it is believed that their rivalry that led to a contest in which they asked Paris, the brother of Hector of Troy, to accept an apple from whoever he considers most beautiful of the three. Paris accepts Aphrodite's apple because she has promised him the love of Helen, wife of Menelaus. The elopement of Paris and Helen causes the war that destroys Troy, as both Hera and Athena fight against Troy on whose side is Aphrodite. In Hindu mythology, the three goddesses are known as Kali, Tara, and Siddharatri. Siddharatri is the youthful one and the Queen of Queens, Tara is the motherly and nurturing one who creates life, while Kali is the dark one who punishes the wicked as well as frees the oppressed.

The Maiden represents enchantment, inception, and youthful exuberance in a woman, hope, and expansion, promise of new beginnings, birth, youth, and youthful enthusiasm, represented by the waxing moon. The Mother represents ripeness, maturity, fertility, sexuality, fulfillment, motherhood, stability, nurture, power, and life represented by the full moon; The

Crone represents wisdom, repose, hopelessness, bitterness, death, and endings represented by the waning moon.

In The Witches' Goddess by Farrar, the authors write about the three aspects of the goddess: the maid, the mother, and the crone. The Maid is the youthful goddess and has borne no child, the mother, of course, is the one who bears children, and the crone, the last one, is as the authors describes her:

She is Wisdom, the Jeweled Hag. She has seen it all; she has compassion for it all, but a compassion undistorted by illusion and sentimentality. Her wisdom is much wider than intellectual knowledge, though it includes intellect and does not despise it. Maid and Mother live within her as stored experience, and she within them as potential. ... When called for, the Crone is baby-sitter for the Mother, and chaperone for the Maid, keeping a shrewd eye on both and maintaining the overall balance. To the male aspect she is a steadying influence, and an enriching one if he listens to her; she adds another dimension to his linear-logical thinking and prevents it getting the bit between its teeth. Like the other two, she is Love, but hers is a calm understanding love, complementing the heady love of the Maid and the incandescent love of the Mother. She too can seem terrible, because she is the gateway to Death. But she is also the Psychopompos who guides us through it, pointing the way to the new life where she will again be all the Three. Her traditional color is Black. (*The Witches Goddess* 36)

This quote above depicts the Mamadou wives and the Mamadou family or relational situation. The Maid is Ndèye who bore no child and whose love is simply heady. Mamadou marries her because she is highly sought after. He marries her for vanity. All she cares about is appearance. There does not seem to be any feeling emanating from her core being, or her heart for, her

husband. She is lavish and cares not about the wellbeing of other members of the family as long as she satisfies her selfish whims. It is Ndèye who labeled Juletane the ‘mad woman’ and thus succeeds in alienating her and making others see her as ‘abnormal’. She is also the person who referred to her as “white” even though Juletane is clearly black, thus robbing her of her identity, and cultural and historical heritage. She in fact depersonalizes Juletane.

Awa is the Mother. She is the only who bore children for their husband, Mamadou. She defines herself by her children and her husband and is content with life just because of her children. She plays the role of mother to the entire household as well, being the only one who truly takes care of Juletane and never believes that she is mad or should be avoided. She prepares Juletane’s food and provides her with other necessities to make her life bearable and she is the only one who often stands up for Juletane. However, she knows that her strength lies only in her ability to bear children and judges herself only useful as a mother. This role she is willing to guard jealously to the point of meddling in sorcery and witchcraft to deprive the other two rivals of the ability to conceive and bear any children of their own. When she loses her children, she takes her own life, as she cannot bear to live without them or to not be a mother.

The Crone among these women is Juletane and the quote does her great justice. She is indeed wise from her experiences in life and from quietly observing the goings-on in the household and the society. She sees it all and within her are both the Maid and the Mother since she did conceive, but never carried her pregnancy to full term. However, it is long enough for her to keep its memory eternally alive in her and to consider one of Awa’s children as the child she would have had. She plays baby-sitter to the mother as she spends time with Awa’s children and watches them write. She plays with them often as Awa never keeps the children away from her since she does not judge her as dangerous. She chaperons the Maid in the sense that she keeps

tab on her activities. She knows everything Ndèye does as Ndèye and her friends camp themselves just outside her window enabling her to watch them and hear their conversation. She is at some points the only “steadying influence” in Mamadou’s life, as he runs to her for comfort when calamities start befalling him. Juletane represents Wisdom in the households as she consciously seeks it and prays for it in her moment of prayer asking God “Give peace to my soul. Teach me to forgive them, make me an example of wisdom for this house. You have said, and I believe, that your wisdom is folly for men” (9). Realizing the depth of her wisdom and strength judging from how she is able to survive all the hardship, betrayal, and neglect that she goes through, Mamadou runs to her to draw strength from her. However, he never heeds her advice when she tells him that Ndèye is the source of all their problems and that he should send her away. If he had listened to her, Juletane might not have been pushed over the edge of her sanity, nor would she have caused the death of the entire household. So like the Maid and the Mother, she is Love, but hers is a calm understanding love, complementing the heady love of the Maid and the incandescent love of the Mother. But as the Farrars write in their description of the Crone, Juletane has been terribly abused and bewitched and she ends up being the family’s “gateway to Death”. As she sees in her dreams, she knows that she is going to a new life, a life where she will be a Maid and a Mother yet again. Her traditional color is black as she goes into mourning, after she loses her baby, and she never stops mourning till she finally dies as well.

Jonathan Ngate’s assumption in his study of *Juletane* complements my analysis to a great extent. In his analysis of Jonathan Ngate’s study of *Juletane*, Patrice J. Proulx insists that:

Jonathan Ngate's incisive analysis of the doubling, which occurs in *Juletane* demonstrates that the protagonist is lashing out at others in an effort to invalidate certain stereotypical female roles: ‘In Awa ... she is rejecting the completely submissive 'traditional' woman

who lives only for her 'lord and master' and his children (Juletane 115). As for Ndèye, she represents the mindless and mean vamp for whom Juletane has only contempt.' (562) (Proulx 705)

4.5 Making Sense out of Madness

As we have seen, Juletane's reaction to the fact that her husband does not inform her about his first wife and daughter leads her to overreact by alienating herself, inflicting pain on herself, and holding everyone in contempt. As a result, she neglects her wifely duties, while refusing to return to France to start a new life, to embrace the culture of her husband, or even use her education to find something that will cause her to be gainfully employed. Her behavior leads to her being labeled a mad woman by a co-wife pushing her to withdraw further into herself, to lock herself in her room, and to keep a journal that allows her to record all the perceived wrong that is done to her. This record keeping enables her to carefully nurse her anger and plan her vengeance against her husband, her co-, and the first wife's children, thus annihilating the entire household all in a bid to get her husband's attention. And all this she does under the guise of madness that she appropriates even though she doubts her own madness, claiming that as far as she is concerned, she is the only lucid person in the entire family.

Here they call me 'the mad woman', not very original. What do they know about madness? What if mad people weren't mad! What if certain types of behavior which simple, ordinary people call madness, were just wisdom, a reflection of the clear-sighted hypersensitivity of a pure, upright soul plunged into a real or imaginary affective void? To me, I am the most lucid person in the house. Even though on certain bitter days, I am filled with rage when I hear Ndèye boasting about our husband's prowess in bed. (2)

In his exploration of the intersections between silence and violence and the (self-) destructive consequences of repression and oppression in Myriam Warner-Vieyra's two texts, *Juletane* and "Sidonie", Patrice J. Proulx claims that "The protagonists' barrenness leaves them powerless to change their position within the hierarchy of the household or within society" (700). Françoise Lionnet and Joseph Heath also categorize *Juletane* as marginalized and provide the reason for her marginalization when they write, "In Paris, Juletane marries Mamadou, a Muslim who brings her back to Africa, where her inability to bear children quickly pushes her to the margins of society"(31). But all of the above authors' claims only seem so when reading *Juletane* very peripherally and without taking into account the fact that this is a first-person narrative in the form of a diary in which what we are being told does not represent the whole picture, but a one-sided, highly subjective, and biased tale. *Juletane* is neither repressed, oppressed, nor put in the margins by anyone without her putting it all in motion.

Though barrenness might leave a woman feeling incomplete, it does not leave the woman powerless to change her position within the society. There are usually options for people to treat the children of their co-wives as their own and these children end up being the person's caretakers in their old age. This is the option that Mamadou offers *Juletane*, to take Awa's children as her own. Also, Helène herself mentioned the possibility of adopting one of her nephews or nieces, but would rather try to see if she can bear her own child legitimately (*Juletane* 57). This shows that there are other alternatives. If *Juletane* had actually wanted, she would probably have been able to go to her country and adopt a relative whom she would have raised as her own child, but she is much too selfish for that. I here also invoke the character of Ndèye who has no child in the novel and who manages to remain her husband's favorite. Let us not forget that Mamadou married Ndèye simply because *Juletane* shuts him and everyone else

out. What we see in Juletane's reaction and response to her situation is a classic case of those who perceive themselves as marginalized being constantly on the defensive and launching the attack even when not attacked. Bernard Knox has theorized a similar explanation about "the unspeakable violence of the oppressed, which is greater than the violence of the oppressor, and which, because it has been long pent up, cannot be controlled" (742). Therefore, Juletane knocks herself into a corner, and convincing herself of her oppression, unleashes violence and destruction on her husband's family.

In her article, "Introduction to Sociology—The concept of Marginalization", Aditya Anupkumar describes marginalization as

the overt actions or tendencies of human societies whereby those perceived as being without desirability or function are removed or excluded (i.e., are marginalized...) from the prevalent systems of protection and integration, so limiting their opportunities and means for survival [...]. Marginalization may manifest itself in forms varying from genocide/ethnic-cleansing and other xenophobic acts/activities at one end of the spectrum, to more basic economic and social hardships at the unitary (individual/family) level. (3)

From a distance, it certainly looks like Juletane is marginalized, while in essence and at a closer look, she is the person who marginalizes herself and others. By destroying them, she judges them unfit and undesirable to live in her world. Initially when they just comes back to her husband's country, she accuses her husband of speaking his language with his people instead of speaking French to her benefit, yet she also says that most of those people cannot speak French. So, how could her husband have been able to communicate with his own people if he has to speak to them in French when they cannot understand it very well?

Is Juletane not just looking desperately for excuses to blame her husband for lying to her in the first place? She chooses to “marginalize” herself by refusing to get involved or to make efforts at understanding and accepting the man she claimed to love. She also refuses to leave him, but chooses to stay and have him and his family completely destroyed, whereas her husband sees nothing else in her than a friend, a lover, someone to whom he can turn to, and the only solid and reliable person in his life. As Irling Françoise and Jennifer Bess note:

Thus, the act of writing connects Juletane to the Western world just as it reinforces her isolation within her immediate environment of women who probably cannot read. Her defiant act of individualism – choosing contemplative withdrawal – is antithetical to the needs of traditional African society where the contributions of a collective are valued above all else. (73)

Yet, no one kills her or excludes her. She does it all both to herself and to others. However, looking at the complex construction of her madness in its entirety might begin to help to us understand why a woman who by nature is supposed to be nurturing and protective, especially of children, ends up being their destroyer.

Myriam Warner-Vieyra thus used her characters to expose different forms of domestic abuse as well as different phases of a woman by choosing three women with different circumstances in life. She shows that domestic abuse is not only perpetuated by men against women but also by women against women as well as against men and children. She shows also that domestic abuse is not only physical, but can be psychological, emotional, and spiritual. Finally, she shows, as does Thomas Szasz, that malingerers appropriate madness and use it to exert violence against others. And, as maintains Jonathan Ngate, “Myriam Warner-Vieyra's texts

do not depict violence as an answer to silence, but rather show it as a consequence of repression and a potential subversive gesture” (707).

In the next chapter, I turn my attention to the works of Sony Labou Tansi, a male author from Congo who represents madness in his works as megalomania. In two of his works, *Les Sept solitudes de Lorsa Lopez* and *La Vie et demie*, his female characters are mad with their quest for power and vengeance and are willing to do anything to restore order in places where disorder reigns. They fight to restore patriarchal order at the expense of their lives. After they are used, they are discarded and life goes on. In these two novels, these women are unfeeling and almost inhuman. It is hard to accept them as women as we do not see their femininity in display. However, in *Les yeux du volcan*, Tansi took a different approach by presenting a real woman with real emotional needs. A woman is neglected by her husband because of his political and religious convictions. This pushes her over the emotional edge, causing her to lose her mind. But after she lashes out and attacks her husband in her madness, he finally sees her for who she is and it helps him to break out of his fears. The woman’s sanity is immediately restored, unlike in *Les sept solitudes de Lora Lopez* and *La vie et demie*, where the female protagonists die unfulfilled. The study of this work will enable me to look at sexual neglect and denial as abuse, which many African women suffer and are subjected to. It will equally allow me to examine how such unmet sexual needs can construct insanity in women.

Chapter Five

Blaming the moon: Constructing Madness through Sex Denial and Religious Violence

in *Les Yeux du Volcan* (1988) by Sony Labou Tansi

It is the very error of the moon;
 She comes more near the earth than
 she was wont, and makes men mad.
 -*Othello*, Act V, Scene II

The preceding chapter dwelt upon the construction of madness in *Juletane*. I showed the complex construction of Juletane's madness through direct, indirect, and remote elements that are physical, historical, psychological, and mythical/mystical. I also demonstrated how Juletane contributed towards her abuse by appropriating the label of madness ascribed to her by her co-wife, Ndèye, and under the guise of this madness, she destroyed the entire family. I did try to rationalize her actions by suggesting that she, like the crone, destroyed in order to protect as she did Awa's children.

An aspect of violence in this novel that I did not dwell on is the religious aspect of the construction of her madness, as it is not very apparent in the novel: however, I will broach it in this chapter, since I am looking at the use of religion in abusing women. For example, Juletane describes her husband as being a selective partisan of Islam, as he only practices the aspects of the religion that suit him most. He refuses to fast because of his ulcer, but he drinks and serves alcohol to his friends in his home. He equally does not adhere to Prophet Mohammed's injunction that if one should marry more than one wife, he should treat them all equally. This is not the case with Mamadou, as he clearly treats his wives differently. This disparity of the way he treats them led to jealousy and brutality, causing the wives to commit many atrocities, such as visiting sorcerers, and marabouts, and committing infanticide as well as other cruelties, in a bid to get his love and attention

5.1 Drawing from the wheel.

In this chapter, I focus on the use of spiritual and religious abuse, as well as sex and intimacy denial to commit domestic abuse. The power and control wheel of the “Domestic Abuse Intervention Project”, 2004 identifies physical and sexual abuse as the over-arching forms of abuse by men against women, that manifest themselves through other forms of abuse such as emotional abuse, which includes:

Putting her down. Making her feel bad about herself. Calling her names. Making her think she’s crazy. Playing mind games. Humiliating her. Making her feel guilty; Minimizing, denying and blaming expressed through making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously. Saying the abuse didn’t happen. Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior. Saying she caused it [...] [among other forms of abuse].

In discussing this, I will focus on the abusive use of spirituality and religion to deny a woman sex and intimacy, while minimizing the seriousness of the abuse, by not taking the woman’s concerns seriously, and by making her feel that she is mad, thereby pushing her to snap. I will also study the myth of lunar cycle lunacy, and how African people represented in this novel use belief in lunar cycle effects on humans to explain every act of violence and destruction, while refusing to find solutions to problems. When a woman complains about being neglected and maltreated, and when she acts out her emotions, her complaints and actions are attributed to either the effect of the full moon, or the new moon. Also when certain phenomena occur, they are attributed to the same lunar effects. Why is the moon so important, and why is it believed to wield such a huge influence on human behavior? Most importantly, why is it believed to induce, or intensify madness in people, and mostly in women? What is spiritual / religious abuse, and

how is it manifested in a marriage? Why is it considered an abuse? What are the effects of spiritual and religious abuse? What about sexual abuse, should it just be limited to forced sexual interaction, or does it comprise of sex and intimacy denial in a marriage? Above all, how do these forms of abuse construct madness in women in Africa? These are some of the questions, that I will answer in the course of this chapter. Firstly, I will like to present a brief synopsis of the novel, *Les Yeux du volcan*, as it is a rather difficult novel that is not easily understood, due to the author's style of writing.

5.2 *Les Yeux du volcan*, A Summary

Les Yeux du volcan is supposedly set in Brazzaville but depicts events in the fictitious cities of Hozanna, Hondo Norte, and Tombalbaye. The story starts in Hozanna, where a man of unusual physical proportion, named thereafter the *colosse*, arrives and settles to sell what he calls his *crimes*, however, he wishes to bring about positive changes to the city, whereas they believe that he has come to lead a revolution, and expect him to do so. This makes him a target to many key players. The Mayor wants to form an alliance with him, the richest family in the city want him on their side too and allows a daughter of the family to move in with him, whereas, the revolutionaries, fearing that he will not lead the revolution and that he will join those oppressing the city, sends an assassin to murder him. In an exchange he had with the mayor, which demonstrates his integrity and true mission, he says:

Non, monsieur le maire, vous n'en aurez pas le loisir. Car cette ville deviendra la cité de la loi et du droit. Plus personne n'y piétinera personne pour son loisir. Je suis venu pour donner raison à la raison. Vous avez caviardé la vie des gens ainsi qu'il vous plaisait. Ce temps-là est fini, monsieur le maire. Cette ville veut chanter. Je suis venu pour qu'elle chante. Elle chantera, ou bien je mourrai. (74)

For him, he has come to liberate the people, not through revolution, but by showing them a different way of doing things. He organized parties where people came out and fraternized together, he offered tea to everyone who stopped by, and his door was open to all and sundry. He ran and greeted people, while stopping to help anyone who needed his help. When a child fell into a pit, he was the one and devised a means of getting her out, while all the while, talking to and reassuring the child as well as the parents. Unfortunately a man pretending to be mad murders him. His madness is believed to come upon him more strongly on new and full moon days, whereas he is completely in his senses and just malingering. He parades himself as mad to start a revolution and he kills the *colosse* (colonel Sombro) for failing to lead the revolution in a timely manner. “Colonel Sombro, dit le fou au cadavre, je m’excuse. Mais vous êtes trop humain pour mener une révolte. Vous tergiversiez depuis trois ans. C’est impardonnable.” (164)

In another city, Tombalbaye, a colonel Benoit Goldmann has put his life on hold as he waits for the revolution. He is waiting anxiously for a word so that he can begin the revolution, whereas he is neglecting the emotional needs of his wife. He reads the Scripture in lieu of being intimate with his wife, and if she complains, he blames her desires as well as complaints on the effects of the moon on her. This continues until she snaps, and he declares her mad with the help and diagnosis of his doctor friend. To treat her madness, he burns raffias, and other roots and herbs, believed to drive the spirit disturbing her away, and his friend prescribes Nembutal, a form of barbiturate as relaxant for her. This medication, I will show, is a death cocktail and may have caused her death. As we have seen in this synopsis, in this novel that is supposedly based in the African city of Brazzaville, the moon takes the blame for everything, and madness is constructed in people based on the effects of the moon. Why is the moon believed to cause madness and in women in particular? In the next section, I will explore the relationship between women, the

moon, and madness. I will equally look at why the new, as well as the full moon, are believed to cause or heighten madness in people.

5.3 *Women and the Moon*

From our planet earth, the moon is the most prominent body in the sky after the sun. The moon and its cycles have held humankind fascinated for ages so many lore and myths are built around them. For ages, it is believed that the moon exercises great influence on humans (Lieber; Rotton & Kelly; Rotton, Kelly, & Elortegui), especially on women. Those who subscribe to this belief do so because, during full and new moon, the gravitational forces of the sun and moon combine, cause rising tides in bodies of water. These believers therefore believe that the moon causes gravitational pull on body fluids as well. As women tend to have more flowing fluid – menstrual flow, breast milk, and fluid in the womb - etc., these people believe that the moon exercises more influence on women than on man. Some believe that the moon intensifies labor in women (Morton-Pradhan et al) and causes them to go mad and act out their emotions when it is new or full moon. Another reason people believe that the moon has a greater influence on women is because the moon is often considered a feminine entity, even though some (Harley) hold that it is both feminine and masculine (Bouw). In her book, *God Herself: The Feminine Roots of Astrology* (1980), Geraldine Thorsten shows that historically, before the 1500s, when the sun-ruled, male-dominated religions took over, the moon was worshipped as a goddess. On the other hand, Reverend Timothy Harley claims in his 1885 book, *Moon Lore*, that:

“In the Aryan of India, in Egyptian, Arabian, Slovenian, Latin, Lithuanian, Gothic, Teutonic, Swedish, Anglo-Saxon, and South America, the moon is a male god. ... “Moon”, says Max Müller, ‘is a very old word, It is *móna* in Anglo-Saxon, and is used there, not as a feminine word, but as a masculine, and the sun a feminine, in all Teutonic

languages; and it is only through the influence of classical models that in English moon has been changed into a feminine, and the sun into a masculine.’ (82)

Bouw has similar findings in his study of the Bible and the moon, by tracing the trajectory as going from moon gods to moon goddesses. For example, he claims that the original moon god is called Nanna, “a male, liked to jump among the stars in the form of a white bull, from which, some claim, came the English myth from which Tolkein wrote the poem “The Inn,” which has the line “the cow jumped over the moon” (45). But Inanna, Nanna’s daughter, represented the waxing crescent phase of the moon: “She is said to give life to the moon and then to take it away in the moon’s waning stages, that is, after full moon” (45). Bouw continues:

Nanna, the original moon god, became Toth, Asimbabber, Suen, Imaqah, Ilah, and Sin, the Acadian moon god. Sin is also worshipped by the Arabs of a particular peninsula, which gave their peninsula its name, Sinai. Inanna remained associated with the crescent moon and went under such diverse names as Ashtoreth, Astarte, Diana, Ishtar, Selene, Kali, and Allat. Each of these moon goddesses also bore the title, Queen of Heaven, and each was at one time or another pictured as a woman with the moon under her feet. (45)

For Christian Catholics, the Virgin Mary, who is the mother of Jesus, is the person described in Revelations 12:1-2:

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Mohammed is also compared to the moon in the “Fatima Zahra.” It is said that her face shone brightly and lit up the sky at her birth.⁵⁷ In this regards, Fatima can be compared to the Virgin Mary⁵⁸ who is also called the Queen of heaven and compared to the moon. However, for the purposes of my research interest as it pertains to the book being studied in this chapter, I would like to look more closely at the effects of the moon on people’s sanity, as well as the place and role of the moon, moon worship, and moon goddesses in mythology.

The moon known in French as “*Lune*”, and in Latin, Italian, and Spanish as “*Luna*”, is represented in mythology as a female goddess. In Egypt, she is worshipped as *Isis*, in Greek, she is initially *Hecate*, *Selene*, or *Luna* and later, she is associated with *Artemis* just as *Apollo* is associated with *Helios*, the sun god. In her *Hecate* form, she is also the crone and the hag. Like the other goddesses of insanity, madness, violent rage, and possessive spirits, treated in chapters one and two, *Hecate*’s old Greek statue shows her as having wings and wielding a snake. She is also the oldest Greek form of the triple goddesses that was discussed in chapter four, thus she has

⁵⁷ “Golden Sayings and Speeches of the Prophet Hazrat Muhammad,” (47). (cited in Buow, 46)

⁵⁸ Fatima is by no means the Islamic version of Mary. Her Islamic version is Mariam and she holds a special place. Fatima is a woman, a mother, and a wife to be put on a level with any other woman. Note that in Islam, Paradise is to be found under the feet of the mother –meaning that men (husbands, sons, daughters, brothers) ought to behave respectfully and take care of women if they wish to be rewarded by God and go to Paradise.

control over birth, life, and death.⁵⁹ For the Romans, the moon goddess is *Diana*, the hunteress, who is also the goddess of fertility like *Inanna*. In Dahomey (Now Benin Republic) in Africa, she is known and worshipped as *Mawu (Maou)*, and among many cultures, she is associated with menstruation. In fact, menstruation comes from Latin *mensis*, which means moon or month. In many African cultures, as among the Igbo, where the moon is called “Onwa”, when a woman misses her menstruation indicating pregnancy, she is said to have missed her moon (month) or that her moon (month) has left her. It is the same among the Mandingo of West Africa, the Susus, and the Congo tribes of Central Africa and many Native American tribes (Grice 67).

For astrologers, “the moon rules our feminine side: feelings, attitudes, memory, tradition and women - particularly mothers and their children. [...] The moon governs the stomach, bodily fluids, breasts, ovaries and all reproductive organs” (Grice 67). This is in line with the assertions of the Spiritual Science Research Foundation. Their examination of the effect of the moon on human behavior using spiritual research methodologies shows that the moon does have effect on human behavior. They find that the frequencies emanating from the moon, affects the frequencies of the mental body, which is the mind - both conscious and unconscious. The mind consists of our feelings, emotions, and desires, and the subconscious mind contains embedded impressions that decide people’s basic nature, and their personality. This effect is what they refer to as the generic subtle or intangible effect of the moon on the mind, and this influences the thoughts and actions of humans. Members of the Spiritual Science Research Foundation believe that on new moon day, the dark side of the moon faces the earth causing darkness to be

⁵⁹ Chrionna Paistin. « Gods and Goddesses » 11 Nov. 2012.

<<http://witchiegirl.tripod.com/deities.html>>

transmitted towards the earth, thus affecting the human mind – thoughts, emotions, and actions - in a negative way. But on a full moon day, the illuminated side of the moon faces the earth causing positive frequencies and energies to be released towards the earth, and these frequencies affect the human mind in a positive way. However, they do insist that the moon’s frequencies usually heighten a person’s innermost desires or personalities be they good or bad.

For Foster and Roenneberg, “lunar cycles had, and continue to have, an influence upon human culture, though despite a persistent belief that our mental health and other behaviors are modulated by the phases of the moon, there is no solid evidence that human biology is in any way regulated by the lunar cycle” (784). There are many who continue to say that the moon does in fact have effects on certain aspects of human behavior. For example, Purpura believes that crime increases during the full moon phase based on his analysis, and study of police activities and calls during those times, which are significantly high (Purpura). For Lieber, in his article, “Human Aggression and the Lunar Synodic Cycle”, there is a correlation between the lunar cycles and aggressive behavior, such as homicides, suicides, fatal traffic accidents, aggravated assaults, and psychiatric emergency room visits occurring in Dade County, Florida. These occurrences all show lunar periodicities.⁶⁰ Blackmon & Catalina, in their article “The Moon and the Emergency Room”, also agree that there is a slightly high volume of emergency room services demand in their study done in St Joseph, Missouri. Pettigrew, a psychotherapist and relationship counselor, observes violent incidents in correctional settings during full moon. (43). Others recorded high volume of suicide attempts (Taylor & Diespecker, 110), hospital

⁶⁰ Lieber Al. “Human aggression and the lunar synodic cycle”. Web. 12 May, 2012.

<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/641019>>

admissions (Templer & Veleber, Weiskott & Tipton), and calls to telephone counseling services (Templer & Veleber, Weiskott). In their article, “Fear of Darkness, the Full Moon and the Nocturnal Ecology of African Lions,” Packer et al present the results of the research they carried out on the predatory behavior of African lions, in relation to lunar cycle, on the largest dataset of lion attacks ever assembled. They found that:

African lions are as sensitive to moonlight when hunting humans as when hunting herbivores and that lions are most dangerous to humans when the moon is faint or below the horizon. At night, people are most active between dusk and 10:00 pm, thus most lion attacks occur in the first weeks following the full moon (when the moon rises at least an hour after sunset). Consequently, the full moon is a reliable indicator of impending danger, perhaps helping to explain why the full moon has been the subject of so many myths and misconceptions.

Thus during the new and full moon, there is believed to be an increased and heightened number of crimes, violent behavior, health issues, and even animal attacks. But what relationship does the moon have with lunacy?

5.4 The Moon and Lunacy

The word “lunacy” is derived from the roman moon goddess, Luna (Raison et al, 99; Owens et al), also known as Selena, Hecate and Diana. The association of the moon with mental imbalance and other sicknesses, such as epilepsy, has persisted since ancient times despite the many research findings in recent times that have proved otherwise (Raison et al, Jordan)⁶¹. For

⁶¹ Here is a partial list of research that show that the moon has no effect on human behavior as established by J. M. Gutierrez-Garcia & F. Tusell in their article, “Suicides and the

example, the moon does not exert any tangible gravitational pull on dormant bodies of water, such as ponds, lakes, etc., which are much larger than body fluids (Britt). How then can it exercise any huge influence on body fluids that are quite minute, in comparison with bodies of water, such as lakes?

5.5 Monday Madness: Lunar Effect in Les Yeux du volcan.

The author of the novel, *Les Yeux du volcan*, takes lunar effects to an entirely new level. Not only does the moon have effect on people, or make them act according to its cycles, its effects are also more pronounced on Mondays. Monday is *lundi* in French, a day named after the moon (*Lune, Luna*), and dedicated to its worship among moon worshippers. In the novel, the moon brings bad luck, and Monday is a day of curses and misfortune, a day that bad things happen. As the narrator puts it:

Si les choses étaient arrivées un lundi, personne ne s'en serait étonné. Le lundi est notre jour de poisson. Depuis nos lointains ancêtres, nous accueillons nos catastrophes le lundi.

Lunar Cycle” in which they too found no correlation between the lunar cycle and human behavior. “on labour absenteeism (Sands & Miller); on accidents and physical diseases (Coates, Jehle, & Cottingham); on births (Strolego, Gigli, & Bugalho, Kelly & Martens); on crisis calls (McDonald, Perkins, & Pickering, Biclus, Kelly, & Byrnes); on suicide deaths (Rogers, Masterton, & McGuire; Martin, Kelly, & Saklofske); and on suicide attempts (Maldonado & Kraus, Martin, *et al.*, Kelly, Rotton, & Culver). Relevant studies in Spain about moon phases and suicide include Garcia-Prieto, Bobes, Bousoio, Suarez, and Gonziilez and Rodes-Lloret, Monera-Olmos, and Marti-Lloret. Other informative articles about traditional lunar misconceptions are by Rotton and Kelly and Quincey.

Nous savons que ce jour ne nous fera jamais de cadeau. (exemple de Maximilien Handa, leur héros le plus célèbre qui mourut un lundi suivant la morsure du crabe)» (*LYV* 46 - 47).

A list of misfortunes that occur on Monday include, the madness orchestrated by Arthur Nola, younger brother of Emmanuel and cousin of the tribe's defunct founder of the fatherland. The Monday prior to the enactment of a missed appointment, Nola lands in the lobby of the hospital triage Géméaux with fifty-nine bodies of cats and briskly demands an autopsy. He disturbs doctors on all six floors of the hospital, infuriates nurses and room girls, molests midwives, and women in labor (*LYV*, 32-33). On another cursed Monday, Mr. Delos Santos, a citizen of the city, finds a dead fly in a glass of lemon drink. Why pay attention to such banality? A fly, it dies anywhere. However, through random conversations, Delos Santos is told by his interlocutors that they all have, that morning, found bizarre things in their environments, one found a dead fly, the other a dead bird. The deputy mayor found a dead snake in his bed (*LYV* 69). Thus, the people in this novel treat these occurrences as premonitions, because they happen on Mondays. Even colonel Pedro, the man preparing a coup d'état to free his people is said to be under the influence of the moon. Alleando Calero explains this later when she finally succeeds in reclaiming her position and freeing herself from the abuse she is going through at her husband's place, which I will discuss in the next section. While introducing Colonel Pedro to the *colosse*, she says: "C'est le colonel Pedro, dit Alleando Calero. Il ne supporte pas les influences de la nouvelle lune. Mais, que voulez-vous, ajouta-t-elle, tout ce pays est devenu une histoire de fous" (*LYV* 149). The worst of these occurrences, however, is the sexual and religious abuse of Dona Alleando by her husband, Benoit Goldmann. In the next section, I will study the forms of abuse that contribute to

the construction of Dona Alleando's madness. Note that my take on sexual abuse is different from what is normally considered as sexual abuse.

5.6 Spiritual / Religious and Sexual Abuse:

In this section, I will look at both spiritual/religious abuse and sexual abuse at the same time, as both are intertwined in the novel. One is used to perpetuate the other. First, I will start with sexual abuse. Generally, sexual abuse is when someone is subjected to sexual involvement either through coercion, manipulation, or force, without the person's consent. However, in this chapter, I look at sexual abuse in a different way – I consider sex and intimacy denial as abuse, as they are part of the Christian marriage injunction. I use the Christian marriage injunction because the protagonist in this novel uses reading the Christian bible to shy away from his responsibilities towards his wife. This act is very common among Christians, whereby the burden is laid on the woman as the one whose responsibility it is to build the home. By making the protagonist use the Scriptures, the author makes using biblical scripture to prove a point pertinent to my argument, because he has invoked such opinion and belief. Another reason for my using the Scriptures to prove my point is because of Benoit Goldmann's status and mission in the novel. He is waiting for and hoping to be part of a military revolution, that will liberate his people. This makes him a nation builder, so to speak. Lynn D. Wardle, who believes that the family is at the foundation of the American Constitution, states:

Marriage shaped the formation of the Constitution of the United States of America not only as a social force but also as a political ideology. The Founders of the United States had a strong "political view" of marriage. They believed that the marital family was the institutional foundation of republican government, the substructure upon which the superstructure of the system of the Constitution and laws rested. The Founders

considered certain domestic habits or virtues (or, as de Tocqueville later called them, "habits of the heart") as necessary "preconditions" for maintaining the constitutional Republic. These domestic habits included and were nurtured by marriage and the marital family. The Founders believed that marriages and families were the first schoolrooms of democracy, the institutions in which essential civic virtue is inculcated. (450-451)

John Adams, one of the founders of the American Constitution, also writes that "The foundation of national Morality must be laid in private Families."⁶² In Africa, families are also very important, as they make up the communities. Every man is expected to have a family, by marrying and raising children, because it is through these that he can perpetuate the name of his family, and carry on lineage. Traditionally, African men are expected to provide for their families. For Benoit Goldmann to actually carry out his public duties effectively, it is pertinent that he performs his marital duties towards his wife appropriately, and based on his own religious beliefs. But what are these marital duties?

When a man and a woman marry, they become one by virtue of their marriage contract depending on the type of marriage it is and through their sexual involvement and their offspring. From Benoit Goldmann's recourse to the Scripture, I deduce that his marriage is a Christian religious marriage. In the first book of Corinthians, chapter seven verses one to five, Paul, writes:

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."² But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.³ The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.⁴ For the

⁶² Cited in Wardle (451)

wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.⁵ Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

So for Christians a married couple owe each other both sex and intimacy as a matter of rights, and have no right to deny each other unless for spiritual reasons. Failure to do this constitutes a breaking of oaths and abuse of the spouse's trust. As this particular offense is sexual in nature, it therefore constitutes sexual abuse. As we will see in this section, religious and spiritual abuse are used to perpetuate sexual abuse because of the husband misinterpreting and abusing this biblical injunction, and so deprives his wife of sex and intimacy on false spiritual ground – reading the scripture.

5.6.1 Sexual Abuse

Usually, sexual abuse is defined as when someone is forced to participate in sexual activities without his or her consent. What about when an intimate partner is denied sex for no just cause probably out of fear, to wield power, as punishment, or as a passive aggressive attitude? I am of a strong opinion that sex denial constitutes abuse as it can destroy someone's self-confidence and entail many other emotional and mental issues that can cause insanity or other mental disorders in the person. In Africa where polygamy is still acceptable, often time, women are denied sex while their husbands enjoy all the sex they want. Of course, women cannot complain and if they do, they run the risk of permanently having sex withheld from them in which case, they are forbidden to get it outside the marriage. In a study titled "Withholding Sex and Forced Sex: Dimensions of Violence Against Zimbabwean Women" the authors,

Charlotte Watts et al., claim that “pleasing a woman sexually is generally not considered important, particularly after marriage. Furthermore, in Zimbabwe (Africa) there is traditionally little communication between spouses about sexual issues. Because women are taught that they should not enjoy sex, it is often difficult for them to express their sexual feelings and needs” (58). In their study, they define sexual abuse as “including unwanted touching, attempted and forced sexual intercourse, withdrawal of sex by the man” (59). Of the 866 women they interviewed, 34% have been either forced to have sex or denied sex and out the 34%, 25% have been denied sex, but the overall number of women who have been denied sex by their husbands is 17% or 151 of them. This statistics makes sex denial a serious sexual abuse issue. The research also finds that some of the men who refuse their wives sex do so in order to protect their wives from contracting the diseases they have such as HIV/AIDS. However, they never hold an open conversation with their wives, but allow the wives to go through deep emotional and mental turmoil and thinking that it is their fault that their husbands refuse to have sex with them.

Such is the case with Dona Alleando in *Les Yeux du volcan*. Her husband will not sleep with her despite all her pleas and attempts at getting him to be intimate with her. It is not until she snaps that he pays her attention. This thus begs the questions of “what is intimacy and why is it important in a marriage. In their article, “Marital Intimacy: Conceptualization and Assessment”, S. Van den Broucke, W. Vandereycken, and H. Vertommen define intimacy

As a quality of a personal relationship at a certain point in time, intimacy primarily refers to a *dyadic* phenomenon, that is, the degree of connectedness or interdependence between two partners. As such, it includes affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects; partners who are in an “intimate” relationship with each other depend upon one another for the appreciation and the cognitive construal of their relationship, as well as for the regulation

of their interactions In other words, intimate partners are affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally directed toward their relationship as a “unit” (222).

Hence, intimacy involves two people who connect deeply not only through feelings of love, but who get to know and accept each other in a profound way and can tolerate each other’s behavior. They cease keeping secrets as they know that they are accepted by the other and they trust that the other accepts them just as they are and would do anything to help them deal with any situations in their lives. While feelings of affection are integral to intimacy, they are not the only grounds for intimacy. In fact, people can be intimate without necessarily being sexual partners. At the intimacy level, people just become comfortable with each other. However, in a marriage, sex and feelings of affection are the tenets of intimacy and the pivots around which intimacy revolves. Dona Alleando finds herself in this situation when her husband would not be intimate with her.

5.6.2 Intimacy and Sexual Anorexia Abuse

In *Intimacy Anorexia: The Book*, as well as in his article “Sexual Anorexia: The New Paradigm for Hyposexual Desire Disorder”, Dr. Douglas Weiss, a licensed psychologist and director of Heart to Heart Counseling Center, uses intimacy anorexia to describe people who actively avoid intimacy with their partner. This term is used interchangeably with sexual anorexia but the only difference is that while one actively avoids intimacy but can perform sex, the other avoids sex but can tolerate closeness and other forms of intimacy. Dr. Patrick Carnes, who has been credited with popularizing the word, “sexual anorexia” in his book, *Sexual Anorexia — Overcoming Sexual Self-Hatred*, defined sexual anorexic persons as “Those who cannot force themselves to be sexual without dire internal consequences and an obsessive state in which the physical, mental and emotional task of avoiding sex dominates one’s life” (cited in

Weiss 3). Hence the sexually and intimacy anorexic person deliberately sabotages and refuses intimacy and/or sex to his/her partner in a marriage or committed relationship.

According to Douglas Weiss, intimacy anorexia:

only appears inside of a marriage or long-term committed relationship. To everyone else, these people look and act quite normal, even engaging. However, when they go home, they are disconnected and even avoidant of any real intimacy with their spouse or partner. They prefer a book, television, their cell phone, work, computer, almost anything else that helps them avoid connecting with their spouse. Their spouses feel unwanted, unnoticed, hurt, resentful, and angry. They have to beg to be loved, heard, seen, or touched. In public, the offending spouses pretend to be affectionate and caring but, at home, rarely a praise or any touch is given. (65)

I use this word to describe Benoît Goldmann because just as Carnes defines it, he has a deep fear of being intimate with his wife as if there might be dire consequences due to his physiological inadequacies and his hemorrhoid and epistaxis. Also according to Weiss's definition, he compulsively withholds emotional, spiritual, and sexual intimacy from his wife. He reads the scriptures alone as a means of avoiding intimacy with his wife, not as a means of developing himself spiritually. He is also emotionally distant from his wife as he chooses to observe nature rather than expose his feelings to his wife. Even though he admires her sculpted body and physique, he never pays her compliments and lets her know how he feels about her. He instead consistently pushes her away and even suggests her leaving rather than opening himself up to her sexually, spiritually, and emotionally. The sexual anorexic person also has a pattern of short-term relationships and from what the author writes about Benoît Goldmann, he has been

married eight times before marrying Dona Alleando and none of the marriages lasts beyond the honeymoon as all the women leave him due to his attitude.

5.6.3 Religious Abuse

The abuse against Dona Alleando Calero is twofold – sexual and religious. Her husband refuses to make love to her, opting to read the Scripture in order to keep himself from being intimate with her, to keep her from bothering him, and to make her angry. The denial causes her to be sleep deprived and to be depressed. When she complains, her complaint is blamed on the moon and Monday, the day of misfortunes:

Pour embêter sa femme, ce soir-là, Benoît Goldmann lisait la Genèse à haute voix. C'était d'ailleurs comme ça tous les soirs. Dès qu'approchait l'heure du lit, l'adjudant plantait ses yeux sur les écritures. De cette manière, il était sûr que Dona Alleando n'oserait pas. (81) ... Toujours les fois qu'il sentait que sa femme allait l'importuner avec cette voracité charnelle qu'il n'était jamais arrivé à comprendre. (même si, des années auparavant, l'adjudant avait été un loup en la matière), Benoît Goldmann rivait ses yeux et son nez sur la parole de Dieu (82).

Dona Alleando is his eighth wife who even manages to stay for a few months. All the other wives leave him within forty-five days during their honeymoon phase for one reason only – “inadéquation physiologique avancée” (*LYV* 101), which makes the sergeant swear never to show his “procreation button” (*LYV* 101) to Dona Alleando. But Dona Alleando wants so badly for the marriage to work. Therefore, instead of leaving, she stays and allows herself to be pushed to depression and insanity. This is indeed one of the reasons why some women stay on in an abusive relationship – they like to play the heroine and they keep believing that their men will come around. They like to be the ones who change a man and they feel that if the marriage does

not work, it will be seen as their fault. Some women make it work at all costs. Dona Alleando being one of such women, throws her naked body at her husband, frolics with him, cries, weeps, and begs, but he still ignores her. Guessing that her husband does not have large enough sexual organs and is therefore not bold enough to allow her to see his penis, she proposes to him to make love to her with his fingers “fais-moi l’amour avec tes doigts. Je serais heureuse” (*LYV* 101), and still he refuses. Despite the sergeant’s father’s injunction to him to always be truthful, he is never truthful to his wife about why he refuses to sleep with her. Instead, he blames it on the hemorrhoid and epistaxis that he experiences four to five consecutive days monthly like a woman and indeed some people call him a woman saying that he “voyait ses lunes par le nez” (*LYV* 105). To prevent his wife from touching him during the night while he sleeps, he places an automatic gun between them.

--- Quel jour sommes-nous, Alleando ?

Encore un lundi. Tais-toi. Le Lundi est pour nous un jour fermé.

--- Tu peux partir si tu veux, Alleando.

--- Ma grand-mère disait qu’on pouvait aimer une femme avec ses doigts.

--- Je préfère le faire avec un fusil, dit l’adjutant. (102)

He knows that Alleando does not want to leave him and will not leave him so he dangles the idea in her face. He suggests to her to leave, knowing that he has completely dominated and controlled her. She has no work and has no means of supporting herself as he makes all the financial decisions in the family, which constitutes economic abuse. The power and control wheel describes economic abuse as “Preventing her (a woman) from getting or keeping a job. Making her ask for money. Giving her an allowance. Taking her money. Not letting her know about or have access to family income.” By using reading the scripture to avoid intimacy with

his wife, he therefore abuses and mocks his wife. This abuse leads to his wife's state of madness. In the next section, I will analyse Dona Alleando's madness and its implications.

5.7 *Cooking up a Revolution*

One day, after so much sex and sleep deprivation, Dona Alleando cannot take it anymore, and she snaps. First, she takes off her cloths, thus becoming naked. Then she proceeds to cut all her clothing including her underwear, panties, and braziers in pieces and starts cooking them for her husband. She adds her make-up such as her lipsticks and she adds her menstrual pads as well as her jewelries. She spends the entire night cooking up this "Revolution" (LYV 107), as she calls it. When the cook informs her husband about what his wife is doing, he goes to her and while attempting to hug and kiss her, she bites off his lip. Later when she snaps out of her madness, she feels bad at her action and takes care of her husband's wound. Just as Dr. Douglas Weiss observes through his counseling of people in intimacy anorexic relationships, a blog entry by a blogger who identifies herself as Iselflove, describes in details and precisely what it feels like to be denied sex and intimacy. According to this blog⁶³:

Withholding sex in a "loving" relationship is Emotional Abuse. Denying one's partner the bond which cultivates closeness and intimacy with them is Emotional Abuse. Whether their refusal is due to mental illness, passive/aggressive anger or control issues or an underlying reason that even they are not aware of, the act of not even trying to right this wrong is Emotional Abuse. [...] Denying one's partner sex and sexual intimacy is abuse

⁶³ Iselflove. "I live in a Sexless Marriage: Refusing Sex = Emotional Abuse" *Experience Project* July 22, 2010. Web. 16 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.experienceproject.com/stories/Live-In-A-Sexless-Marriage/1116207>>.

because it makes their partner feel unwanted, undesired, unworthy, unattractive, unhappy and unfulfilled. [...] It may make their partner question their self-worth, it may cause depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, lessen their ability to think rationally, create a sense of hopelessness and cause them constant worry. It is crippling. It is emotionally painful. It indeed hurts. It drains one's energy, makes them feel like they're fighting a losing battle, and makes them question their own sanity.

These are exactly the feelings that Alleando has and these feelings of inadequacy, unattractiveness, and unwantedness pushes her to debase and degrade herself, (She was actually stark naked in front of the cook), and uses her husband's terminology and tactics to try to get through to him. Her husband, Benoit Goldmann, is one of those who are expected to lead the revolution among his people. He is revered, respected, and looked up to. However, he has a rare disease that causes him to hemorrhage constantly. He also has what he considers to be inadequate sexual organs, which he does not want to expose to his wife, which constitutes lack of sincerity in the marriage. He conceals his sexual issues, marries a vibrant young woman of twenty-nine years, and subjects her to emotional and psychological abuse through his intimacy anorexia. When she complains, he does not take her concerns seriously but minimizes them and even ignores her altogether. She stays awake many nights trying to get his attention, which she never succeeds in getting. According to research, prolonged sleep deprivation causes changes in mood (Tyler; Luby et al., Ross); and in people with disorders such as bipolar, sleep deprivation even for half of a night induces mania. (Wehr et al., Wehr, Wright). This sleep deprivation that induces mania is possibly related to what is known in academic literature as the "Transylvanian Effect" (Mason, cited in Owens et al., 123), which is "the possible influence of the lunar cycle over psychological and physiological disturbances in the human being" (Owens et al 123). When

Dona Alleando reacts, her reaction is attributed to the moon. In fact, instead of trying to address and satisfy her sexual needs when she loses her mind, her husband instead “brula des résines de raphia et des racines de capselle pour éloigner les influences de la nouvelle lune.” (*LYV* 113). By blaming the moon, the husband, like Hamlet, exonerates himself of his role and refuses to assume responsibility for his actions. This attitude that Benoit Goldmann exhibits is also a passive-aggressive behavior, an attitude in which someone calmly infuriates and aggravates others, thereby pushing them to snap and appearing to be the victim and the good person in the situation. By ignoring his wife, refusing to acknowledge her concerns, and blaming her outbursts on the effects of the moon, he aggravates her all the more, and causes her to erupt and become violent.

Many women who marry rich men are subjected to idleness and dependency as they are mostly not allowed to work, and most of the time, house helpers such as maids, servants, gardeners, and cooks are provided for them, leaving them time to just be their husband's play thing and to bear children. Even when they bear children, they are provided with nannies. However, the children occupy their time, give them a sense of being busy and important, and take their minds off certain negative thoughts such as feelings of worthlessness. But in the case of Alleando, she is denied everything and left to wallow deeply in these negative feelings that cause deep emotional and psychological scars. She is denied intimacy by her husband, which ensures that she is never going to be able to bear children. She is provided with house helpers, which means that she cannot employ her time gainfully, be creative, or employ whatever talents she has. Hence, the role of women in such marriages is to be objects for their husbands' self-aggrandizement and fulfillment, with no emotions and contributions of their own, companions with no attachments. Alleando is in fact vegetating and wasting away. Therefore, when she

snaps, the only concept in her mind is her husband's schemes and goals – a revolution as she no longer lives her own ideals. This she ties to what would primarily have been her work – cooking for her husband. The objects she uses in her cooking are all symbolic. We see a category of things – food items, clothing items, sanitation items, as well as jewelry.

Food items are definitely supposed to nourish someone and Alleando has been denied the opportunity to nourish anyone. Her husband showers her with gifts of expensive clothing and jewelry just to show off his wealth. He does so for his own pride as the author indicates : “Au moment où l’adjudant arriva, sa femme levait le bras pour jeter dans la marmite ses pierres, ses boucles d’oreilles en or, ses bracelets en or, tout ce qui avait fait d’elle le centre de l’admiration de Hondo-Norte et d’Hozanna” (107). Though these objects are beautiful and expensive, they end up objectifying her. Her sanitation pads signify her fertility, womanhood, and chances at motherhood being wasted. Every monthly menstruation she goes through represents a missed opportunity at being a mother, which is the joy of every African woman. Many people stay in marriages only because of their children and most childless women are insecure and feel inadequate and unfulfilled as we have seen in *Juletane*. By refusing to sleep with his wife, he is denying her the opportunity of experiencing the joys of motherhood. Alleando also adds her make-up items such as lipsticks and other beauty products in her big pot of revolution to show her husband that those are not important to her. Therefore, by combining all these elements in her big pot of revolution, she is taking back control of her life. She is breaking her chains of limitation and objectification. She is desperately looking to finally be able to get her husband's attention and to get him to hear her through actions; since she is not able to achieve these aims through the use of words, she has to achieve them through actions and by using her husband's

military language – a revolution. In the upcoming section, I will explore the role of the community in the perpetration of abuse in *Les Yeux du volcan*.

5.8 Communal Role in the Abuse of Dona Alleando in *Les Yeux du volcan*

As is noted by Thomas Szasz, medical and legal officers often become clients of abusers and become vehicles in the construction of madness as they listen to tales by the family and friends of the person conceived to be mentally ill. Based on these tales, they diagnose a person as mad, thereby lending legitimacy to these claims without testing the person. “Most people recognize that individuals and institutions – the family, employers, the court, the state – sometimes use psychiatry as a weapon against the individual: They attribute the role of mental patient to certain persons to control them, if need be by depriving them of property and liberty” (*My Madness Saved me 9-10*). On the other hand, some people who have already been classified as mad, insane, lunatics, or mentally ill also use psychiatry to obtain privileges and to equally control others. For example, after biting her husband, Alleando comes to her senses. She then runs to the home pharmacy to get first aid materials, which she administers on her husband’s wound. She however tells him that “ça t’apprendra à me préférer les écritures” (113) indicating that she is not completely out her mind when she attacks her husband, but simply angry, and her act of violence against her husband helps the anger to dissipate. This substantiates Szasz and Donald’s claim that madness is not a structural disease, as it is not based on scientific facts, but a functional one that can be caused by many social factors. Because of the ability of family members to construct the madness in their relatives, it constitutes abuse and makes the medical, legal, and other officers involved, accomplices in the perpetuation of this abuse.

When a woman acts out her emotions, even though she might have been complaining about a situation or an issue for a long time and been ignored, she is instantly considered to be

insane. This is because men cannot conceive of why a woman cannot just sit in one place, do exactly as she is told, and be content with whatever treatment she is subjected to. Men know what is best for a woman and expect her, without dispute to accept their decisions. Thus, when Alleando snaps, her husband quickly rules her condition as madness and after taking measures to eliminate the influence of the moon, he invites his doctor friend who has his own agenda.

- Qu'est-ce que tu fous ? gronda l'adjutant.

- M'encule pas, répondit Alleando Calero. Je cuisine la Révolution, c'est mon droit.

Ce fut alors seulement que l'adjutant réalisa que sa femme venait de passer folle. Il la prit dans ses bras et essaya de l'embrasser sur la bouche. Elle lui déchira la lèvre supérieure d'un coup de dents. La blessure était profonde. Elle lâchait un flot de sang. L'adjutant retourna dans sa chambre. Il alla à la porte principale et se mit à regarder les rochers, du côté de Tombalbaye. (106-107)

After the wife's brief state of insanity, he remembers that on another « Monday » night, she came to him while he was busy reading the Scriptures and he her off without even looking up from his reading: "Alleando, toute nue, s'était mise à lui crier une colère de tous les diables, sans respecter les Écritures. ... L'adjutant avait craint un moment que l'écervelée ne prît le livre de Dieu et ne le jetât par la fenêtre. Mais elle était allée se coucher pour tranquilliser ses nerfs, et lui s'était mis à la fenêtre pour contempler la nuit" (111).

Hence, each time she expresses herself, instead of trying to understand her or to alleviate her pains, he goes and admires inanimate "Nature" such as rocks and the darkness of the night while destroying her own "nature". It is almost as if he compares her to them, as if he wills her to be like the rocks, dormant, docile, speechless, and as if just like the darkness of the night that is so mysterious and unfathomable, he cannot fathom or understand her either and he is afraid of

both. He is known to shoot incessantly at even cockroaches and rats during the night and he always sleeps with his gun by his side because of his deep fear of both being intimate with his wife and of the night.

Il allongea le fusil à répétition entre sa femme et lui, puis se coucha. Pendant longtemps, comme cela lui était souvent arrivé, ses yeux flottèrent sous le plafond avant de s'immerger dans le sommeil, tandis que sa main droite continuait à s'agiter sur le fusil. [...] l'adjudant se réveilla et fit péter son fusil pour descendre une énorme souris qui avait eu le malheur de passer sur son corps, [...] Les coups de pétoire ne réveillaient plus personne dans le quartier depuis que le monde entier savait que Benoît Goldmann sortait son fusil même pour tuer un cafard. [...] la seule personne que les pétards et les rafales réveillaient ne pouvait être, pour les malheurs de l'adjudant, que Dona Alleando sa femme, coincée dans un besoin d'amour visible de toute la ville (*LYV 99*).

Hence, Benoît Goldmann is not just denying his wife sex and intimacy, he also keeps her in a constant state of fear by placing a gun between them and by shooting sporadically at cockroaches and rats in the night. This increases her sleeplessness, which pushes her into a manic state. Of interest is the last part of the quotation that shows that Dona Alleando's need for love is visible throughout the city. As I have mentioned earlier, in Africa, people are not so private, as everyone knows what everyone else is doing. So when a woman is neglected, it is public knowledge, which makes it even more humiliating. The cook and other house-helpers are all members of the community and they of course recount whatever they observe, hear, and witness in the Goldmann household to the community. Yet, no one does anything to try to help her.

On the particular day of Alleando's emotional melt-down, her husband sends for his Doctor friend who comes to the house to treat his wife's mental illness based entirely on his

tales. The doctor, without interviewing Alleando, administers Nembutal to her as a way of helping his friend:

Le docteur examina la malade et prescrivit du Nembutal. Il eut ensuite une discussion avec l'adjudant.

- C'est toujours ce même problème de frustration sexuelle...

Alleando Calero dormait sous l'effet de sa dose de Nembutal. C'est pour parler sagesse et passé militaire que le docteur saisissait la moindre occasion d'aller voir l'adjudant Goldmann. (115)

So the Doctor is there for two reasons only, to help his friend keeps his wife's desires in check and for his own personal agenda – to banter and revel in their past military glory, none of which is of any benefit to Alleando, the helpless woman. She finds herself a victim of male conspiracy geared towards her suppression and annihilation and which thus constitutes communal abuse.

It should be noted that Nembutal, also known as pentobarbital, is a barbiturate that is used to euthanize pets. It has also come to be known as 'death in a bottle.'⁶⁴ According to Susan Donaldson James of ABC News, "The lethal drug, once widely available in the U.S. as a sleep aid and now used primarily in veterinary medicine, is an ingredient in the fatal cocktails that killed Marilyn Monroe and Judy Garland in the 1960s" (July 31 2008). Subsequently, it has been

⁶⁴ Susan Donaldson James, "Tourists Trek to Mexico for 'Death in a Bottle'" *ABCNews* July 31, 2008. Friday, 15 Feb. 2013.

<<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/story?id=5481482&page=1>>

reported by BBC news⁶⁵ of July 18, 2012 that “The United States state of Texas executed its first death row inmate with a single lethal injection of the sedative pentobarbital on July 18, 2012. Yokamon Hearn⁶⁶, 33, was convicted for the carjacking and murder of a Dallas stockbroker in 1998.” The news goes on to list several states in the United States, which have opted for this death cocktail in the execution of their death row inmates. These states include Ohio, Washington, Idaho, Texas, and Georgia. So, instead of granting his wife, Dona Alleando, the emotional support she needs, she is being gradually killed by her husband’s doctor friend, who is feeding her with doses of Nembutal, a fatal drug that makes people die in their sleep. It is also interesting to note that the name Nembutal was coined by Dr. John S. Lundy, who started using it in 1930.⁶⁷ Lundy clearly sounds like Lundi, the French version of Monday, which is considered the day of evil occurrences in this novel because of its connection to the moon. The name of the Danish manufacturer of the drug is Lundbeck, which was founded by Hans Lundbeck in 1915 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Lundbeck in a way still references “lundi.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-18897310>

⁶⁶ Rick Halperin, “Texas executes Yokamon Hearn with pentobarbital” *Associate Press*, 18 July 2012, <http://deathpenaltynews.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/texas-executes-yokamon-hearn.html> retrieved Friday, February 15, 2013.

⁶⁷ L. C. Fosburgh, "From this point in time: Some memories of my part in the history of anesthesia - John S. Lundy, MD". *AANA Journal* 65.4 (1997): 323 – 328.

5.9 Taking Back Control

The author, in a rather sinister, but jovial manner, uses a play of words to show how myth, and in this case, the myth of the lunar cycle and lunar effect are used to construct madness in people and particularly in women as well as to suppress and control them. He also shows that Africa is a land of myths and illusion. Africans strive on the creation, appropriation, and perpetuation of myths, with dire and costly consequences to them. However, he also shows how women can take back control of their lives, by taking action, and even acting crazy, if need be, to regain their places in both their families and society. Sometimes, a woman needs to speak her husband's language to make him hear and understand her, and in Dona Alleando's case, she decides on a revolution, which is all her husband lives for and she is able to revolutionize her marriage. For example, after Dona Alleando's moment of insanity, her husband finally decides to seek medical help for his situation and he also agrees to move back to the City of Tombalbaye at his wife's request. He even starts expressing his love verbally to her as he tells her: "Pour toi, je pourrais tout aimer, dit l'adjudant. J'ai laissé la guerre à cause de toi, moi l'artiste de la pétroire, ange noir de la Révolution, à cause de toi, je me suis foutu infirme, condamné à fusiller des bestioles" (*LYV* 114). Finally, the moment of insanity makes him become intimate with her. This turn of events changes her personality completely as she even becomes a part of his discussion with his political friends and revolutionaries, thus making her a part of his life.

⁶⁸ Lundbeck Press Release. "Lundbeck Overhauls Pentobarbital Distribution Program to Restrict Misuse" *Lundbeck*. July 1, 2011. Friday, 15 Feb. 2013.

<<http://investor.lundbeck.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=605775>>

What the plot resolution also buttresses is the assertion that madness in a woman is simply a reflection of the madness in the society. As with Ousmane in *Un Chant écarlate* who realizes rather late that he is the person who has been mad all along, we see that the person who is actually mad is Benoit Goldmann, but being a man, he refuses to admit it, and rather places the madness outside of him and in his wife. Both husbands project their madness on their wives, thereby destroying, or nearly destroying vibrant young women, full of love and affection. Goldmann and his wife are only able to heal after Benoit Goldmann agrees to seek treatment for his ailments: his epistaxis and hemorrhages that are causing his sexual and intimacy anorexia.

I must also insist here that though Sony Labou Tansi appears to have averted calamity by making his male protagonist finally listen to his wife, she still does not have her own voice. Her husband still does not listen to her own voice as she has to eventually speak his own language of violence and revolution to get his attention. Thus, the author still follows the pattern of African male authors who take away the voice of their female protagonists and use them to establish patriarchal orders. In this case, by not allowing Dona Alleando to desert the marriage, she is used to restore the patriarchal order of marriage in which the woman loses her voice and only speaks her husband's language.

In the next chapter, I will analyze all three novels together by looking at the degree of the Medea effect in each of them. Medea is a woman who murdered her two sons to punish her husband for betraying her love. By comparing these novels, we will be able to determine the authors that are able to avert the Medea effect and the authors who apply it fully. We will also be able to determine which of our protagonists reacted and which ones responded to the violence they suffered by exploring the differences between reaction and response.

Chapter Six

Reacting and Responding to Violence through Madness.

The madman is not the man who has lost his reason.
The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason.
- Gilbert K. Chesterton⁶⁹ (1874-1936)

Onye obula na-awi ara, mana onye n'udi ara ya.
(Everyone is mad, however each, his own kind of madness.)
- (The sayings of Akpaka, an Igbo proverb)

In chapter five, I explored the belief in lunar lunacy, and how people blamed everything they considered abnormal on the new and full moon, in *Les Yeux du volcan* by Sony Labou Tansi. I equally showed how Benoit Goldmann neglected his wife by denying her sex, while blaming the moon whenever she complained to him about her intimacy and sexual needs. This led me to treat sex denial as sexual abuse. Benoit Goldmann also preferred reading the Scriptures to being with his wife. Eventually, she snapped and became violent towards him. However, her violent behavior jolted him back to reality, and helped him to seek help for his medical needs, to listen to his wife, and to save their marriage.

In this chapter, I will do a comparative study of the three novels I am studying, *Un chant écarlate*, *Juletane*, and *Les yeux du volcan*. I will revisit the mythological representation of the female characters in the novels, through the study of the myth of Medea. I will look at whether the madness exhibited by these women is a reaction, or a response to their situations. To do this, I will try to distinguish between reaction and response by exploring the nuances that exist in their meanings. I will equally look at the role of the community in the perpetration of violence as

⁶⁹ Chesterton, G.K., <http://mdemarco.web.wesleyan.edu/gkc/quotes.html>. Cited in Szasz, T.S. *Liberation by Oppression: A Comparative Study of Slavery and Psychiatry*.

depicted in these novels, and how the female authors' representation of the madness of their female protagonists differ from that of the male author.

6.1 *The Medea Effects and Elements:*

I start this chapter by going back to the mythological, superstitious, and other beliefs that I have noted in all the novels. For example, my findings show that, in *Un Chant écarlate*, Mireille is believed to be a *Rab*, *Siren*, as well as a *Jinnie*. My research findings also indicate that, the blanket name for these in Africa is *Mamiwata*. This is demonstrated when in *Un chant écarlate*, Ma Fatim is believed to be possessed by a *Rab*, during the *ndeup* ritual to exorcise the spirit possessing her, sacrifices are made to *mama Coumba*, one of the names for *Mamiwata* in Senegal⁷⁰. Ousmane also undergoes an exorcism ritual to deal with his relationship problems, which probably causes him to loath his wife even more, leading Mireille to murder her son and almost murdering her husband as well. This brings to mind the myth of Medea who is also betrayed by her husband and in retaliation, murdered her two sons. In *Juletane*, I showed on how

⁷⁰ Full name: Mama Coumba Lamba Ndoye, the head of the *Rabs* among the Lebu ethnic group. Some refer to her as mama Ndoye as well. For more information, see Zenju Earthlyn Manuel's "The Mirror of the Great Mother", Web. 2 May 2012.

<<http://zenjuearthlynmanuel.com/2012/06/05/the-mirror-of-the-great-mother/>>; James Week's "In Search of Madame Fatou Seck", Oct. 18, 2011, *Across the Kings River.com* Web. 2 May 2012. <<http://www.acrossthekingriver.com/in-search-of-madame-fatou-seck/>>; and "Les divinités côtières dans les autres sacrés des Lebous" Web. 19 Mar. 2012. <<http://www.adminsen.o2switch.net/reportages/decouverte-du-senegal/1006-les-divinites-cotieres-dans-les-autres-sacres-des-lebous/>>.

Juletane's madness is constructed through belief in superstitions, witchcraft, sorcery, labeling, and by the history of her people. I also proved that she appropriates the madness and destroys her husband's family, even though she believes herself not to be mad. Later, in *Les Yeux du volcan*, I illustrated how belief in the effect of the moon is taken to a completely new and absurd level. This is evidenced in how everything is blamed on the moon, to the extent that it became a vehicle for abuse. Colonel Benoît Goldmann, who is sexually negligent towards his wife by denying her sex, preferred to blame her complaints on the effects of the moon, instead of addressing her needs. This led to her suffering a psychotic breakdown and brief moment of insanity. However, I demonstrated how the author averts a full-blown tragedy by causing his protagonist, colonel Goldmann, to realize his errors, and to take steps to address them. This is a counter discourse to the Medea syndrome, whereby the victim of violence retaliates by killing her children, and those her husband loves.

6.1.1 Comparison between Mireille, Juletane, and Medea

Of all the myths of Antiquity, the myth of Medea is probably one of the most remarkable, and shocking, primarily because of the crime committed against children, by their very own mother, Medea. Violence, tragedy, killings, raids, sacrifices, wars, and all forms of ruthlessness against other people or gods characterize most myths, but to see a mother turn against her own children is one of the most inconceivable and shocking of tales, worse still, when the perpetrator of such heinous crime walks free without being punished for her crime. That is what makes the myth and subsequently the tragedies and tales inspired by the character of Medea alarming.

The first version of the myth to have survived is written in 5th century B.C, by the Greek author, Euripides, followed by a Latin version written by Lucius Annaeus Seneca, between 49 and 62 BC. (Magdalena Kruk - abstract). Later in the 17th Century, Pierre Corneille adapted it in

his first tragedy, *Médée*, published in 1635. Since then, there have been many other adaptations of this myth by French, German, as well as African authors. For example, J.P. Little studied the legacy of Medea in Marie Ndiaye's *La Femme changée en bûche* and Mariama Bâ's *Un Chant écarlate*. One of the similarities he notes is that though not explicit in Ndiaye's novel, there are pointers to the Medea legacy, such as the protagonist's rapport with the devil, who sends her a tiny little dress for her child which, when put on the child, immediately combusts, causing her death. This is a direct allusion to the dress that Medea sends to Glauké, Creon's daughter, and her husband's fiancée. Lilian Corti finds the same in her study of Mireille as modern Medea, noting strong similarities between Mireille de la Vallée and Medea. Lillian Corti's article, "Mariama Bâ's Mireille as Modern Medea: The Tragic Implications of *Un Chant écarlate*," looks at a number of textual details suggesting that Bâ is possibly familiar with the myth of Medea. Corti indicates that Bâ makes references to masks and "un sexe viril en bois", (201) which recalls the phalluses worn by members of the ancient comic chorus in the myth of Medea. Mary-Katherine Miller also studies the similarities along the lines of colonialism, as she studies the reproduction of self in instances of colonialism, infanticide, and autobiography in the works of Mariama Bâ, Aminata Sow Fall, and Marguerite Duras. Miller emphasizes the "analogy between infanticide and the violence of the 'mother' country that considers its colonies as 'children' but brutalizes them nonetheless" (188 cited in Corti 89).

What this chapter is bringing fresh to the study is a look at the Medea effect, not only in *Un Chant écarlate*, but also in *Juletane*, which no one has done before,⁷¹ given that the children

⁷¹ In her book, *Rewriting the Return to Africa: Voices of Francophone Caribbean Women Writers*, Anne M. François mentioned it in passing without exploring it.

Juletane murders, though her husband's, are not born by her. The other aspect that this chapter is adding, is to show how the versions by Euripides, Seneca, and Pierre Corneille apply to the novels that fully adopted the myth being studied. Finally, I will show how Sony Labou Tansi introduces the Medea element, but circumvents the calamities associated with her, based on the choices he allows his protagonists to make, which are reconciliatory and not extreme. He makes his male protagonist, not only to listen, but to harken to his wife's complaints, as well as those of his friends, which neither Jason in Corneille's version, nor Ousmane in *Un Chant écarlate* do.

The myth of Medea tells the story of Medea, daughter of Aeetes, King of Colchis, niece of the enchantress Circe, and the granddaughter of Helios, the Sun. "Ce dieu [Helios]⁷² aime encore et épousa Perséis ou Persa, fille de Téthys et de l'Océan; il en eut Eétés, Persé, Circé et Pasiphaé."⁷³ Circe is the priestess of the moon goddess, Hecate, who is a sister of Aeetes, thus her aunt. Medea grows up having magical powers and serving as a priestess of Hecate as well. Medea's story comes to the fore because of her relationship with Jason, and the Argonauts. Jason, a deprived prince comes to Colchis, in search of the Golden Fleece. His uncle, Pelias, who has usurped power from Jason's father, Aeson, and who refuses to cede the throne of Iolchos to Jason unless the later brings him the Golden Fleece, sent him on the quest, for which many have lost their lives.

⁷² My addition for clarification.

⁷³ "Helios." 2 June 2013. < <http://www.mythesgreco.com/mythologie-grecque/dieux-greco/helios.html>>

Not wanting to give Jason the Golden Fleece, Aeetes, king and guardian of the Golden Fleece, decides to make him prove himself, by asking him to fulfill several very difficult and perilous, if not impossible tasks. Such tasks include, putting a yoke on two wild bulls that breathe fire from their nostrils and using them to plough a field for planting. He is asked to plant the teeth of a dragon and defeat the dangerous warriors that spring up from these dragon teeth. Fortunately, for him, Medea, Aeetes' daughter who falls in love with him, takes pity on him and, using her cunning and magical powers, as well as aid from Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, helps him to obtain the Golden Fleece. However, she too asks Jason to save her from her father's wrath. Jason swears a solemn oath to her by the gods by saying: "Je te ramenerai dans ma patrie et tu seras mon épouse" (Pekista, cited in Kruk 2).

When Aeetes finds out about her daughter's treason, he sends his son Absyrtos after Medea, Jason, and the Argonauts, as they are already at sea in the Argos. However, Medea tricks her brother into having a peace meeting with her, and kills him. She has his body cut in bits and thrown all over the sea to delay his father's progress in pursuing them, thus allowing them to get away. On getting back and settling in Ioschos, Pelias refuses to leave the throne for Jason yet again. So, Medea goes to the palace with the pretense that she is a priestess of Artemis, and before the eyes of Pelias' daughters, rejuvenates and restores the youth of a ram, by boiling it in magical herbs. She persuades Pelias' daughters to restore their father's youth the same way. They do, but Medea gives them herbs that have no magical restorative powers, and they end up killing their father instead. Jason and Medea are banished from Iolchos as a result, and the king of Corinth, Creon, offers them asylum in his kingdom. They live there for ten years and have two sons. At this time, Creon's daughter, Creusa or Glauke comes of marriageable age and her father

offers her hand in marriage to Jason, who accepts, thus abandoning Medea, and breaking the solemn vows he makes to the gods.

This is where each version differs. In Euripides *Medea*, a chorus presents and recounts Medea's humiliation and abandonment. The chorus and other groups of women introduce her life, both past and present, and recount how broken hearted she is, a poor woman taken advantage of by her husband; a stranger woman and immigrant, who is maltreated and cast off in a foreign land. They present her as a victim, and it is very easy to have pity on her. The Chorus's love and pity for her are expressed in lines 171 to 174; when listening to her lamentation, some of the women exclaim:

Would she but come to seek
Our faces, that love her well,
And take to her heart the spell
Of words that speak? (Euripides, 171 - 174)

She learns of her husband's infidelity from her children's nurse. Not only that, Creon, the father of her rival, and king of Corinth, wants her and her children banished and exiled forever, so that his own daughter can take Medea's place. In retaliation, and quest for justice, she sends a magical gown and jewelry to Creusa, which when she puts them on, burn her, as well as her father, who tries to rescue her from the fire. After that, Medea kills her two sons to punish her husband, and make him suffer, as King Aegeus of Athens, who is childless, and who goes to different oracles in search of a solution to his childlessness. Being banished forever by the king, and Jason's plans to take her sons from her, left her emotionally empty and bereft. She knows that she will lose everything. After the murder of her children, she is taken away in a magical chariot of fire, drawn by two dragons that her grandfather, Helios, sends to rescue her.

In Seneca's version, Medea is telling her story by herself. She takes the center stage and is in control of her destiny, as she invokes the gods:

Ye gods of wedlock, and thou, Lucina, guardian of the nuptial couch, and thou¹ who didst teach Tiphys to guide his new barque to the conquest of the seas, and thou, grim ruler of the deeps of Ocean, and Titan, who dost portion out bright day unto the world, and thou who doest show thy bright face as witness of the silent mysteries, O three-formed Hecate⁷⁴, and ye gods by whose divinity Jason swore to me, to whom Medea may more lawfully appeal – thou chaos of endless night, ye realms remote from heaven, ye unhallowed ghosts, thou lord of the realm of gloom, and thou, his queen, won by violence but with better faith, with ill-omened speech I make my prayer to you. Be present, be present, ye goddesses who avenge crime⁷⁵, your hair foul with writhing snakes, grasping the smoking torch with your bloody hands, be present now, such as once ye stood in dread array beside my marriage couch; upon this new wife destruction bring, destruction on this father-in-law and the whole royal stock. (Seneca, *Medea* 1-18)⁷⁶

She even kills one of her sons in front of her husband, while the later begs for the boy's life, but she kills him anyway without flinching, whereas in Euripides, we are told of the act without seeing it. Seneca's Medea, right from the start is aggressive, vengeful, determined, and makes

⁷⁴ Here, *Medea* confirms that Hecate has three forms – Diana, Selena, and Hecate, which represent the three phases of the moon (half, full and waning moon) and of a woman – the maid, the mother and the crone (hag or witch).

⁷⁵ These are the *Erinyes* or the *Furies*.

⁷⁶ Seneca, *Medea*. <http://www.theoi.com/Text/SenecaMedea.html>

her own rules. Even though she invokes them, she did not depend on any gods or goddesses to fight her battles, and she even calls up the chariot that takes her away, instead of it being sent to rescue her. She is active, dominant, ferocious, apathetic, and has a voice and a presence. She is unsympathetic and equally inspires no sympathy.

In Pierre Corneille's version, a close friend of Jason's, Pollux, is introduced and the choir removed. Jason is presented as lacking moral integrity and being an arriviste, who takes advantage of women to advance his political status, and pave ways for himself. He is unscrupulous and treats women as means to an end, not the end in itself. Pollux, on the other hand, is a voice of reason sounding warnings to Jason, since, he knows of Medea's powers and that abandoning her will have dire consequences,

Sur quoi que vous fondiez un traitement si rude,

C'est montrer pour Médée un peu d'ingratitude ;

Ce qu'elle a fait pour vous est mal récompensé.

Il faut craindre mieux que moi ce que peuvent ses charmes. (V. 144-9)

Even Jason admits all that Medea has done for him in his monologue in scene III where he says:

Depuis que mon esprit est capable de flamme,

Jamais un trouble égal n'a confondue mon âme.

Mon cœur, qui se partage en deux affections

Se laisse déchirer en milles passions.

Je dois beaucoup à Médée, et je ne suis pas sans honte

Et d'elle et de ma foi tenir si peu de compte (V. 161-6).

Thus, Jason recognizes all that Medea has sacrificed and endured for his sake. He equally acknowledges his errors of negligence towards Medea, but because of his heady and calculated love for Glauké, fails to do right by Medea.

6.1.1.1 Mireille and Medea

Comparing these three versions of Medea to *Un Chant écarlate* and *Juletane*, one can clearly see that Euripides and Pierre Corneille's Medea are more evident in *Un Chant écarlate* than Seneca's. The fact that Bâ's female protagonist's name, Mireille de la Vallée, starts with an M as does Medea's, is quite suggestive. Mireille is bourgeois as Medea is of a noble family, of the lineage of kings and gods. Both of them are presented as having magical powers. Medea is a descendant of the gods and a sorceress, while Mireille is believed by her husband's family to be a *Rab*, a *Siren*, and a *Jinnée*. Her husband believes her to be possessed by the *Furies* during her psychotic melt down. At their first meeting, she inspires Ousmane during his exam, which enables him to pass it with flying colors. This inspiration is almost presented like 'magic', or sorcery. Like Medea, of course, she is a foreigner, who despises her own family, and burns all bridges, to be with Ousmane. Bâ's Mireille not only gives up everything, she also tries everything to be accepted by her husband's family, but they only connive to oust her from her home, by encouraging her husband to marry an African wife, much like Jason marrying Glauke. Like Euripides Medea, who hears of this atrocity from the mouth of her children's nurse, and not from her husband, Mireille is the last to know, being informed by Soukeyna, her sister-in-law. It is therefore easier to sympathize with Mireille than it is to sympathize with Juletane, and I will show why later in the chapter.

In *Un Chant écarlate*, there is also a remarkable similarity with Corneille's *Medea*, in the character of Pollux. Ousmane's friend, Ali, is also a voice of reason, reminding Ousmane of

what Mireille has done for him, and dissuading him from deserting her. He even takes him to a marabout, who performs an *ndeup*, an exorcism ritual, to rid him of Ouleymatou's, his African wife's bewitchment, as he is convinced that Ousmane is possessed. "How can you Ousmane betray trust? I hardly know you in your new guise ... Besides, what do you reproach your wife with? Her colour? Her mentality? The same grievances that her father had against you? Ridiculous! So you are the racist now..." (138-9). And much like Jason, Ousmane is torn by his daily battle between his emotions and his reason, as he expresses in his reply:

You are not telling me what I don't know. I'm still the same person I always was. But a man is a complicated mixture of aspirations. And it's difficult to combine all the conditions for his fulfillment. I realize that I have in Mireille a wife who loves me. But when I'm with her, I have a depressing feeling of dissatisfaction, of something lacking.
(139)

Both kill their offspring. However, while Medea kills her sons in order to punish her husband, Mireille kills hers both to punish her husband and to save her son from an even more horrible fate of living a life of rejection by both branches of his family – maternal and paternal. While Medea also kills her husband's fiancée, Mireille only stalks Ouleymatou to find out the truth about her husband's involvement with her, she does not confront her, or try to kill her. Euripides' Medea is presented as not being in control of her actions, just as Mireille is presented as having killed her child in a fit of madness. She is pitiable, sorrowful, and touches a soft spot both in the audience, and in the reader. One can easily justify her actions and even forgive her, as she is less frightening than Seneca's Medea, who is very obstinate and aggressive. The Chorus is also very sympathetic towards Euripides' Medea's plight. It is easy to feel and understand what she went through as a rejected Other, immigrant, and foreigner, as well as woman and wife in a

foreign land, by a man to whom she has given everything and rejected as well as sacrificed even her own family for.

In the end, Mireille kills her son as Medea kills her children. Just as Medea is rescued by a chariot of fire, sent by her grandfather, Helios, Mireille is taken away by the French Embassy, a representative of France, her father (land). As the *Furies* refused to prosecute Medea because Jason broke his vow to her, Mireille never stands trial for her own crimes of killing her son and almost killing her husband.

6.1.1.2 *Juletane and Medea*

It is a little hard to compare Juletane with Medea, if one considers only the fact that the children she murders are not her own children, but when studied closely, the similarities between them are overwhelming. In Africa, a child belongs to the community, and in a polygamous home, children consider all the mothers in the household to be their mothers. Juletane's case is even more symbolic in the sense that, when Awa delivers her son Alioune, she gives him to Juletane and asks her to take him as her own. Juletane does not object to the gesture, as she reports in her journal, "When she came home from the hospital after the birth of her baby son Alioune, she came to see me and told me: 'take him he is yours.' I am touched that she should entrust me with her baby" (38). This is a pact, and Juletane herself considers Alioune, the child she could have had. So there is a spiritual and emotional connection already in existence. Besides, Dairy, Awa's daughter, is always with Juletane, helping her. Juletane even steals Dairy's notebook to use as her own "Diary." Note the symbolism of the word play. So when she kills the three children, she does in fact kill her own children, making her like Medea. Like Medea and Mireille, Juletane is also a foreigner. Originally from Guadeloupe, she becomes a French citizen and after her marriage to Mamadou, she relocates to Senegal like Mireille.

Though not bourgeois like Mireille, or royalty like Medea, she has a bourgeois upbringing (6). However, unlike Mireille and Medea who sacrificed a lot for their husbands Ousmane and Jason, Juletane did not contribute significantly to Mamadou's life, except the fact that she gives up her job to marry him after her Aunt dies, and she moves to Senegal with him. Thus for her, Mamadou is her entire life and family. Like all three versions of Medea that we have seen, in which Medea kills her husband's fiancée, Juletane causes the death of her co-wife, Awa, and pours boiling hot oil on another one, Ndèye, whereas Medea sends a magical wedding gown to Creon's daughter, which burns her and her father to death.

Of all three versions, however, Juletane is more reminiscent of Seneca's Medea who takes center stage, speaks directly to the audience, and invokes nothing but vengeance. She is a strong woman who dictates her own destiny and dares the gods. Juletane does the same. She speaks directly and reports everything that happens in the Mamadou household through her journal and her own words. Her desire for vengeance is evident and she is strong willed, as we have seen that, she decides on her own to move out of her matrimonial bed and room, giving room for her husband to bring in a third wife. She refuses to play her wifely role, but allowed others serve her and provide for her daily needs, which makes it even more difficult for them because of her actions, and she intentionally destroys the entire household. Just like the celebration of Creusa (Glauke) and Jason's marriage infuriated Medea, as Creusa is treated as a worthy prize for Jason, Ndèye's marriage to Mamadou does the same to Juletane. She watches the celebrations and understands that Mamadou "married her purely out of vanity because she is much sought after" (41). He even has to borrow lots of money to do so as he considers himself worthy of Ndèye as a prize. Marrying Ndèye shatters the last illusions that Juletane has of ever gaining Mamadou back, as solely hers, and from then on, she does nothing but plot the downfall

of the family. It becomes her elixir and *raison d'être* as she asks: "Can I live long enough to see the fatal fall of this house where my last illusions dwelled" (64)? Leaving is no longer an option for her, as she believes that she married Mamadou for better or for worse; however, she opts for the worst but decides that the joke will be on Mamadou.

Juletane kills Mamadou's children with the hope of bequeathing him with her diary, which is a sort of friend, confidant, and "child" to her, as all creative writing is a sort of "brain child". In her case, the diary is a chronicle of her perceived suffering at the hands of her husband, and having him read it is supposed to be the culmination of her vengeance on him. Note the play of words: Diary (journal) to replace his children among whom one is named Diary -- even though they do not have the same meaning. Diary, the physical child, is Mamadou's first daughter and child just as Juletane's diary is Juletane's first creation and brainchild. Also, as Diary, the human child, is born, not out of love, but out of duty, as Mamadou claims to have married her mother, Awa, who is his cousin, to please his family, Juletane's Diary is also a child born not out of love, but out of despair, hatred, anger, and vengeance. This diary, Juletane also steals from the human child, Diary. Therefore, she steals her book and murders her. For Anne-Lancaster Badders, the diary takes the place of Mamadou himself because she refers to it as "ami" ("friend"). According to Badders, "The act of writing occupies her and turns the journal into a friend and a confidant. Her "ami", gendered male, clearly replaces her husband, given Mamadou's lack of concern for her well-being and her idealized notion of a husband: "Il devrait être tout pour moi, moi tout pour lui, notre union aussi solide qu'une forteresse construite sur un rocher" (115). However, this never happens.

Just like Seneca's Medea, who regrets that Jason does not witness the murder of his first child, Juletane regrets that Mamadou cannot read her diary. Worst still, she feels no pity or pain

at the children's death, as she even questions herself: "Have I become a being without a soul? ... The children's death, after the first moments of surprise, leaves me relatively unmoved. I don't suffer from not seeing them" (58). And just as Medea savors her vengeance by prolonging the murder scene of their second child, Juletane promises to savor her vengeance on the Mamadou family: "I am preparing my vengeance like a very special dish. After I have carefully prepared it, seasoned it, it will be my last meal and my madness will vanish" (62). The only regret and setback she suffers is when Mamadou dies in a car wreck without reading the diary, which leaves her drained and disappointed, as watching him hurt is supposed to be the apex of her vengeance.

Finally, it is worth noting here that infants are sacrificed to the moon goddess, Hecate, in Antiquity and Medea is her priestess (Corti 91). In addition, female slaves used to commit infanticide, so as not to bear more slaves or to punish their slave masters. Juletane comes from Guadeloupe and her ancestors are slaves. Tales of infanticide are common during the era of slavery and these tales are part of Juletane's history, legacy, morality, baggage, formation, and convictions. Thus, killing children means nothing to either of them, proving that there is indeed a correlation in the characters of Medea and Juletane and the atrocities they both commit.

6.1.1.3 Medea Averted : Les Yeux du volcan:

As I already mentioned, Sony Labou Tansi invokes Hecate, the goddess of the moon, in her hunting nature as Diana, as well as her madness Hecate nature. May I remind us of the relationship between Hecate and Medea. Hecate might have been the grandmother of Medea⁷⁷,

⁷⁷ Hecate. "Hecate's Cauldron". 2 June 2013.

<<http://www.hecatescaldron.org/Hecate's%20History%20&%20Origins.htm>>. "The wife of the sun God Helios was named Perse or Perseis, which is also one of the names of the Moon

but surely, Medea is Hecate's priestess. Sony Labou Tans, however, refuses to let Medea's influence be as violent as it might have been, as he makes her influence beneficial and redemptive. As noted, all three women are immigrants and foreigners in the land of their sojourn. For example, after Alleando Calero's psychotic breakdown, we read that she asks her husband to take her back to Tombalbaye or Hozanna:

Je voudrais qu'on retourne à Tombalbaye, dit Alleando Calero. On était mieux là-bas.

(*LYV* 114)

“Tombalbaye ou Hozanna. Mais pas ce coin pourri qui sent la suie (*LYV* 115).”

Tombalbaye est au nord-ouest de Kanapohée, entre le septième degré de latitude nord, à la même hauteur que Bogota, plus près du méridien de Greenwich que du trentième degré

Goddess Hecate and doubtless represented the Underworld aspect of the "widely shining" Goddess. It is interesting, that the name of the Queen of the Underworld, Persephone, can be taken to be a longer, perhaps even a more ceremonious form of Perse, Perseis, Perses, Perseus and Persaios—all names of Hecate and her associates—and are probably used from pre-Greek times as a name of the Queen of the Underworld. Persephone is referred to Kore, the Maiden, when she returns to her Mother, Demeter, in the spring, and once again, she is known as Persephone when she returns to the Underworld. So, there are many aspects which connect Hecate to Persephone as there are many speculations that Persephone and Hecate are one and the same. Many speculate that the myth of Persephone journeying to the Underworld happened before the myth of the abduction by Hades but instead, Persephone journeyed to the land of the Underworld for teachings from Hecate or even that she then became Hecate.”

de longitude est. L'adjudant connaissait ces données pour y avoir fait la guerre [...].
 Alleando demanda à Benoît qu'il lui fasse l'amour là-bas à Tombalbaye. (*LYV* 114)

Les Yeux du volcan is a novel situated in a fictitious African nation and the geography is hard to map out or decipher. From the above quotations, one can deduce that Benoît Goldmann must have met and married his eighth wife, Dona Alleando Calero, while he was at war in Tombalbaye and retired with her back to Hondo-Norte where he either came from or has family (106). So like Jason, who brought back a wife, when he went on a quest for the golden fleece and Mamadou, who brought back Juletane while on a quest for education in a foreign country, colonel Benoit Goldmann, a warfarer and soldier, brings back Dona Alleando from a war trip. What I find also interesting is that Sony Labou Tansi, a male author, invokes the Medea effect but averts its attending calamities, through the myth of the effect of the moon believed to be brought on by Hecate. The Hecate form of the moon goddess is the most destructive because she represents the crone, the hag, and the witch, and we now know the relationship between Medea, the crazy one, and Hecate⁷⁸. Tansi averts all the Medea calamities, by making his protagonist, Benoit Goldmann, to listen to his wife, and to return to a place where, she no longer feels like a foreigner, unlike Jason, Ousmane and Mamadou who bring their wives back with them and abandon them. We will explore more of this later.

⁷⁸ In a self introduction, *Medea* said: "Je suis la petite fille d'Hélios et magicienne comme ma tante Circé dont la rumeur rapporte qu'elle fut ma mère, ou alors Hécate l'enchanteresse. De tels liens de parenté m'emmailotent et vibrent à l'unisson. Je me suis trouvée ainsi abritée dès ma naissance, ce qui fit peser quelque pénombre sur mon existence. » (Fardoulis-Lagrange 7)

The author not only alludes to the moon goddess in her Hecate form, he also invokes her through the manifestation of her Diana form. Luna, the moon goddess, also known as Selene, Hecate, and Diana, is an enchanter and hunter in her Diana state. She is the wild one, the goddess of hunting. Sony Labou Tansi alludes to this aspect of the moon goddess in his description and introduction of Colonel Pedro Gazani, an ordinary designer who becomes a colonel through the most of bizarre of ways (*LYV* 121-4). He is believed to have been visited by ‘madness’ when the third democratic war in his country has just broken out. One day, he took his two hunting guns and entered the Bandoum forest and, with the help of madness (*la folie* – feminine whom I read as Diana or Lyssa, the hunting and madness goddess), he embarks on a shooting spree. Two days later, it took the army which is dying from hunger, fourteen Lorries to gather all the animals he has killed. He was instantly drafted into the army, and made a colonel. Afterwards, he continued to have more miraculous hunting escapades. Beside his hunting prowess, he also received information about medical remedies through his dreams and he was eventually the person who found the cure for Benoit Goldmann’s epistaxis and hemorrhoids, allowing him to begin to enjoy a full sexual life with his wife.

At the time of the story, Colonel Pedro is planning a coup-d’état to save his people from a bad government. Given this, one can say that he is possessed by the moon goddess in her Diana form. Diane is known to guide hunters and give them hunting abilities. For Pedro Gazani to perform the hunting feat he did under the influence of madness, and for him to be given information and messages in his dreams show a form of spirit possession. Diana, the moon goddess of hunting, becomes his muse and him, her oracle and spokes-person. Unlike how other authors from Antiquity and beyond have depicted her as the goddess of madness who causes those she possesses to lose their minds and commit atrocities, in *Les Yeux du volcan*, she makes

the man she possesses to become a better person, a savior for his people, and a strong leader, as well as a healer. This way, the author changes the narrative and expected outcome of destruction, and averts tragic ending. By so doing, he avoids the Medea effect, as Medea leaves nothing but a trail of destruction in her path. Even though Medea is not represented, by her relationship to the moon goddess and the fact of Alleando Calero's otherness and foreignness, Sony Labou Tansi alludes to her.

6.2 Madness: Reaction or Response?

Reaction and response are two words that are usually used interchangeably to the extent that even the dictionaries do the same. For example searching for the word "response", the entries will use reaction to define it and vice versa. The Collins World English Dictionary defines "response" as "the act of responding; reply or reaction". And "reaction" as "a response to some foregoing action or stimulus" and "a response indicating a person's feelings or emotional attitude". Both the Science Dictionary and the Medical Dictionary define "response" as, "A reaction, as that of an organism or any of its parts, to a specific stimulus". They are in other words, considered synonyms. In fact, in school, response and reaction papers are the same, and both are only differentiated from reflection papers. However, there are nuances between the two words. For example, the Collins *World English Dictionary* goes further to explain the usage of "reaction" by explaining that: "usage reaction is used to refer both to an instant response (her reaction was one of amazement) and to a considered response in the form of a statement (the Minister gave his reaction to the court's decision). Some people think this second use is incorrect". This further explanation shows the difference between "reaction" and "response". While "reaction" is instantaneous, "reaction" is more thought-out and planned.

According to Roberta Meyer,⁷⁹ a United States national alcoholism trainer, “reaction has to do with the past while response has to do with the present.” In other words, reaction is acting from the past, from all the baggage, hurt, history, and experiences of someone’s past. Thus, when something else happens, the person goes into a survival and protective mode and therefore acts out of reflex. On the other hand, response, being in the present, is when someone looks at events from the present point of view before taking an action about it. To illustrate her point, she uses a scenario of a recovering alcoholic who is late in coming home. The husband who is at home, first goes into a reactive mode by thinking that she has probably gone drinking as she used to do and he becomes really angry, then, he starts processing the situation and the progress the wife has made from practicing the Al-Anon steps, it occurs to him that the wife might be in trouble. This thought calms his anger and makes him to start thinking of some of the lessons he too has learned from the program on how to respond and not react. At this point, the wife calls and tells him that he has a flat tire.

Reaction requires one listening, and reflecting for a moment, it does not matter the length of time, but pausing to think, taking a ‘gap’ to take something in before passing and executing judgment, is all that is required to gain control of the situation. The key to response is that for a moment, one stops to take a breather, and analyze one’s thoughts and decide on a course of action. The absence of this gap is what differentiates response from reaction, and reactions produce unpredictable outcomes. Reaction is action based on emotions and irrationality, while response is based on the intellect and logic. Thus with reaction, one loses focus of one’s goals

⁷⁹ Roberta Meyer, "Reaction vs. response." *Alcoholism & Addiction Magazine* Apr. 1988: 13. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 22 Mar. 2014.

and objectives, and can be irrational. With response, one takes actions in a way that ensures that goals and objectives are accomplished. They allow overlooking trivialities in favor of the larger picture, the more important things in life. Responses are therefore pre-meditated and take planning, learning, studying, and self-control to apply. Response employs such virtues as patience, tolerance, perseverance, letting go, diligence, hard work, etc. to achieve, and such vices as ruse, manipulation, trick, deception, pretense, false front, and craftiness, among others. In this section, I will examine the insanity and violence exhibited by each of our protagonists with the view of determining whether they reacted to or responded to their situations. I will determine the points at which they reacted or responded.

6.2.1 Responding and Reacting through Madness in *Juletane*

Starting with Juletane, I will state categorically that her madness and violence are apparently responses, as she appropriated her madness, and under its pretense, wreaked havoc on the family in a very methodical way. She goes from extreme love to extreme hatred for Mamadou and his household, as she records in her diary: “I have run out of tears. I have discovered hatred and this feeling drives me as much as my love did in the past” (66). As we have already seen, she carefully prepared her vengeance against the entire household whose fatal fall she longs for. Throughout the length of the journal she uses such expressions as “I have or have not decided [...]” For example, when Ndèye slaps her and Awa partially agrees with Ndèye’s action, Juletane simply stands there and, as she says, “I was too surprised to react” (30). But then, she starts plotting her revenge:

Right now I have not decided on anything definite. But, although I am not inclined to violence, I cannot just accept that slap in the face. If I do not retaliate, Ndèye will quickly make it a habit to hit me whenever she feels like it [...]. I am going to become more than

spiteful. Ndèye will pay very dearly for the two years of insults that I have just been through in her presence without saying a word ply. That slap in the face was the last drop that made my cup of passivity overflow and transformed my patience into a raging torrent. (30)

Thus, besides Mamadou, the other person she hates ardently is Ndèye, whom she sees as an obstacle that must be removed:

Living with Mamadou and Ndèye, even provisionally, would be unbearable. I have to find a solution once and for all, and as soon as possible. Ndèye is the stumbling block on the already tortuous path of my life. I must remove this obstacle so that I can see clearly as I could before, And then, I will be able to face the future with excitement, and say to myself ‘Tomorrow is another day’. (67)

Therefore, she meticulously plans how she will avenge herself on Ndèye. First, she imagines stabbing her to death and going to spend some quality intimate time with Mamadou after the crime. As she writes: I think of Ndèye who Mamadou is going to find dead. I have my vengeance. I burst out laughing at the thought of all the beautiful red blood flowing from Ndèye’s side. Ndèye, silenced at last. She won’t insult me anymore. What a lovely joke, Mamadou’s favorite out of the way (69). She abandons the idea of stabbing her to death because she does not want to deal with the blood that will flow, and so she opts for pouring boiling oil on Ndèye, which she does. She chooses this method because she feels that stabbing Ndèye to death will reduce her sufferings whereas disfiguring her will leave a permanent scar:

The first time I thought about revenge, I thought about taking Ndèye’s life. But all things considered, it was better that she continue to live, disfigured. So that as long as she lived, she can think about how she has hurt me. All the more so as I had not been able to do

away with her. With the knife and all that blood, I could not have done it ... Armed with my saucepan full of very hot oil, I went to the room. The door creaked, Ndèye did not budge. She was lying on her side, her face towards the wall. I wanted her full face, with her eyes open. I called her, touching her on the shoulder. When she opened her eyes, wondering what was happening, with the other hand, which I had hidden behind my back, I poured the whole panful of oil in her face. She howled like a wounded animal and leapt out of bed. It was easy to get out of her way for she cannot see. I went and locked myself in my room. Ndèye groped her way to the gate. A neighbor took her to the hospital. I have not seen her again since then. I hope she will live long enough to remember (72-3).

From the above description, it is clear that Juletane takes her time and plans her crime before executing it and she also enjoys committing it, which makes it a premeditated crime. After the horrible act, she practices what her response will be to whoever asks, and she maintains it even though she knows what she has done, as she writes herself:

In the evening Mamadou and his uncle arrived; someone had told them. I remember that I told him: 'she hit me and God punished her; I did not touch her,' repeating the same words over and over. I believed what I was saying, having spent the whole day telling myself over and over again that I was innocent, that I was the victim of a fate over which I had no control. (73)

We can see that Juletane is in full possession of her senses. She is not mad, but she sees madness as a convenient locus to hide and commit all the evil she commits, because mad people are not really taken seriously in Africa. People simply ignore mad people and allow them freedom, as they are not usually sequestered or locked up unless they are violent. So as soon as Juletane starts

her violent acts, she commits them in quick successions. Awa and her children die within the same week, and while they are still being mourned, Juletane incapacitates Ndèye, who could end up being blind, and looking hideous for the rest of her life. A few days afterwards, Mamadou, the husband, dies.

This does not mean, however, that Juletane never reacts to her situation. At the initial stages, she reacts with tears, seclusion, withdrawal, and self-alienation, but with time, she learns to respond, and her actions become calculated and orchestrated. For example, she knows that she is not supposed to be the one administering her medication – the barbiturate to herself, - but seeing that as an opportunity to avenge herself, she never says anything to her husband about it or complains; instead, the very one and only day that Awa sides with Ndèye, she poisons her children that same night.

I cannot stop laughing, I laugh until I cry. He will soon know the extent of his misfortune. And about the children's death. Who is responsible for their death [...] Didn't they prescribe drops for me? Drops that Mamadou himself was to make me take, and that are to be kept out of the children's reach [...] Of course, Mamadou had given them to me, telling me 'No more than ten drops, all right?' At that moment, he was thinking that if I swallowed the whole bottle I would solve my problem. This medicine can take care of other things ... (69 -70)

Thus Juletane insinuates that she can also use the medicine to take care of other things. Could the other things involve killing the children? In another entry, she questions herself in a way that suggests that she might have poured the barbiturate into the children's water, but would rather not believe it. « Ai-je versé le contenu du flacon de barbiturique dans la timbale d'eau des

enfants? Ou ai-je laissé le flacon à portée de leur main ? Je ne me souviens de rien » (*Juletane* 133).

6.2.2 Responding and Reacting to Violence in *Un Chant écarlate*

In *Un Chant écarlate*, Mireille's madness comes from deep and perturbing thought processes. She calculates the pros and cons of staying married to Ousmane, as well as the consequences of leaving her son alive, before she plots and executes the infanticide, and near homicide. Indeed, when Soukeyna, her sister-in-law anonymously informs her of her husband's new wife, Ouleymatou, it takes her a whole week to "build up her war strategy" (155) and she decides to "proceed systematically" (156). She stalks and spies on her husband by hiring a taxi, which takes her to Ouleymatou's address, and she is able to confirm her husband's betrayal of her. She even follows them to Yaye Khady, her mother-in-law's place, where she witnesses her mother-in-law carrying Ouleymatou's child. Yaye Khadi on the other hand, does not even touch Mireille's own son, Gorgui, whom she calls *Gnouloule Khessoule* – which means neither white nor black. She sees her mother-in-law not only carry, but play with Ouleymatou's black child. Despite this agonizing discovery, she still maintains her self-control, which if her madness is just an ordinary reaction, she will not have been able to do. "Mireille kept tight control on her misery. She knew its extent. She measures its violence" (160). Her ability here to control, and measure the extent of her violence invariably proves that when she finally unleashes her violence during her moment of insanity, that she knows exactly the results she hopes to achieve.

Mireille realizes that her marriage is over and that she must leave. She even knows that her parents will forgive her, but what about her son? "Would my father accept a little colored child in his very correct world? Can my father forget the affront to his dignity?" (160). She asks but reminds herself that they can welcome her back without the child. First, she decides to stay

because of her son, as she tells herself: “Children’s lives are more miserable with an estranged couple ...” (160). However, Mireille is not a coward as she quickly reminds herself:

The child argument doesn’t hold water. Many humiliated wives use this excuse to camouflage their own lack of will-power. And with faces bathed in tears, these mothers protest how ill-used they are. But the reason they do not leave is cowardice, fear of assuming responsibility for themselves. They are kept prisoner by the habit of not thinking for themselves, not taking any decisions, not seeing with their own eyes, of letting others take over. It’s not long before they crumble. They are eaten up with suffering. They don’t know the meaning of liberty. (161)

Mireille is a proud and strong-willed person, who would not be bullied into losing her freedom or accepting to live like a prisoner. In fact Ousmane affirms the same to his friends when he tells them that “Mireille, armed by centuries of civilization, can survive, with her iron will, her enthusiasm for a confrontation, and with her immense fortune” (150). Therefore, she decides to face up to life as a survivor, though an emotionally empty one. Trying to reawaken her passion for life, she decides to reread the letters Ousmane has written to her when they were courting and the lies and deceit, pouring out of them push her over the limits of her sanity: “The meretricious words of love jolted her mental distress. The lying words mocked her. Promises deliberately violated turned into hideous serpents that twined around her” (163). At that moment she is transformed into *fury*. She becomes Medea and decides the fate of her child: “A violent surge of resentment flooded over her and she decreed, ‘There is no place in this world for the *Gnouloule Khessoule!* A world of filthy bastards! A world of liars! You, my child, you’re going to leave this world! *Gnouloule Khessoule!*” (164) And she overdoses her child on sleeping pills thus putting him to an eternal sleep from which he will never wake up again. Afterwards, she lies

in wait for her husband whom she stabs severally with a knife she has spent hours sharpening. However, his stab wounds are not fatal as he is able to stumble out of their apartment and neighbors call an ambulance that takes him to the hospital. Officials of the French embassy eventually take Mireille away.

Thus, Mireille goes from responding to her grief to reacting to it whereas Juletane goes from reacting to hers to responding to it. Mireille is not a woman of faith and so we do not see her praying to anything or invoking any gods. Written work, and in this case, first, the anonymous letter written to her by her sister-in-law, Soukeyna, in which she informs her of her husband's infidelity, and the letters written to her by her husband, are what trigger her reaction, unlike in *Juletane* where her own written work, her diary, helps her nurse her anger and plan her vengeance. Thus, while Mireille is provoked by others, Juletane works up her own anger. Also, this is where Helène in *Juletane*, differs from both women. When she is betrayed by a man, one of the first things she does is to destroy all the letters that Hector ever writes her, thereby preventing herself from being reminded of her past with him or being provoked and driven overboard by such remembrances.

6.2.3 Responding and Reacting Through Madness in *Les Yeux du volcan*

In *Les Yeux du volcan*, it takes Dona Alleando a long time of sexual neglect to react. The author does not develop her character well enough for one to see her thought processes as well as her psychological and emotional states. However, actions speak louder than words, and the few words that she utters such as “Je cuisine la Révolution, c'est mon droit”, show that her actions are revolutionary. She is making a silent statement and taking a stand. But the act of biting off her husband's lip is purely a reaction to the sudden intimacy her husband is showing her, such as hugging her and trying to kiss her, which he has never done before. He is showing his affection

for her in public to probably save his face and make it look to others as if they have been living a normal marital life of intimacy behind closed doors.

Indeed, this is one of the manifestations of abuse, as the abuser will seek to create the impression that everything is fine and that he/she is the good guy, whereas in the privacy of their room or away from the public glare, s/he will go back to abusing the victim. By biting off his lip, Alleando clearly states that she is no longer playing his games and will no longer be manipulated. Again, action speaks louder than words and her actions get through to him where her words, crying, pleading, and complaining could not.

All three women therefore respond and react differently and for different reasons to their situations. However, their responses and reactions end up being labeled madness. Apart from Dona Alleando who does not take a life, Juletane and Mireille both kill their children, and Juletane also causes the death of one of her co-wives and husband, while maiming the other. In the following section, I will demonstrate that violence hardly happens in isolation or is perpetuated by a single person in the long run, without the involvement or knowledge of it by a community or a group of people.

6.3 Communal Involvement in Perpetuation of Violence:

In Africa, families go beyond just the man, his wife, and their children. A man can sometimes marry as many as four wives especially if he is a member of the Islamic faith. He is not required to divorce any one of them before contracting another marriage. The wives can choose to stay or leave. However, a woman cannot remarry without being properly divorced. This divorce can be in the form of the return of symbolic objects that are exchanged when the marriage is contracted. Thus, polygamy favors mostly men who are free to accumulate wives. Besides the family that can be composed of one man, many wives, and even many more

children, there are also members of the extended family such as aunts, uncles, grand-parents, first, second, and third cousins if not beyond, who factor into the family and who must be accommodated and welcomed with open arms. Outside of the extended family members, community and kindred members also play huge roles in the family. Thus, people meddle in other people's affairs. Decisions sometimes involve everyone. Many African communities are hierarchical, which means that the oldest member is the leader and his decisions are final and binding on every other member of the community. Other influential members of the community are the traditional leaders, marabouts, native and witch doctors, priests and priestesses, as well as other religious leaders such as imams, pastors, and reverend gentlemen. Their words are *aye* and *amen* in the running of the community and they are consulted during sicknesses, disputes, and other events in the family and the community.

These are the people who make the rules by which the communities are governed. They decide what is moral or immoral, what is ethical or unethical. They can decide who should be ousted and who should stay. That is why when a young wife comes into the family and community, she tries everything within her power to get the favor of these people, especially that of her mother-in-law, as the latter can make her life miserable. She wins people over with gifts, food, and goodwill. She must humble herself, or else, any one of these people can create nightmares for her. A husband's relatives – sisters, brothers, friends, and parents - are carefully nurtured if a woman hopes to make it far in the family. She needs them to approve of her or they will make her life unbearable if they even let her stay to enjoy her marriage. In the following section, I will look at communal involvement in the perpetration of violence in these novels. I will look at the role of in-laws, friends, as well as doctors and social workers. I will examine the kind of violence they encourage or perpetuate.

6.3.1 Communal Violence in *Un Chant écarlate*, *Juletane*, and *Les Yeux du volcan*

As has been shown, these three women – Juletane, Mireille, and Dona Alleando - are foreigners just like Medea. What they each go through is no different from what women in Antiquity go through so it is safe to say that people still react the way today as they did in the past. Though Medea’s story might be a myth, we have seen in chapter two that myths are usually grounded in reality. Myths are realities imbued with out-of-worldliness in a bid you to explain what people consider impossible under normal circumstances. The novels I am studying are also works of fiction, but they all portray very plausible and possible events. They are all realistic. In *Medea*, the chorus’ hostility to Medea as a foreign wife is clearly revealed when they state: “let her depart in silent darkness, any woman who runs away and marries a foreign husband” (line 114/115). The chorus is indeed echoing the general sentiment of the community in which Medea is married. She is different and so she is despised. There are probably many parents who have their eyes on Jason as a possible son-in-law and many young girls who dream of being his wife, and, then, suddenly, he comes back with an exotic and “barbaric” wife. Medea is immediately perceived as a usurper, and the fact that she has not married Jason with her father’s blessings does not help her case. She is a bad influence and so must be cast away. This of course can mount pressure on a man who wishes to belong among his people.

6.3.1.1 *Communal Violence in Un Chant écarlate*

In *Un Chant écarlate*, we see a “very identical” case. Mireille marries Ousmane without her parents’ consent and blessings. She is a disgrace to her bourgeois family. But, while Jason is the civilized one, Mireille belongs to the colonial race who has come to civilize Ousmane’s race. Therefore, Ousmane is the “barbarian”. However, as we have seen, that is not the perception of Ousmane’s family, as they see Mireille as a *Rab* and a *Jinnie*, and Ousmane sees her as a *Siren*

and a *Fury*, all of which we have seen are possessive and destructive spirits. In mistreating and condemning Mireille, they forget that she too is a child to someone, as Soukeyna reminds her mother:

By your selfishness, you are driving Ousmane to an eventual disaster; and simultaneously, you're killing another woman's daughter, as Mireille has a mother too. I am completely opposed to my brother's second marriage and consider that nothing can justify it except your self-interest. [...] Mireille has tried the impossible to try to please you! She even offered to take a turn in cooking at the brazier in the yard, to give you a rest, but you just laughed in her face. You discourage any attempts at co-operation. You reject her without even knowing her. Why? Because she is White [...] Her color is the only reason you've got for hating her. I can't see anything else you can have against her.

(152-3)

Symbolically, Yaye Khady also commits infanticide by killing someone else's daughter emotionally, socially, morally, and mentally, as she does Mireille. She not only refuses all her efforts at being a family, she also consults marabouts and charlatans to try to dislodge her spiritually: "I'll find the means of dislodging you some day" (97), she threatens Mireille, and she sets about doing just that.

Despite the fact that Mireille disproves of all her mother-in-law's stereotypical expectations of her not to be a good daughter, Yaye Khady remains blind to her and instead goes over and beyond to cause fights between Ousmane and Mireille. For example, Yaye Khady goes to their house, chews and spits toothpick all over the floor. When Ousmane is sick, she accuses Mireille of bewitching her son and causing his sickness through the power of her sorcery and she forbids Mireille from cooking for Ousmane, while she moves in and takes over Mireille's

kitchen in Mireille's home. When her daughter-in-law complains, she breaks down in fake tears to Ousmane and lies to him that Mireille has kicked her out. This lie causes Ousmane to side with her against his wife, which leads to Mireille fainting: "Mireille came to as from a nightmare. Tears trickled down her cheeks. Ousmane Gueye stared at her without a single gesture of affection, to avoid vexing his mother. Yaye Khady fled. But once again, she has been the cause of something indefinable but essential deserting the couple's relationship" (95).

Beside Yaye Khady, there are also Ousmane's friends who are very insensitive to Mireille's plight. They come at odd times and overstay. They come uninvited to dinner, and Mireille, who does not understand the communal life of Africans, takes offense at their attitude and lack of respect for her clean home, which they mess up, leaving everything for her to clean after them. Worse still, Mireille considers them very noisy and dirty, and they think of her as hostile and intolerant.

The general belief of the people in *Rabs*, *Jinnees*, and other beings such as *Mamiwata* also contributes to coloring the perception of Mireille as an entity, a spiritual being who has escaped her abode, according to Yaye Khady, to come and marry her son. As we see in chapters two and three, these beings are believed to love extremely and hate extremely when they sense that they are losing the object of their affection to a mortal being. The charlatans and marabouts also contribute immensely, as it is Ousmane's trip to see a witch doctor and his predictions that "Ousmane had been bewitched by someone, at whose beck and call he now is," (146) that leads to their final break-up. However, he does not clarify by whom Ousmane is bewitched. This ambiguity confuses matters and convinces Ousmane that he is doing the right thing by abandoning his wife. After the exorcism, Ousmane "no longer saw Mireille as the goal of his desires" (147). If anyone has tried to bewitch Ousmane, it is probably Ouleymatou, who is

described as having a kind of intelligence that understands mischief even though she does not do well at school. She does everything in her power to seduce and win Ousmane's love. She pays visits to his parents and does chores for them such as their laundry, which includes washing clothes manually and ironing them. She also pays unscheduled visits to Ousmane's place of work after having "smeared a scented salve over her whole body till it shone and her oiled skin clothed her like a velvety film which followed the swellings of her small firm breasts, curved over her hips to cover her firm, rounded buttocks" (108-109). Yet, she knows that he is married and has broken his heart by refusing him for other more desirable boys when they were young.

The first time she pays him these visits, she demands that Ousmane give her money to pay for her taxi fare because she believes that she has claims to his sweat as her brother, Ousseynou's, "hut brother" (110). Hut bothers are boys one grows up with and with whom he has probably gone through some rituals such as circumcision and other initiations. So in Senegal, as in other African cultures, one has claims to the wealth of friends and other family members, to the detriment of one's family. In this particular case, Ousmane gives Ouleymatou three thousand francs, of which of course his wife, with whom he has a joint account, is not aware. On many occasions too, his other friends and family are given gifts and money without consultation with Mireille. They also give Ousmane's parents regular monthly allowance, besides the ones they are given when they barge in on them unannounced. Eventually, Ousmane gets Ouleymatou pregnant and has to marry her without his wife's knowledge. He depletes their bank account to set Ouleymatou up in her own apartment with two maids – when Mireille has none. Beside that, he also sets Ouleymatou's parents up in a decent home with Mireille's money. When Ouleymatou has his baby baptized, Ousmane throws a lavish and extravagant party, which is the

talk of the town for a very long time, whereas Mireille's child is baptized in a quiet ceremony with no guests.

In *Un Chant écarlate*, therefore, it is not just Ousmane who abuses his wife; his family, friends as well as traditional and spiritual leaders such as marabouts and the traditional healers also participate in the abuse she suffers. His father-in-law, who knows and disapproves of his wife's attitude towards Mireille, is unfortunately so feeble that he does nothing to stop the abuse and keep his wife in check.

6.3.1.2 Communal Violence in *Juletane*

In *Juletane*, the major communal role in the abuse that Juletane suffers is the polygamous marriage she is forced into, as she does not intentionally marry an already married man. If Mamadou had told her the truth, she would not have married him or quit her job and France to move with him to Senegal. As we have already seen in chapter three, polygamy exposes women to a lot of manipulative and malevolent practices such as dabbling into sorcery, witchcraft, and visiting marabouts to obtain charms and amulets to try to keep their husband to themselves alone, and to remain his favorite. In Senegal, women are mentally prepared for polygamy since many of them come from polygamous families anyway, and they have their families to support them through it; but Juletane is neither mentally prepared for it nor does she have the same support system as the other wives. In fact, Awa is Mamadou's cousin, thus they are family even before they are married. Each wife obviously has parents and other relatives who fight for them behind the scene to make sure that her interests are taken care of and so even though the man considers himself the head of his family, most of the time he becomes a puppet pulled in different directions by different strings.

In Mamadou's family, both Awa and Ndèye have relatives who visit. Only Juletane has no family either in Senegal or in France. The relatives she has in Guadeloupe refuse to take her in since she is sick. Awa's relatives are there for her during her crisis. As for Ndèye, she camps outside Juletane's window with her friends and they gossip just about anything, which infuriates Juletane. For example, Ndèye usually boasts to her friends about Mamadou's prowess in bed when she knows that she is monopolizing that aspect of their married lives and that Juletane is not even sleeping with Mamadou anymore. Awa only sleeps with him when Mamadou wants her to be pregnant as she is the only wife bearing children in the family.

I am filled with rage when I hear Ndèye boasting about our husband's prowess in bed. She is so spiteful.

Here she is again today with her friend Binta, in the courtyard, right under my window, and to make sure that I don't miss a single word of their conversation they are speaking French.

'My dear Binta, Mamadou is extraordinary, not at all like those men who take their pleasure and leave you unfulfilled. He is even sensitive enough to make sure I am really satisfied'. (2-3)

Their insensitivity infuriates Juletane, and she reacts instantly by opening her window's shutter, which knocks off Binta's wig, exposing her dirty tangled up hair and, of course, Ndèye takes the opportunity to rain abuse on Juletane, calling her a mad woman.

Besides friends and family members of the co-wives whose presence infuriates Juletane, her own family abandons her and the social worker, Helène, who should have shown more concern for her, being that they are from the same country, does not until later. As a social worker, she is negligent and almost dispassionate. She is not at all proactive in devising a means

of finding out exactly what is going on with Juletane when she refuses to see her. She simply waves it aside. Even after Juletane's death, it takes her so long to even read her diary that is given to her by the nurses:

Why hasn't she felt any curiosity to read the diary before? What unforgivable negligence! A very bad habit acquired some time before: she always put off reading anything she thought might be boring. Thus she has forgotten this notebook. When they have given it to her, she'd thought it a completely disjointed tale, incoherent ramblings. [...] once again, she has been the victim of her prejudices. (3-4)

Helène is not the only member of the medical staff who is guilty of negligence. Juletane is taken to the hospital after she suffers several self-inflicted injuries, which clearly indicate that she is violent and poses a danger to those around her, yet, neither her doctor nor anyone else follows up with her or her family members. No one warns them about the danger she poses to their own lives, well-being, and safety, and no one reports anything to the police:

The third weekend when Mamadou left for Awa's, his uncle took me to the hospital. I was deeply depressed, really raving or to use the doctor's expression I suffered 'fits of delirium'. I do not know what happened to me. I vaguely remember being overcome with a sudden, desperate rage during the night between Sunday evening and Monday morning.

I began breaking everything in my room and banging my head against the walls (25).

Neither Helène, the social worker and her compatriot, nor the doctors nor the nurses try to make sure that she is doing fine after her hospitalization. Her husband who is supposed to administer her medication to her, instead leaves it to her to do by herself, providing her with the opportunity to overdose the children on the barbiturates. Thus, the hospital workers, the social workers, as

well as the husband are all negligent. and this is so because the government as well as the legal system of the country does not hold them accountable.

As we have shown in chapter four, barbiturates are anti-depressants and relaxants that are used in patient-assisted suicide (PAS) as well as in euthanizing pets and individuals. Nembutal, the form that is given to Dona Alleando in *Les Yeux du volcan*, is now used in the United States in executing criminals. In *Un Chant écarlate*, we only know that Mireille mixes an overdose of sleeping pills and gives to her son, we do not know whether they are prescribed by a doctor, which seems very likely. Again, she is in possession of so many sleeping pills that become weapons in her hand to murder her child in her moment of insanity. Furthermore, in Dona Alleando's case, it is quite probable that her husband has been using the Nembuttal to control her, and that when the effect wears off, she gets violent, as she can no longer control her senses. This is the case with many addictive prescription medications. At a certain point, they tend to take over and start controlling the individual. For Juletane, she becomes completely indifferent to her sufferings, emotions, and environment due to the effect of the barbiturates. Hence, the medical community's negligence contributes immensely to the violence these women commit on these novels and thus constitutes violence in its own right.

According to Thomas Szasz, most of the time, the doctors and other authorities become employees of the patient's family as they listen to and believe the tales of these family members, leading to an insanity diagnosis or ruling. Thus, many people are declared insane, not because they are truly insane, but because of tales by family members and, the more they protest against such attitude, the more they are confirmed insane and medicated as insane people. For instance, in Juletane's case, after losing her baby through a miscarriage, her husband goes from visiting his first wife, Awa, in the village to bringing her to live with them in the city. Juletane gets so

depressed and moves out of the room she shares with her husband. She cuts off her hair and dons mourning clothing as a way “to finally crush any hope” in her. (37-38) Mamadou, thinking that she has completely lost her mind, finally agrees to let her go back to France, but to her, it is too late since he has refused to let her go when she first arrives the country. At this point, she has lost everything. He takes her to see a psychiatrist and she has an electro-encephalogram test done on her. The doctor who “apparently understood nothing of ‘her situation” (38), talks mainly to Mamadou and simply “prescribed medication, rest, quiet and nutritious diet” (38). She is placed on anti-depressants. “I closed my eyes. I was floating on a cloud high above earth. The injections probably have a lot to do with my state of tranquil indifference” (31). What the anti-depressants do is make her wallow in indifference without providing any cure for her depression.

6.3.1.3 Communal Violence in *Les Yeux du volcan*

This same situation applies to Dona Alleando in *Les Yeux du volcan*. Despite her complaints to her husband about being neglected and all her suggestions to him to cater to her sexual and emotional needs that he does not pay heed to, when she ‘loses her mind’, and his doctor ‘friend’ comes, the doctor never interviews Dona Alleando. He only listens to colonel Goldmann’s ‘tales’ and prescribes Nembutal, which can easily cause her death as it does the children of Awa. It is clear that he is just trying to ease what he considers his friend’s suffering, not Dona Alleando’s. If he had been there to help Dona Alleando, he would have at least talked to her to find out what she is feeling and where she is hurting.

In all, all three of these women get away with their crimes. Just as the *Furies* (*Erinyes*) refuse to avenge the murders committed by Medea because Jason breaks his vows, these women are also exonerated. Each of the husbands makes solemn vows to his wife when they marry. Vows and oaths are not just mere words. They are very powerful, mostly when they are sworn

before or in the name of a god. In Greek, Hebrew, Roman, and other ancient mythology and spirituality, oaths-swearing play very important roles and is taken very seriously. In our times, before people can assume any public office, they must participate in a swearing in ceremony in which they make certain pronouncements that become binding on them. In the legal system, witnesses have to swear an oath on either the Bible or the Qu'ran or other spiritual books to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. If their testimony is proved false, they commit what is referred to as perjury, which is punishable under the law. Some people serve time in prisons for committing perjury. The fact that people have to swear on a religious or spiritual writing or book means that it is believed that they are swearing before a god. So spirituality still plays a major role in our present day legal system and government.

In all the novels we see vows broken. Mamadou never tells his wife, Juletane, that he has a first wife when he marries her. He is a very passive character who likes to blame others for his actions. For example, he claims that he does not love Awa and that his family made him marry her. Secondly, he claims that he cannot divorce Awa as the whole community will ostracize him. In fact it is as if he does not have a mind of his own. The family decides everything he does. According to him, he “had no choice” than to obey (23). And as the master of the household, he subjects his family, including Juletane, to this passivity. He is a master with no clear direction of where he is going or what he wants specifically in life. According to Juletane, “An aura of mystery surrounded the affairs of the husband who, as sole master, made all the decisions without ever worrying about the wishes and desires of the women” (24). For Juletane, who does not come from this culture, it is a shocking thing to see women living this way and accepting everything as is. She expresses the same disbelief when the children die and there is no investigation whatsoever, but a blind acceptance, as everything is attributed to the will of Allah.

She knows that it is not the will of Allah that the children die, as she is the one who kills them, and so the passivity appalls her but it also gives her the courage to plan more evil since she knows that no one will hold her responsible, but that everything will, yet again, be attributed to Allah:

This fatalism has always amazed me. I know that in this particular case, Allah is not the only one involved ... And what about my madness, whose will is that? That is, if I can be considered mad, for the moment I am neither the mad woman of the village nor the neighborhood. My madness is the private property of Mamadou Moustapha's house and in particular of Ndèye, his favorite and third wife. This beloved Ndèye loses nothing by waiting. I am preparing my vengeance like a very special dish. After I have carefully prepared it, seasoned it, I will savor it slowly, very slowly and carefully, it will be my last meal and my madness will vanish. (62)

Thus we have seen the role that the community plays in perpetuating violence in the African families in these novels. Though one might consider oneself an individual, in Africa, one is hardly that, as decisions, even at the family level, are taken communally and many people including medical personnel and religious or spiritual leaders contribute towards what actions are taken. However, women as daughters, daughters-in-law, or wives, are usually the ones who are not allowed a say until they attain a certain age where they too become mothers-in-law or older women, or in the case that they become priestesses of gods or goddesses. For them to influence decisions at a younger age, they will have to resort to manipulations, sorcery, witchcraft, or face rejection, abandonment, or ostracism.

In this chapter, I have analyzed together the three novels studied in this dissertation. I revisited the mythological representation of the characters in the novels through the study of the

myth of Medea and I showed how the myth of Medea is reflected in these novels with the exception of *Les Yeux du volcan*, where the author cleverly broaches it without fully developing it, thereby averting all the calamities committed by her. I looked at whether their madness is a reaction or a response to their situations, and determined that they all respond and react to their situations at some points, and I established which of their actions are reactions and which are responses. To do this, I distinguished between reaction and response by exploring the nuances that exist in their meanings. I also looked at the role of community in the perpetration of violence as depicted in these novels. I explained that one is hardly an individual in Africa as communal living plays a strong role in daily decision-making. Friends as well as community members including religious leaders all influence decisions even at the family level.

In the final chapter, I look at the role of madness as a redeeming feature of sorts in these novels, as these women and some other characters get away with the violent crimes they commit without being prosecuted, as a result of their madness.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: Saved by Madness:

Comme j'aimerais m'endormir
aussi, pour une longue nuit de
repos! Me réveiller dans un autre
monde où les fous ne sont pas
fous, mais des sages aux regards
de justice.
Juletane (1982:141)

7.1 *The Mad Female*

Throughout this dissertation, I have shown how madness is constructed not only in, but as women or feminine entities. From Antiquity, through Greek, Roman, Asian, and African mythology to the present time, women have always been suspected of insanity, and have been represented insane, be they goddesses or humans. When men or male entities exhibit similar characteristics, the females in their lives are blamed for their actions, or for causing their madness. We have seen that madness is usually personified as female, so when madness is blamed for people's actions, invariably, a woman is being accused. For example, Hamlet blames his "madness" for his ill treatment of Laertes. However, later he admits to his mother Gertrude, that: "I essentially am not in madness, / But mad in craft" (III. iv. 187-188). Indeed, what led to Hamlet's "mad" behavior is his mother's involvement with Claudius, his uncle, whom Hamlet later kills.

When Heracles kills his sons, it is believed that *Hera* had asked the goddess of madness, *Lyssa*, to cause him to lose his mind and kill his children. Men and male entities use women and female entities, to destroy themselves in favor of males, as is evident in polygamous families. However, women often react and respond to their ill treatment at the hands of men and their cohorts, through behaviors that end up being interpreted as madness, as illustrated in the three

novels I have studied *Un Chant écarlate*, *Juletane* and *Les Yeux du volcan*.. As such, it is as if women are doomed to insanity. I showed how madness is constructed in African women, through many practices and beliefs, and how some women intentionally accept this state of madness, to avoid humiliation or to exert vengeance. For example, Ma Fatim, in *Un Chant écarlate*, claims to be under the attack of a *Rab* because she does not want it to appear like the co-wife is beating her in a fight, which is clearly the case. Juletane appropriates the madness ascribed to her by her co-wife Ndèye , under the guise of madness, destroys an entire household. In *Les Yeux du volcan*, I also demonstrated how denial of sex constitutes domestic abuse, and constructs madness in women. In all, mythology has played a major role in my study, because even though some might treat mythology and beliefs in witchcraft, possessive spirits, the effect of the moon, and their exorcism as archaic and fantastical, these are still very much in vogue in Africa. By using mythology in reading these African novels, I have demonstrated that women react the same way to abuse in spite of the era, and that unless issues of abuse are addressed, they will still react the same way in the future. They will still use whatever is available to them in responding to the bad situation they find themselves in.

This chapter concludes this dissertation and I do so by saying that madness is a redeeming feature of sorts in these literary texts. It saves some people from bad situations, while others use it to get away with crimes that they should have been prosecuted for. I continue to draw from mythology to show how madness can be redemptive and, I will proceed to show how this applies to *Juletane*, *Un Chant écarlate* and *Les Yeux du volcan*. Finally, I will compare the representation of how the female protagonists react and respond to the abuse they suffer to determine how the female authors' representations differ from that of the male author.

7.2 *Saved by Madness*

In Greek mythology, the *Erinyes*, also known as *Furiae* (*Furies*), or *Dirae* by the Romans are angry goddesses who are said to have been born from Nyx (Night), or to have emerged from the drops of blood from the genitalia of Uranus thrown into the sea after his son, the Titan Cronus castrated him. They are invoked and animated when people commit murder, perjury, are ungrateful, disrespectful, harsh, or break the laws of hospitality. They punish criminals who escape public or legal justice. Thus, they are the avenging goddesses who haunt and punish criminals. In the *Illiad*, they are invoked as “those who beneath the earth punish whoever has sworn a false oath” (*Illiad* iii, 278ff, xix 260ff). Burkert on his part suggests that they are “an embodiment of the act of self-cursing contained in the oath” (Burkert 198). At the acquittal of Oreste in the court of the Areiopagus, after he murders his mother for killing his father, when their anger are soothed by the pleadings and intervention of Athena (Roman Minerva), they become the *Eumenides* (Aeschylus *Eumenides* 321) meaning the gracious ones or the kindly ones. This is the form in which they operate in Euripides *Medea*, when they refuse to punish Medea because Jason has broken his marriage oath to her. This renders his marriage oath false. Jason invoked the *Furies*, when he is cursing Medea saying: “May the *Furies* destroy you for the sake of these children” (Euripedes *Medea* 1389), and in response, Medea, filled with confidence that the *Erinyes* would acquit her, because she has acted in response to Jason’s broken oath, responded “What god or divinity listens to you, you breaker of oaths and deceiver of strangers” (1391-2)? Hence, Jason “violated the most sacred of customary laws” (Corti 94), because he breaks an oath to a stranger in his land, a stranger he has offered asylum, so to speak, and one that he has made a part of himself, and who has given up everything for his sake. In other words, they judge a crime according to the “mitigating circumstances” (Corti 90). The fact

that the *Erinyes* did not consider Medea's killing of her children, albeit in a brutal manner, as constituting culpability, and that Helios sent her a chariot to rescue her, led Corti to conclude that the gods are on her side (Corti 91).

This is also evident in Seneca's version of *Medea*, where Medea proclaims herself the vehicle for the *Erinyes* (*Furies*) as if possessed by them: "Ma douleur à nouveau se réveille, et ma haine s'enflamme, et de mon bras, malgré moi, s'empare l'antique Erinys. Ô ma colère, j'irai où tu me mènes!" (Seneca, 948-53) In *Un Chant écarlate*, the *Furies* are also on the side of Mireille. It is as if she is possessed by them, and they make her scream at, and punish her husband, for breaking his vows and betraying her, as she screams at him: "Sale Nègre! Sale traître! Adultère! Infidèle!" (246) The author references the *Furies*, when she describes Ousmane's broken promises as snakes, that encircle Mireille in her madness: "At what moment did her agonizing suffering precipitate her into madness? The meretricious words of love jolted her mental distress. The lying words mocked her. Promises deliberately violated turned into hideous serpents that twined around her" (163). These surely allude to the hair of the *Erinyes*, that are serpent like and, of course, Mireille's hair are also described as long and, obviously twined around her. The narrator also equate her with *furie*, while insisting on Ousmane's culpability, since he is responsible for unleashing the *furie*. "[...] il avait pétri inconsciemment une furie. Et quelle furie! Sa furie l'insultait et hurlait" (246-7). As a *Fury*, she is therefore momentarily transformed into an agent of vengeance.

The role of the *Furies* as avengers who judge people for their crimes, but who can also show leniency when one pleads with them, to withhold their judgment based on the burden of proof and intent, alludes to our current legal system. In the present day legal system, criminals and murderers are acquitted of their crimes based on insanity plea, self-defense plea, or the

inability to prove motive, pre-meditation, and mitigating circumstances. This is portrayed in the case of Orestes, who though he had murdered his mother for murdering his father, Agamemnon and his slave-mistress, Cassandra of Troy, is acquitted by the *Erinyes*, because Athena pleads with them. Athena's ability to prove to them that Clytemnestra has broken her vows to Agamemnon, as she has taken her brother-in-law as her lover in the absence of her husband, caused the *Erinyes* to refuse to punish Orestes. According to William H. Reid, "A person generally has not committed a crime unless he or she has both committed an illegal act and *intended* to commit an illegal act. Thus there are lots of kinds of "killing," but only some of them are 'murder' and lots of kinds of 'taking,' only some of which are 'stealing'" (169). As such mitigating circumstances and the frame of mind one is in when he commits a crime, play an important role in determining culpability, and insanity plea can be entered, and used, to acquit a person of his/her crime.

7.3 Insanity Plea

Insanity plea is well played-out in each of these novels, as we see that many people got away with crimes, because they were considered insane. Some minor characters are also saved, either due to their own assumed role of insanity or because of other people's insanity. Insanity as a defense is very powerful, especially in Africa, because people consider mad people not to be in control of their faculties, as they are believed to be possessed by another entity, or spirit, and therefore not responsible for their actions. Indeed, insane people are usually not paid much heed, as no one takes them seriously. In medieval literature, the theme of madness is so common, and many people assume that role to gain access to places they would otherwise have been denied access. For example, in *Tristan et Iseult*, Tristan pretends to be mad to gain access into the court of King Marc and Iseult's chambers, with no one stopping him (ch. 5). In Africa, mad people are

rarely kept in psychiatric homes; they are mostly allowed to roam free, and intermingle with everyone else, provided that they are not violent, as we see in the case of Juletane. Most mad people do not work, but are fed, as well as provided for, by their families or their community. In both rural and urban communities, be these Islamic, Christian, or traditional, mad people roam free and beg for food. It is believed that giving them food and clothes will ward evil and calamity away from the givers' families, as well as open doors for them. So, mad people are not held responsible for their crimes.

Juletane alludes to some of these practices. For example, she notes that Mamadou and his family are just taking care of her as they would a begger, to receive favor from God. Therefore, she considers her madness, a personal property of the Mamadou family, as she is not cast out or allowed to beg from others. Also owing to the fact that mad people are not restrained, or kept at psychiatric facilities, except when violent, she is left alone to mind her own business and is only taken to the psychiatric hospital, whenever she suffers an emotional or psychotic breakdown. Unfortunately, she bites the hands that feed her, and destroys an entire family. No one ever suspects her even when the children die. Also, she is not arrested by the police after she pours hot oil on Ndèye.

In the introduction to the *Medea of Euripides* (xi) Gilbert Murray writes:

The truth is that in this play Medea herself is the *dea ex machinâ*. The woman whom Jason and Creon intended simply to crush has been transformed by her injuries from an individual human being into a sort of living Curse. She is inspired with superhuman force. Her wrongs and her hate fill all the sky. And, the judgment pronounced on Jason comes not from any disinterested or peace-making God, but from his own victim transfigured into a devil. (xi)

This is obviously what Juletane and Mireille become as well. They become avenging angels, destructive machines, and curses on the families, especially Juletane, who actually succeeds in destroying an entire family. For Mireille, at least her husband does not suffer fatal injuries, and she does not harm Ouleymatou or her child.

7.4 Saved by madness: Other Characters

As we have seen, all our major female characters escape prosecution for the violent crimes they commit, but while Dona Alleando's own turns out for good, Juletane and Mireille's are tragic. Beside these three main characters, there are some other characters in the novels that are equally saved from bad situations they find themselves in, either by faking their own madness or by other people's madness. Some use the guise of madness to commit criminal acts and get away with them.

In *Juletane*, the author presents us with the character of Helène, who herself has been hurt by a man and, who has chosen to freeze her emotions and to just be as independent as she possible can be, without ever having to depend on a man. She works hard and owns property and apartments in three countries; she, however, drowns her pains in alcohol consumption, and liberates herself with chain smoking: "Helène lit another cigarette. She had started smoking to look emancipated and liberated and had acquired a taste for it. Now she smoked two packets a day" (28). Yet, there is also a problem with that, Helène wants a child of her own and to do that, she will have to be with a man again. Being as calculating as she has become, she calculates all the risks, and chooses a man she believes she can control, a man who is younger in age than she is and who earns less income than she earns, an only son. She takes a critical look at herself and her situation, and, she decides that if he messes around with another woman, that she will simply leave him with her child. Reading Helène, one can feel that there is a total emotional disconnect.

She is shallow in her feelings and pays not much attention to anything or anyone. Even the way she talks about her own family members shows that she does not have much of a connection with them: “in fact, in spite of the affection she felt for them, once they had exchanged news about the weather and their health, did not know what else to write about. Her life is so different from theirs” (45). Even in her job, as we have seen in how she treated Juletane’s case, she is not as passionate. However, reading Juletane’s diary, makes her to take another critical look at herself and reassess her situation. She does this by embarking on a journey down memory lane, which jolts her from her coldness:

Helène had reached the end of Juletane’s diary. [...] she was not sleepy. The alcohol can no longer affect her. She felt a certain melancholy. She had not known that Juletane’s life had been so full of drama, and in particular that she had suffered so much. Now in her turn, she asked herself the questions, which had been preoccupying her: can she have a child, at her age? Was she right to be getting married? [...]

Helène tenderly smoothed the bent corners of the notebook, closed it, and, for the first time in twenty years, she wept. Juletane’s diary had broken the ice around her heart (78-9).

Thus reading the diary saves her from her own state of apathy and disconnect. The fact that she does not feel sleepy, despite the amount of alcohol she has consumed, and the number of cigarette that she has smoked as she reads the diary, shows that they no longer have effect on her. Her addiction to them is broken and she is ready to start a brand new life. Juletane’s diary helps her to confront her emotions and feelings finally, instead of running from and avoiding them. Her own healing takes place, and the ice around her heart is broken.

In *Un Chant écarlate*, we see another person saved by faking being possessed by an entity or spirit. As we have seen, being possessed causes the possessed to behave in an abnormal way that is interpreted as madness. Ma Fatim, a woman who is involved in a polygamous marriage, is known to pick on and beat up on her co-wives. She is quite aggressive and feared by the other wives. She makes their lives miserable and a living hell, thus forcing them to leave the marriage. When a new wife, Maimouna joins the family, Ma Fatim starts her antics and picks a fight with her. Unfortunately for her, this new wife is younger and ready to fight for her position in the family. When Ma Fatim finds herself being beaten by her co-wife, Maimouna, she quickly goes into a trance, to make it appear like Maimouna did not beat her on her own merit, but because of the attack of a *Rab*. She stays in her trance until an exorcism ritual is performed to appease the *Rab* possessing her. In her case, it is Mama Coumba, a *Mamiwata* spirit, that is appeased, and she is miraculously restored. Faking this possession saves her from an embarrassing situation.

In *Les Yeux du volcan*, beside Dona Alleando Calero's sanity and marriage that are saved, the man who kills the *colosse* (Colonel Sombro) also does so under the guise of madness that he appropriates. When rumors has it that the *colosse* is going to speak publicly about Colonel Ignacio Banda, whose life is being kept a secret, so the authorities will not prevent the revolution he is planning, another ex-colonel, colonel Claudio Lahenda, who everybody believes is mad, pays the *colosse* a visit in his tent, and shoots him to death. The shooting is not a secret as the crowd outside hears the six shots he fires at the *colosse*, yet, nothing is done to him by the authorities because of his madness and they cannot even take his gun from him as it has been given to him as a keepsake at the end of his military service.

Finally among those saved by madness are Ousmane in *Un Chant écarlate* and Benoit Goldmann in *Les Yeux du volcan*. Both men finally come to their senses after their wives run mad. Ousmane realizes rather late that he is the one who has been sick and who projected his madness on his wife and Benoit Goldmann actually turns his life around, as his wife's insanity causes him to seek medical help for his ailments, which enable him to regain both his confidence, and his manhood. We can safely assume that given his new state of mind and peace at his home that he will now make a better Statesman after helping to liberate his people. As many insist, madness in a person is often a reflection of the madness of the society. Since these men are representative of these societies, positive changes in them will hopefully bring about positive changes in their respective African societies.

This hope ties to what Lena Šimić, writes in her article, “On Medea/Mothers’ Clothes: A ‘Foreigner’ Re-figuring Medea and Motherhood” that:

Medea is not a woman, but woman as sign – a construct of a canonical theatre tradition, the ultimate immoral figure invented in order to mark the ethical limits and boundaries of the state itself. Medea, the barbarian anti-mother, figures unspeakable danger, a disaster waiting to happen, a collapse of not only systems of gender and nation but also the absolute destruction of the natural order. (112)

As I have shown through the three female protagonists, it takes the eyes of a stranger, a foreigner to expose the flaws of a given society. People just settle for what is obtainable in the culture they are born into. Instead of questioning issues, they devise more means of surviving their ordeal, than doing anything to change or stop it. These means are sometimes devious, evil, and manipulative. Just as with the killing of twins and sacrificing of humans to gods is challenged

and finally stopped with the participation of strangers⁸⁰, polygamy and other marital crimes are also challenged by foreign women, who do not understand the tenets and the reasons for it. These women of the sister-hood of Medea might be considered as barbarians, anti-mothers, and disasters waiting to happen, but they bring about the collapse of gender systems. They equally challenge the status quo and what is accepted as the natural norm, thereby bringing about liberation and emancipation, as well as creating awareness of the humanity of other women. They become the true heroines, and their actions end up speaking louder than the words and all forms of manipulations that women can come up with to live with their abuse.

Finally, I conclude this dissertation by saying that in the works of the female authors' studied here, *Juletane* and *Un Chant écarlate*, the emotional states of their female protagonists are well developed, whereas it is not so in *Les Yeux du volcan*, written by a male author. Even though they all used mythology and other superstitious beliefs in their works, yet the outcomes are different. While the female authors allow their female protagonists to vent their anger and fury fully, through the perpetration of violence to the point of committing murder, reiterating the saying that there is no fury as hot as a woman scorned, the male author pulls back and allows for a peaceful resolution that albeit, still restores patriarchal order as the norm.

⁸⁰ In the case of Nigeria, Mary Slessor played a major role in the stopping of the killing of twins.

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