



Recalling Psychological Trauma in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*

Leqa'a Salam Abu-Mahfouz^{[a],*}

^[a]Department of English Language and Literature, Hashemite University, Jordan.

*Corresponding author.

Received 17 October 2021; accepted 29 November 2021

Published online 26 December 2021

Abstract

Through examining the text of the play Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* (1970); this paper shows the psychological trauma and social impact of colonization in *Anowa's* life; the main character in the play of the same name; which depicts the postcolonial psychological trauma of individuals as an indisputable consequence of colonization. Aidoo uses the memories and flashbacks which are also common symptoms of trauma to evoke rooted trauma through returning to the history of slavery in the Gold Coast (Ghana) also, to make the painful memories alive in the traumatized person's psyche and she/he still suffers from the psychological traumatic experience. This paper reveals Aidoo's techniques for portraying traumas, its effects, and reactions in the frame of analyzing literary portrayals of oppressed people through drama, which was embodied here by *Anowa* as a victim overwhelmed by psychological trauma in every aspect of her life. Different defense mechanisms such as denial, projection, isolation, regression, displacement and sublimation show in *Anowa's* reactions, feelings; and thoughts; to reduce the effects of trauma on her psyche. *Anowa*, subjected to overwhelming stress or intolerable pain, uses this technique to express the impact of persecution when she remembers the past in her childhood. To this end, the researcher argues that the damage of the individual psychology as a traumatic effect of colonization; is an undeniable fact.

Key words: Psychological trauma; Ama ata aidoo; *Anowa*; Post-colonial drama

Abu-Mahfouz, L. S. (2021). Recalling Psychological Trauma in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 17(4), 7-15. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/12312>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12312>

INTRODUCTION

Caruth (1996) in her book *Unclaimed Experience* defines trauma as an "overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena." (p.11). Also in the same book she called them "the wound of the mind" (p.3). These wounds are located in the mind of the individual who suffers from trauma and passes through a period of 'latency' which seems for Caruth as "the period during which the effects of experience are not apparent" (p.7); then it returns to haunt the survivor. Similarly and according to Visser, trauma symptoms may appear not only on those who suffer directly "primary victims" from traumatic events but may also include "secondary victims, witnesses and bystanders at the event, relatives and friends victims" ("Trauma Theory", p. 272). These people will suffer from the same symptoms the directly traumatized people suffer from such as "nightmares, flashbacks and depression" and they suffer from "an increased sensitivity to cynicism, depersonalization and distinct changes in spirituality or worldview (Visser, 2011, p. 272). *Anowa* was not a primary victim. She does not suffer directly from slavery, but the traumatic atmosphere that her people got exposed to affects her badly.

This paper focuses on the psychological traumatic effects of slavery which have been particularized in *Anowa's* life. The play presents the traumatic psychological effects that *Anowa's* husband embodies in her life, whose economic status depends on the slave trade. Aidoo in *Anowa* reacts against the traumatic system

in which the slaves suffered constantly. In *Anowa's* words, the poor who are enslaved are "wayfarer" and "the wayfarer is traveler" (p.37) because the slaves are homeless, and go hand in hand.

With its recalling of the trauma and the history of slavery in the Gold Coast during the second half of the eighteenth century *Anowa* is a metaphorical condemnation of all shapes of oppression and economic exploitation from the beginning of slavery until the contemporary neocolonial period during the 1960s.

Ama Ata Aidoo's writings suggest a symbiotic relationship between literature and history. Fiction can convey emotional overtones and meanings that may not be easily expressed by historians. The play explores the need to recover the past and the lost homeland by recalling trauma. The play embodies a form of a counter history that confirms the necessity of recalling against the grain, and admits the difficulty of evoking such memories. In the third part (or phase) of the play, *Anowa* remembers when her grandmother told her about the great houses which were built by the "pale men" (Gilbert, *Postcolonial Plays*, 118). She recalls how she raised many questions about white men who came "from far away. From beyond the horizon" and who looked like them [Africans] but as if they were peeled of their skins, "like a lobster that is boiled or roasted" (118). *Anowa* specifically remembers how her questions about slavery were hushed by her grandmother and other women of her community who believed she was a witch to ask such questions: "no one talks of these things anymore! All good men and women try to forget;/they have forgotten!/What happened to those who were taken away? Do people hear from them?/Shut up child. It is too late child. /Sleep well, child. All good men and women try to forget;/They have forgotten" (119).

Anowa is the dramatic embodiment of the slave trade after the 1844 Bond Treaty in what is now Ghana. The play portrays a slave trader named Kofi Ako who consumes his whole youth obtaining slaves to substitute his sexual impotence. The play starts with a daring young girl, *Anowa*, who challenges her mother to marry a man of her own choice. She wants to dispose of the duties of a traditional wife, and wants to become a modern one; but in fact she does not get freedom in her chosen man's life. Her husband, Kofi Ako has an ingrained nature to gain money through slave's trade of which *Anowa* refuses; but her disagreement does not impact her husband's greed at all. While the husband's benefits in slave trading increase significantly, their sexual life begins to disintegrate; and *Anowa* gradually becomes disappointed with her marriage. *Anowa* says to her husband that "after all, it is you who are anxious that the slaves should not hear us. What I don't understand, Kofi, is why you want to have so many things your own way" and Kofi Ako angrily retorts "why are you like this, *Anowa*? Why? Can't you be like other normal women? Other normal people?" (Aidoo, 1970, p.53).

Actually, Kofi Ako's slave trade in 1870 Africa was a common issue; but somebody, who refuses it, was silenced because it was a strange behavior to put an end to slave trade. Kofi Ako does not have a family for himself because he consumes his youth to his trade and spends his life there with slaves. Murphy argues that "in *Anowa*, Aidoo depicts a slave holder in the 1870s who, because of his relationship slaves and the slave trade, is literally made impotent; though he reaches out to his slaves as if they were his family, he is not able to have a family life himself" (Murphy 2009, p.47). The influence of slavery at the end leads him to commit suicide. Aidoo's depictions of slavery and its traumatic impacts in *Anowa* are very clear throughout the play.

According to Khawaldeh and Bani-khair (2017), *Anowa* cannot remain silent any more with regard to the injustices she observes around her. The question of slavery as a horrible and unspeakable memory permeates the play from its onset to its end (73). As Caruth (1996), "the story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling an escape from reality- the escape from death, or from its referential force- rather attests to its endless impact on a life" (p.7), Caruth claims that such story is, "a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (p.7). Witnesses of traumatic events suffer every time they recall their trauma. The traumatic incidents not only return to haunt the traumatized person, but also their effect is not fully known during the event. During the traumatic experience, the traumatized person wants to escape and survive his life, and there is no time to think about or have a special feeling about it. But when the memories return, the image of the incident becomes very obvious and the accurate details that the victim was unable to see during the traumatic event start to clearly vivify in the victim's mind; the image of the traumatic event becomes clearer, which makes the victim suffer double suffering.

As Khawaldeh and Bani-Khair suggest that, Aidoo dramatizes her female protagonist to symbolize all Africa as a mother of all Africans (73). In a highly symbolic moment in the play, I see *Anowa* relating her memory of a nightmarish dream in which the white slave-dealers appear as uncanny creatures:

I dreamt that I was a big, big woman. And from my insides were huge holes out of which poured men, women, and children. And the sea was boiling hot and steaming. And as it boiled, it threw lobsters, boiled lobsters, each of whom as it fell turned into a man or a woman, but keeping its lobsters heads and claws. And they rushed to where I sat and seized the men and women as they poured out of me, and they tore them apart, and dashed them to the ground and stamped upon them. (119)

Disclosing this dream to the women of her family, the little girl is labeled as a witch and reminded not to speak about it. *Anowa* is only able to remember what others tend to forget and hide: "any time there is a mention of a slave,

I see a woman who is me and a bursting of a ripe tomato or a swollen pod" (119). By enabling Anowa to speak the unspeakable, Aidoo reminds her readership about the difficulty of remembering against the grain, but she, at the same time, is aware of the importance of remembering and resurrecting suppressed memories of the past (Khawaldeh and Bani- Khair, 2017, p.73).

TRAUMATIC BEHAVIOR IN ANOWA

Anowa as a traumatized character from the beginning was filled with a bitter feeling of a stranger; she said "I am only a wayfarer, with no belongings either here or there" (*Anowa*, p.115); which clearly shows that she is a traumatized person who is suffering from alienation. A wayfarer is a traveler. Therefore, to call someone a wayfarer is a painless way of saying he does not belong. That he has no home, no family, no village, and no stool of his own, has no feast days, no holidays, no state, no territory –Anowa" she suffers from loneliness; she had found herself alone and a stranger. For this reason, Anowa denotes her identity as "strange" which means that in terms of her gender, she is not like other women; also she is apart from her society because of her strong social attitudes and visions.

Aidoo evokes many types of trauma in *Anowa* by paying special attention to her "abikuness" as a symbol for showing Africa's violent rupturing by the slave trade and European colonial polices. Also, she shows the social attitudes toward that past, and Africa's self-forced forgetting ' amnesia' or silence about the past of their history. In recalling trauma, Aidoo uses Anowa as some kind stimulation of social objection. Through traditions and treatment, she also shows manifestations of social biases against women and marginalization of women in her society. The play is based on the figure of "abiku" which represents both Anowa's spiritual migrations (the returning spirit child) as she lives in the past and the present at the same time among her people.

Aidoo's passions about African history and the slave trade are depicted by her character, Anowa, whose origin of pain is the awareness that many Africans were sold into slavery and used as a cheap labor for western communities. Anowa's grandmother told her a story when she was a child of eight, about the " huge house rising to touch the skies, houses whose foundations were wider than the biggest roads" (Aidoo, 1985, p.104) The houses mentioned here are the slaver's bastions at Elmina and along the West African coast, those "great places "to which Nana, Anowa's grandmother, had traveled, but which according to the Old Man of the "Prologue" "shall remind our children" that "there is a bigger crime" (p.66). In those places the people of the land played the game of "dipping with the stranger" (Aidoo, 1987, p.66). In shock, Anowa realizes the complicity of her people in the slave trade and asks her grandmother for more details:

"Tell me Nana, who built the houses?" This questions comes as an attempt to encourage her grandmother to tell a more detailed story, but her people are often silent about the horror of the slave trade: "The pale men.....They are white men" (pp.104-105) who were said to have "built the big houses to keep/the slaves" (p.105). However, Anowa further inquires: "What is a slave Nana?" (p.105). this question draws an angry response from her grandmother who orders her to stop asking "Shut up! It is not good that a child should ask big questions. A slave is one who is bought and sold" (p.105).

Anowa's insistence to recall her past even when she was a child of eight years to reveal the fact about her people and their history sets her as a distinguished woman in her society. Her open- mindedness scares her grandmother who tags her as a "witch", but for Anowa, the story of her people's slavery and their persecution becomes the origin of her psychological schism; so the traumatic memories of Anowa, like many other literary traumatic recalling, "include fragments of the traumatic event in exact form, with little or no imaginative elaboration" and these memories are "often experienced with terrifying immediacy, as if occurring in the present" (Herman, 1992, p.28). The play relies heavily on memories and flashbacks which are also common symptoms of trauma. Flashbacks make the painful memories alive in the traumatized person's psyche and they show that the traumatized person still suffers from the traumatic experience. According to Freud, the traumatized person's reaction "may take various forms. For quite slight increases in excitation, alteration in his own body may perhaps be enough: weeping, abusing, and raging and so on. The more intense the trauma, the greater is the adequate reaction" ("On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena", p. 296).

Anowa's psychological trauma is actualized in the nightmare she has on the night after she heard the story. Her trauma was embodied since her childhood by the nightmare that was full of symbols of power, occupation, slavery, and colonization. The nightmare is allegorical and is portrayed as Anowa's rejection of the story of Africa's ruptures as a result of colonization. In her dream, Anowa becomes a metaphor for "Mother Africa "whose people have been defeated, exploited, and ruptured along time.

Anowa's dream was awful and tragic, but it was a means to recall the past, to understand history or communicate with it. It is an act of re (membering), to borrow Toni Morrison's term for recuperating history/memory or the past in order to use it for the present. However, as it is apparent in Anowa's pain, the silencing of the possibility of recalling trauma or stories of the past both anguishes and horrifies. According to Maggi Phillips, (1994) "the plays tragic force is derived from the repression of dream as a channel for genuine communication and connections". These historical and spiritual connections of Africans worldwide are affirmed theatrically in the play through "the voices of unseen

wearied multitude” which begins to sing the spiritual, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot on stage after Anowa tells her tale of horror” (p.107).

The “wise” Anowa, however, remembers her childhood visit with her grandmother who had reluctantly unraveled the story of the “pale men from beyond the horizon who looked like you or me peeled like lobsters boiled or roasted” (p.106). Who had taken the men, women and children of the land away. The tale was so shocking to her as a twelve year old that even then; she had dreamed that she was “the mother” of these men, women, and children who were then seized by “giant lobsters, boiled lobsters who tore them apart. Dashed them to the ground and stamped upon them” (Aidoo, 1987, p.106). She relates that she became ill over the dream and at that time “the women of the house” warned her not to mention the dream again, However as she says. “Any time there is a mention of a slave, I see a woman who is me and a bursting” (p.107). The major traumatic event in the play burst when Kofi tells Anowa that he has decided to acquire slaves, but her rejection evokes the major fears from her past nightmare to divide Africans into diaspora and the notion of the History of slavery. To reinforce the first, Aidoo instructs that the spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” should be sung by an “unseen wearied multitude” (p.107) and for the second is Anowa’s refusal to be a part of her husband’s new bargain to enslave to make himself feel important. Her response is: “I shall not feel happy with slaves around Kofi. No man made a slave of his friend and came too much himself. It is wrong. It is evil” (p.90). Then, she realizes that her husband is a demon in disguise.

As a confirmation of trauma in Anowa’s life, her husband’s insistence on getting slaves adds another strain to their relationship and contributes to the personal tragedies of the two main characters, but it invites the linking up of history, that is the past, present, and the future. Earlier in the prologue, the Old Man, one of the pair of “The Mouth – that Eats-Salt-And pepper.” In his chronicle of the state of Abura, informs us of the “bigger crime/we have inherited from the clans incorporate.” He suggests that the clans had participated in a “game of dipping with the stranger” (p.66).

The concluding scene of the second phase of the play, as Jade Lambert (2005) rightly argues, exposes the schism that has fully developed between Anowa and Kofi. Although they are walking together on the same road, their lives have taken opposite tracks. Kofi, having slaves against Anowa’s wishes, passes through the forest flanked by male attendants. His wealth is apparent in his garments and jewelry. Anowa follows them, in her same clothes from Yebi, idly twiddling a stick. This visual composition strongly alerts the audience that not only did Kofi ignore Anowa’s wishes, but also that Anowa has not resigned to Kofi’s choice (p.35). In the midst of another debate, Kofi suggests that Anowa is lonely because of

their childlessness, and insists on buying female slaves to keep Anowa company. In a climactic outburst Anowa fiercely opposes being the benefactor of another being’s bondage. Anowa discloses that she, like the slaves, is a wayfarer “with no belongings here or there.” (p.96). Kofi is appalled at Anowa’s taboo self-realization, asserting that Anowa is comparing herself to those who “belong to other people.” Anowa asserts that a wayfarer may also “belong to oneself” (p.97). Anowa knows that, like the slaves, she is an eternal outsider, but unlike the slaves, she can never truly belong to the community in which she is subjected as long as she is true to herself.

Erich Lindemann in his paper “Acute Grief Symptomatology and Management of this Condition.» Argues that state of acute grief is a syndrome with a certain psychological and somatic symptoms (ie, a set of characteristic features) occurring immediately after a crisis. So, the loss of warmth is very clear in the relation between Anowa and her husband. Women in the colonized countries lost the feeling of life as a result of killing their emotions; where emotional damage is linked to traumatic losses.

Anowa’s Fragmented Psyche as a victim of the post-colonial trauma, Anowa suffers from psychological fragmentation. She is tortured psychologically and physically. Returning to her homeland and her history can be held as a search for her identity. Anowa is unable to cope with her life and her post traumatic reality. The history of slavery and the complicity of her husband; traumatize her. Her ego tries to defend her against her traumatic past which causes her anxiety, by distancing herself from her awareness of unpleasant colonial thoughts and feelings. In his article “Repression” Freud (1915) asserts that “the motive and purpose of repression has nothing else than avoidance of unpleasure” (qtd. in Smith, 2010, p.2983). According to this quote, denial is part of repression. The colonizers’ behaviors affect the victim, so she tries to cope with the stress of the traumatic events that she faces during her life. Paraphrasing Freud, Mcleod (2009) states that the ego “sits at the center of some pretty powerful forces: reality; society represented by the super ego. Biology which represents by the Id” (Para. 1). Since the ego defends us against an aching traumatic past, it falls under the threat of fact and society, causing the feeling of anxiety. According to Freud, “anxiety attack may consist of the feeling of anxiety, alone, without any associated idea, or accompanied by the interpretation that is nearest to hand, such as ideas of extinction of life, or of a stroke, or of a threat of madness may combined with the feeling of anxiety” (qtd. in Smith, 2010, p.330). It is very clear that Anowa suffers from anxiety that makes the person feel fear. In the play, Anowa is a combination of strength and weakness. Her anxiety even makes her laugh predominated by weakness. A clear sign of Anow’s anxiety is shown when her decision enrages Kofi who assumes that Anowa is simply trying to once again be

strong willed. Then, she tries to convince him that the slaves are useless in their trade, but he ties her rejection to her body stating that she is, “only talking like a woman.” (90). Though Anowa’s declarations are not related to her gender, Kofi’s rebuttal is especially revealing of the pre-conceived ideas of womanhood that Anowa is consistently attempting to escape. In earnest, she asks Kofi: “How does a woman talk? I had as much a mouth in the beginning of this trade as you had. And as much head” (90). Then he replies with arguments that he has adopted from his conversations with others, concluding with the same gendered argument to assert his superiority:

KOFI AKO: Anowa, who told you that buying men is wrong? You know what? I like you and the way you are different. But Anowa, sometimes you are too different. [...] I know I could not have started without you, but after all, we all know you are a woman, and I am the man. (90).

The argument ends with Anowa asserting that gender should have nothing to do with the fact that buying slaves is “wrong” and “evil.” In this pivotal dialogue, Aidoo implies that Kofi is developing his argument from discussions with others. Therefore, he demands to know from where Anowa is stealing her opposing views to which she replies, “Are there never things which one can figure out for oneself.” (112). Kofi misreads this statement as Anowa calling him a fool, and accuses her of believing and behaving as if she were superior. It is clear by this point that Kofi wishes to retain the traditional practice of the husband as head of the household who has the only say in all of their public affairs and the final say in their private ones. To deal with problems in life, “the ego employs a range of defense mechanisms to reduce the unpleasant events in the body” (Smith, 2010, p.4207). Anowa employs defense mechanisms during her rejection of Kofi’s request, which makes her feel that they are talking about somebody else Anowa projects the hatred that she suffers from for a long time on slavery and dealing with slaves aggressively. Kofi has no consideration to their feeling or what will happen to them. Most of these slave women committed suicide, but he has no feeling of sympathy and he does not regret what he does. Anowa chooses to live in a different village with her husband, but she regrets choosing him when she discovers his complicity in slave trade and how he has no loyalty to his own countrymen and anywhere in Africa. She feels that she becomes alone in this world, not having any relative. She realizes that he also does not have a sense of belonging to any place in Africa, or anything to remind him of his past, so she chooses another place to live in. Anowa and Kofi are forced to leave their village of Yebi to Oguaa under oath without returning again; amidst ridicule by the townspeople, Led by Anowa’s mother. “To permit the gratification of repressed impulses by projection or displacement” (Kline, 1972, p.186). Anowa’s displacement is some sort of defense mechanisms to avoid

psychological trauma symptoms. Displacement is “grief or aggression known to be caused by or directed at one object may be expressed towards another” (Kline, 1972, p.200). Anowa wants to avoid any acquaintances as she thinks that her mother will not accept her husband and she convinces herself about these thoughts so she avoids going to her village. She hides everything about him, and tries to forget her traumatic experience, but according to Freud, “What seems to be forgotten is, in real sense, still remembered: conscious forgetting is accompanied by unconscious remembering” (qtd. in Billig, 2004, p.147). Another psychological traumatic event that appears here is when they undertake the positions of nomadic traders dealing in skins. The major conflict begins when the couple, childless after several years of marriage, differs upon the ownership of slaves. The assumption amongst the community and couple is that Anowa is barren. Their rift widens, as Kofi becomes the richest man in all of West Africa upon the backs of enslaved men, women, and children. Anowa assumes Kofi’s choice is a substitution for their childlessness. She repeatedly insists that Kofi take another wife who is able to reproduce as an alternative to indentured servitude. Finally, Anowa’s predetermined gift of sight reveals that their childlessness is due to Kofi’s greed, which has replaced his virility. Upon the community’s discovery of Anowa’s realization, Kofi in disgrace shoots himself.

To confirm her psychological trauma, in Oguaa, Anowa tries to live in inner peace and respite; but the name of the “Big House” indicates that Kofi’s creation of a living space is similar to that of the main plantation house in the colonial period and the history of slavery. Oguaa is a land close to Yabi and it is the traditional name for Cape Coast, the largest trading and slave port on the Atlantic. Symbolically, this house serves as a refuge or prison for Anowa. The physical design of the house set coupled with the traumatic events serves to increasingly alienate her. Her trauma leads her to the last solution that is to try to revert to a more traditional lifestyle that she once rejected at the beginning. In contrast, Kofi has adopted and integrated himself with the most powerful cultural practices of the colonial policies. He is a gold dealer with a gathering of slaves who do his work for him. Because of his riches he has declared himself as a head by dressing in Akan royal clothing and greeting guests in a lavishly decorated Victorian style throne room. And in the appearance of the final trauma, he has hung a picture of himself on his mantel in English military regalia next to a picture of Queen Victoria. All these manifestations make Anowa a traumatized woman seeking material security. She tries to find it with her husband who is a weak and helpless man. Anowa’s traumatic experience haunts her through flashbacks. Caruth explains that Freud considers the returning of the past event in the form of flashbacks “traumatic repetition” which is, as Caruth adds, “absolute

inability of the mind to avoid an unpleasurable event” (p.59). The traumatized person loses the ability to pass his/her past experience, which results in neurosis, as in Anowa’s case who is kept dwelling on her past.

The psychological trauma of *Anowa* is rekindled by many of Kofi’s actions when she sees a lavish parade of Kofi, and his slaves, and his excessive manifestations of wealth. In contrast, the traumatic manifestations show her in sharp contrast to the abundance of her circumstances. She wears the same clothing she has worn throughout the play. Anowa is bare-foot, weak, unadorned, and appears more like a wayfarer than any of Kofi’s associates. It is evident that she has been hardly traumatized psychologically, emotionally, physically by the presence of slaves in her home. In addition, the manifestations of aging emerged because of her mental anxiety rather than overwork. Aidoo sets Anowa in a series of monologues in the play to depict her frustration. This technique also reveals that the only way in which Anowa may fully express her trauma is in isolation. She suffers from isolation and is more aware that there is no one to stand by her side. She tries to rely on some defense mechanisms that are used to cope with colonialism. From a psychoanalytic perspective, a defense mechanism develops when “the ego seeks to avoid pain. Instinctual drives are warded off to avoid anxiety or guilt by certain characteristic processes (defense mechanisms). In addition, the ego attempts to avoid feelings of guilt and anxiety (defense against affects)” (Kline, 1972, p.200).

As mentioned earlier, the colonized people use different defense mechanisms such as denial, projection, isolation, regression, displacement and sublimation to reduce the effects of trauma on their psyche. Anowa’s first monologue reveals her initial recognition of colonialism and slavery in her society. Recalling a dialogue with her grandmother as a child, she remembers being rebuked for her questions about the relationship of her people to Europeans. Anowa’s grandmother tries to suppress her curiosity saying, “A child like you should not ask questions”, “what devil has entered you child”, “You frighten me child, you must be a witch child”, “all good men and women try to forget, they have forgotten.” (106). The recalling of the dream that follows the dialogue between Anowa and her grandmother confirms the roots of Anowa’s hostility to slavery. In her nightmare, Anowa becomes a large woman with a round stomach, from which poured her people, who were destroyed by people who came from the sea. She described them as “many giant lobsters, boiled lobsters, each of which keeping its lobster head and claws. “These lobster people ground Anowa’s people on mound of stone, which caused them to burst like a “ripe tomato or swollen pod.” (106) Anowa’s inquest to her grandmother and the following dream acknowledge and recall the taboo associated with the history of slavery. Anowa recalls the village’s reaction in the following quotation:

ANOWA. I was very ill and did not recover for weeks. When I told my dream, the women of the house were very frightened. They cried and cried and told me not to mention the dream again. For some time, there was talk of apprenticing me to a priestess. I don’t know what came of it. But since then, any time there is mention of a slave, I see a woman who is me and a bursting of a ripe tomato or a swollen pod. (p.107)

Anowa’s dream has been troubling to her and to her society since she was a child recalling trauma in her life comes through the horrible nightmare that has lived with Anowa for years and revived every day in her home when she is meeting face to face with slaves.

Another aspect of psychological trauma appears when Anowa’s constant feeling of alienation is expressed in her dialogue with Kofi, which bursts from the traumatic effect in the play. Kofi, disguised in royal Akan regalia, reveals Anowa’s differences in her life with him. She is rumored to be a witch, and as she inquires Kofi about his behaviors and his present evidences of her abnormality she discovers that Kofi’s personal priest has affected his belief of this scandal. Then she is traumatized when she finds out that his plan is now to send her back home to her family in disgrace, and barren. Anowa refuses to go and attempts to bring forth a traditional trial, by asking the community elders to listen to her plea. Kofi’s threatens to brand her as a witch. Through the continuous inquest, she realizes that it is Kofi, not herself, who has given up on them having children. Anowa confirms that Kofi’s manhood has been swallowed by the “devil” of colonialism.

Anowa got exposed to trauma in her motherland as well as her own life. Anowa in her marriage finds it a big chance to retell her traumatic experience to cure herself, but at the end it was impossible for her to cure herself and she cannot stand the trauma that she was exposed to; so, she commits suicide. At first, Anowa suffers from being unable to protect her people. The unsolvable nightmare that she has lived with for years is replayed every day in her home when she is brought face to face with slaves. She does her best not to tell anybody about what happens to her. Freud suggests that the origin of repression lies in external trauma. He says: “the theory of repression, . . . , asserts that these repressed wishes still exist- though there is a simultaneous inhibition which holds them down” (qtd. in Smith, 2010, p.714).

Anowa suffers from melancholic depression. According to Michael Kerr (2016), melancholic depression is seen by the American Psychiatric Association as a mental illness and is characterized as an intense feeling of sadness and hopelessness. Kerr explains that Melancholic Depression Disorder (MDD) has a strong effect on a person’s life such as “work, school, and relationships. It may also impact mood and behavior as well as various physical functions, such as appetite and sleep. People with MDD often lose interest in activities they once enjoyed and have trouble getting through the day. Occasionally, they may also feel as if life isn’t worth living” (para. 2). Like

people who suffer from melancholic depression disorder, Anowa loses the hope of life; when she discovers her husband's complicity in the slave trade she feels as if the universe, with its past, present and future, were gathered together into a single point before and after which nothing existed. She has a desire to shout that this is wrong. This appears when she refuses to be a part of her husband's new bargain to enslave to make himself feel important: "I shall not feel happy with slaves around Kofi. No man made a slave of his friend and came too much himself. It is wrong. It is evil"(90) This quote clearly shows that she is worried about being a partner, and she ends her life with committing suicide because she can no longer stand living this traumatic life.

Trauma, psychological injury, pain and shock because of violence or accident which left emotional scar, can lead to neurosis (Caruth, 1996, p59-60). A series of events lead to a mentally unstable Anowa, her behavior is neurotic. She suffers from the feeling of ignominy, loneliness and loss, and she admits that her life events mirror the events of Africa, slavery and the slave trade. Anowa at the beginning of the play represents the idyllic beauty and purity of Africa before the age of European colonization. Her marriage to the slave dealer Kofi Ako causes an important conflict between marriage, slavery and the postcolonial relationship between masters and slaves. The trauma makes Anowa at the end of the play, weak, half-mad, sloppy and ready to discard herself; she depicts herself as a symbol of both the slaves and Africa itself, after they have been exposed to the mindset of the colonizer and his policies, as portrayed in Kofi Ako and his actions as a slave dealer.

Anowa is emotionally abused by her husband, and he is also traumatized by the violence he himself commits in slave trade which causes the collapse of his marital life and the loss of his manhood. Anowa chooses her own destiny and husband and this leads her to tragic end. Anow's marriage to Kofi leads her to eventual failure. "Her sense of slavery as an unethical institution that connects the black slaveholder with the white colonizer isolates her more and more from her husband Kofi. While Anowa's and Kofi's business flourishes, their marriage fails. Anowa is driven almost into insanity because nobody will back her in her "hypersensitive" reaction to her husband's role as a slave-owner. The play ends tragically with the suicide of both Anowa and Kofi when Anowa reveals that Kofi power as a Slav owner masks his impotence as a man"(Jagne, Parekh.1998.34). Throughout recalling the trauma of Anowa in this postcolonial play one finds that the colonial policies trap her in an inescapable prison. Anowa realizes that Kofi and all the colonized people do not exist in the Western mind; colonizers just consider colonization as a civilizing mission that they have done for the "barbaric" people who are insignificant. Anowa physically lives in the present, but the past haunts her

psychologically and she realizes the traumatic events which make her suffer continuously.

The painful memories keep Anowa an inmate of her past. Through her traumatic memories she tries to free her mind of the traumatic thought of finding herself trapped in continual pain. Anowa recalls the traumatic memories when she sees the slaves or her husband's wealth which reminds her of the image of her past nightmare, and the pain that she feels becomes very clear. When Kofi Ako states: "But your soul is too restless. You always seem to be looking for things; and that prevents your blood from settling" (Phase 2, p 50). Herman (1992) explains that "traumatized people relive the moment of trauma not only in their thoughts and dreams but also in their actions (p.28).

AIDOO'S STYLE OF PORTRAYING POST-COLONIAL TRAUMA

This play, set in the late 1800's during a crucial period in the history of Ghana, portrays some of the earlier conflicts of African peoples with Western slave traders. Aidoo recalls a crucial historical moment in the history of Ghana by recalling the trauma of a personal tragedy in the life of Anowa and Kofi Ako. According to Brown "Approximately thirty years after the Bond Treaty with the British opened up the door to European hegemony in the Fanti area of what was then called the Gold Coast' (91). Brown also adds that:

The historical events which Aidoo interweaves with her legendary material are also important in the play's themes. In recalling the Bond Treaty which bound the Fanti to British rule, the old man of the prologue introduces the familiar theme of change, encouraging the audience in this case to recognize links between the arrival of an alien and hostile culture and the cold-bloodedness of the new generation represented by Kofi. (91).

In *Anowa*, Aidoo utilizes various display techniques of recalling psychological trauma. The play is depicted by Anowa, the main character of the same name of the play. First of all, she makes it more personal in order to attract the reader's attention, hence, she enters Anowa's psyche and lives her trauma and the conflict that she suffers from during her life since her childhood, and the reality that she lives. The reader un.masks Anowa's reality little by little, especially after her traumatic experiences that she had lived. She represents the mysterious life of the colonized. Dilemma tale is one of these techniques which is popular kind of oral literature within West African culture is used as a technique of intellectual awareness. Aidoo used to revive the minds of readers, also it serves to support the ethical and moral consciousness rooted in the folktale and proverb in recalling trauma. Anowa keeps on going backward and forward with her memory which the past seems to haunt the present of the characters experiencing trauma. Anowa depicts the modern woman who is eager to make her own decisions and live life as she desires.

She tries to have the right to make life choices including choosing her husband although as a tribal woman, she has the features of a city-bred one. Ama Ata Aidoo uses the fused choral figure known in the play as THE-MOUTH-THAT-EATS-SALT-AND-PEPPER, to show critical points in the play and give their own perspectives on the scenes of the play. They are discussing and asking that if the world replaces a global village, can it abolish our customs and traditions without costly consequences? This play drives us to search for contradictory issues such as gender roles, the traumatic effects of colonization, reproduction in our various societies, the consequences of their absence, and, most importantly, the choices we make and how they affect others. Aidoo depicts the past of history in recalling trauma which forces her audience to adjust with contemporary traumatic effects.

The play evokes the history of slavery in the Gold Coast during the second half of the eighteenth century as a metaphor for all policies of oppression and economic exploitation. The history of the colonization of what is now Ghana is in a sense depicted through the personal trauma of Anowa with Kofi Ako. Anowa is the character who suffers most from trauma. She suffers from colonization and patriarchal society. After being shocked by her husband, her trauma turns into rejection. Anowa's trauma allows the reader to enter the private life of Anowa and accordingly to know everything about her life and traumatic past. Her tragedy comes as no surprise considering her fears from her childhood. She remembers all the miserable situations through her nightmares. Lack of freedom in a country that suffered from colonization intensifies her suffering. Anowa loses her feeling, like most traumatized people who suffer from colonization. While she is a traumatized person, Anowa avoids projecting her feelings and hides them. Avoidance in this case can be considered as a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. Cathy Caruth mentions Freud's division of trauma symptoms; "positive symptoms (flashbacks and hallucinations) and the "negative symptoms" (numbing, amnesia, and avoidance of triggering stimuli)" (p.130). The avoidance symptoms are feelings of emotional numbness, feelings of depression, losing interest in past activities, hopelessness about the future and a difficulty in maintaining close relationships. The traumatized person also avoids places, people, thinking and talking about his past experience or reduction in one's awareness of one's surrounding (Doctor & Shiromoto, 2010, p.2).

The play conveys the behaviors of the traumatized who are likely to relive the traumatic events in repeated nightmares and other manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder. Another related technique utilized by Aidoo is the fragmented memories. Following the chronological order in recalling trauma helps convey Anowa's traumatic behaviors by observing her conflicts and lack of solidarity. Watching hints here and there about action strongly alerts readers to the trauma that Anowa

suffers from. Interestingly, the protagonist Anowa dreams at the beginning of the play, but she leaves indications for the contemporary African readers who keep searching to unravel traumatic secret as Anowa who is a victim of trauma effects. The readers conclude that the freedom that she asks for is also a lie. As a product of colonization, it is a myth that may not exist. All the daring she has had in herself turns out to be a fantasy. The colonized, including her husband, are shaped according to the will and desire of the colonizer. Anowa realizes that the bitter awareness of being no more than a means that is manipulated by her oppressors generates feelings of helplessness which can lead traumatized victims to find the sole solution for their suffering in committing suicide.

Furthermore, Aidoo's skill of recalling trauma is noticed in her portrayal of the dream which looks like very horrible nightmare. As it was mentioned earlier Anowa relates her memory of a nightmarish dream in which the white slave- dealers appear as uncanny creatures.

Eventually, Anowa's talent of her insight reveals that her childlessness is due to Kofi's avidity, which has replaced his virility. Upon the society's discovery of Anowa's predictions, Kofi in shame shoots himself. To confirm Anowa's trauma, Aidoo offers two possible epilogues for *Anowa*. First, after Kofi committing suicide, the play ends with Anowa in a state of madness, laughing on Kofi's throne. Also, there is an additional selective ending in which the community members and Anowa's parents grieve while the Mouth-That-Eat-Salt-and Pepper, the narrators, elders, and voice of the community, lament over the death of Kofi and Anowa who has also committed suicide by drowning herself. The presentation of two optional endings illustrates a traditional literary technique of narration, the dilemma tale. This popular type of oral literature is used within Western African tradition as a method of intellectual education. It works to broaden the visions of individuals, but it rarely disrupts the prevailing ideology of the community. Instead, it serves as an integral part of the folktale and proverbs which work to promote ethical and moral awareness among individuals. (Lambert, p.5)

CONCLUSION

At the end as an inevitable consequence of the victim of the post-colonial trauma, Anowa realized when she swore she would never go back to Yebi that this decision was incorrect. Kofi Ako had already committed suicide by shooting himself to death and there was no way she could go back to Yebi because she was bound by the oath not to come back to Yebi. Hence, as a tragic end she killed herself for that.

The process of recalling psychological trauma in *Anowa*— in the form of flashbacks or dreams — is primarily channeled to show the same effects of trauma

consequences. On the one hand, the act of recalling trauma in these plays examines the historical narratives about these much resurrected periods. On the other, these traumatic acts reveal the state of social transformation in which oppressed ethnical groups become aware of the suffering left by colonialism under the pretense of independence for postcolonial nations.

The concept of sublimation in life refers to effective protections that change human beings from case to case as with Anowa's case in *Anowa*, and it also turns love into hatred which becomes very clear through her rejection of slavery and slave-trade that Anowa defies throughout her relation with her husband. Rejection is another technique used by the colonized. In *Anowa*, the main character – after whose name the play is titled – shows ample amounts of hatred towards the colonizers and in contrast she has great sympathy towards her own people and all Africans in Africa and the diaspora across the Atlantic Ocean, so she lives in a continuous conflict when she is thinking of the things that happened to her. The colonized people suffer from repression, which refers to “rejecting and keeping something out of consciousness” (Kline, 2014, p.195). The colonized people reject their present status quo and their way of life. Anowa's rejection is embodied in her reactions since her childhood, especially her reaction towards the complicity of her beloved husband in slavery and slave-trade. Denial, rejection and isolation are defense mechanisms used by Anowa to reduce the effects of trauma in her life. She suffers from psych schism as an effect of traumatic events in her marital life.

Aidoo shows a mirror of Africa catastrophic casualties as a consequence of colonization. Anowa embodies an image of human relations and political issues as a mother of whole Africans. She depicts trauma both in the psychological aspect and her physical aspect, though her physical appearance seems to be in good look, but she psychologically and mentally exhausted by her traumatic events in her private life. Different scene in the play full of, feelings of confusion, incapability, shame, grief and anxiety haunt her as a result of her psychological trauma when she discovered her husband's complicity in slave trade; so she is both physically and psychologically traumatized. Her husband impotent by greed, he remains disable of avoiding the shame and ignominy connected with his complicity in slavery trade. Throughout the play, trauma can be noticed in encounters and dialogues between Anowa and her husband. Aidoo used Flashbacks and memories to express the unspeakable manifestation of trauma. Furthermore, imagery of the roads and her clothes add to the bleakness of the scene. Anowa give us examples of traumatized human psyche, but Aidoo also effectively presents the contribution of drama and

theatre to postcolonial literature and theory as well, also she conveys trauma to the reader through its narrative technique of employing flashbacks and dreams.

Note: This paper began as a chapter in an MA thesis entitled *Recalling trauma in selected post-colonial plays* by Leqa'a Abu Mahfouz (First author above) defended at the Hashemite University in March 2019.

REFERENCES

- Aidoo, A. A. (2001). *Anowa*. In H. Gilbert (Ed.), *Postcolonial plays: An anthology* (pp.101-127). London: Routledge.
- Billig, M. (1999). *Freudian repression conversation creating the unconscious* (2nd ed.), Cambridge: University Press.
- Brown, L. (1987). *Women writers in Black Africa*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed experience trauma, narrative, and history*(1st ed.). The Johns Hopkins University press Baltimore and London, USA
- Doctor, R. M., & Shiromoto, F. N. (2010). *The encyclopedia of trauma and traumatic stress disorders*. Facts On File, Inc.
- Freud, S. (1915b). *Repression*. Standard Edn Vol. XIV London: Hogarth.
- Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. Basic Books, New York.
- Kerr, Michael.(2016). Melancholic depression. Retrieved from [Http://www.healthline.com/health/depression/melancholic-depression](http://www.healthline.com/health/depression/melancholic-depression) (accessed) Sat.
- Khawaldeh, I. M., Bani-Khair, B., & Al-Khawaldeh, N. (2017). Recalling the past in postcolonial drama: From counter history to sociopolitical redress. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 8(5), 71-78.
- Kline, P. (1972). *Fact and fantasy in Freudian theory* (1st ed.). T&A Constable Lt, Great Britain.
- Lambert, J. M. (2005). *Ama Ata Aidoo's Anowa: Performative practice and the postcolonial subject* (Doctoral dissertation, Miami University).
- Lindemann, E. (1944). Symptomatology and management of acute grief. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 101,141-148.
- McLeod, S. (2009). Defense mechanisms. *Simply Psychology*. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/defense-mechanisms.html>.
- Parekh, P. N., & Jagne, S. F. (Eds.).(1998). *Postcolonial African writers: A bio-bibliographical critical sourcebook*. Routledge.
- Phillips, M. (1994). Engaging dreams: Alternative perspectives on Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, Bessie Head, and Tsitsi Dangarembga's Writing. *Research in Africa Literatures*, 25(4), 89-103.
- Smith, I. (2010). *Freud-complete works*. Patrick Valas.
- Visser, I. (2011). Trauma theory and postcolonial literary studies. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47(3), 270-282.