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Abuse and the HIV/AIDs Epidemic as Trauma Stressors and the Responses in Bessie head's *When Rain Clouds* Gather and Lauri Kubuitsile's *The Fatal Payout*

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Abstract

Abuse and HIV/AIDS remain some of the trauma stressors in Botswana. This study investigates abuse and the HIV/AIDS epidemic as traumastressors in colonial and postcolonial Botswana. It examines how Bessie Head's When Rain Clouds Gather and Lauri Kubuitsile's The Fatal Payout portray domestic abuse, workplace abuse and autocracy in government, as instances of abuse in colonial and postcolonial Botswana. Also, through Kubuitsile's The Fatal Payout, the study foregrounds the representations of HIV/AIDS in the history of Botswana. The theoretical analysis adopts Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory, and the American Psychological Association's (2026) Posttraumatic Stress Disorder symptoms. The study finds that in Botswana, although abuse is not a gender-based experience, it is perpetrated more by men in authority either in the home, workplaces or in government. In addition, HIV/AIDS is a traumatic reality, which paves the way to vices in society. Substantially, the responses of the affected characters in the selected narratives, explain Caruth's conceptualisation of trauma, and corroborate the American Psychological Association's categorisations of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder's symptoms: intrusion, avoidance, changes in cognition and mood and changes in arousal and reactivity. The study posits that literature enhances the comprehension of history, and trauma in Botswana, and by extension, Africa.

Keywords: Abuse, Trauma Theory, trauma, HIV/AIDS, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Botswana

Introduction

African literature has focused on diverse societal realities, some of which constitute traumatic experiences for individuals and society. Realities such as poor leadership, abuse, religious extremism, racism, insurgency, war, and epidemics result in trauma in some individuals. Some African literary writers such as Achebe, Soyinka, Diop, Senghor, and Wa Thiongo have responded to negative portrayals of Africa and Africans in European writings. Also, African literary writers and critics have asserted that the identity and development of African literature can be ascribed to writers' responses to colonial writings and the postcolonial realities of African countries such as abuse and HIV/AIDS. Over

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time, some writers have written as observers or reporters of their societal realities, while others have written as victims of these realities, including traumatic events. In addition, some traumatised literary writers have engaged in relaying their experiences as a means of subsuming their trauma or therapy. This explains the concept of scriptotherapy, which have been described as a literary writer's attempt to seek healing through the scripting of a personal traumatic experience. This is identified as a form of therapy. To a large extent, scriptotherapyhas contributed to the success of African literature across the globe, and it justifies Oripeloye'ssubmission that societal challenges and their consequences in Africa have served as useful materials for the growth of African literature on the global scene. Hence, either African experiences or challenges are reported or presented through the victims; African literature now features the marriage between Literary Studies and the Medical Sciences.

Recently, African literature has embraced areas which had earlier been regarded as Eurocentric. Trauma studies in African writings have evolved. This aspect of literature has stretched its attention beyond portraying traumatic realities in society, towards depicting the consequences of these experiences on the affected victims and society. It is now a platform that serves as a borderline between the humanities and psychiatry. Hence, scholars have not only succeeded in exploring realities such as abuse, violence, epidemics, dictatorship, insurgency, religious extremism, and wars, but have also revealed the physical and psychological effects of these realities on individuals and society. Critics such as Ajibola, Ofosu, Omojola, Ahmed, and Adebiyi-Adelabu have discussed African issues that constitute traumatic experiences in African society. These include abuse, terrorism, dictatorship, violence and war.

Abuse and the HIV/AIDS epidemic are traumatic experiences in societies across the globe, and they make the list of the issues addressed by the colonial and postcolonial African literary writers. The Cornell Law School describes abuse as "an action that intentionally causes harm and injures another person". Abuse could be in different forms, which are physical, psychological, mental, or child abuse. While physical abuse is described as a violent behaviour towards another, resulting in substantial bodily injury, emotional abuse entails a deliberate infliction of distress, anguish or intimidation on others through non-physical acts. This can take the form of harassment or coercion. Another form of abuse is child abuse, which occurs when a parent or guardian neglects his or her responsibilities and subjecting the child to risks. Abuse can also be tagged based on the location where the abuse is experienced. Similarly, the United Nations posits that abuse is "physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threat of actions that influence another person." In addition, abuse is no respecter of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, fate or class. Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is aggravated by abuse, especially against women, in Africa. This corroborates PEPFAR's assertion that in a country such as Botswana, persistently "high infection rates among females are partly attributable to gender inequality, which puts women and girls at risk for domestic and sexual violence and compromises their ability to negotiate safer sex." (3). All the research posits that the females' inability to demand safer sex from their partners results in higher cases of HIV infection. Frank et al.assert that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is a global persistent and complex public health challenge which results in massive morbidity, mortality and socioeconomic

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burden. This description is also buttressed by Makhema et al. and Batisani et al.. The realities of abuse and HIV/AIDS have also been acknowledged as worthy depictions of African challenges in African literary texts.

Botswana Literature is not an exception in depicting how realities such as abuse and rape constitute traumatic experiences and culminate in trauma in a Motswana or Batswana. That is, these are experienced individually and collectively in Botswana. Scholars such as Johnston, Sebudubudu, Zoomers, Hillbom and Bolt,Sebeelo, and Jeremiah et al. have posited that issues such as HIV/AIDS, war, unequal wealth distribution, alcoholism, ritual, kidnap, murder, racism, political subjugation, bribery, corruption, patriarchy, domestic violence, ritualism, gender issues, economic inequality and impoverishment pose as societal challenges in Botswana. For instance, PEPFAR admits that in 2014, 340,000 Batswana were living with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and apart from Gender-Based Violence, which was a key driving factor of HIV/AIDS in Botswana, other contributory factors are "multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships, adolescent and intergenerational sex, alcohol and high-risk sex, stigma and discrimination, low uptake of male circumcision factors" (2-3). Also, the report reveals that in Botswana, maternal mortality is related to HIV/AIDS, and the virus contributes to the decreasing economic growth and investment as well as the increasing financial outlays by the Government of the country(3).

Denbow and Thebe have traced the first occurrence of HIV/AIDS in Botswana to 1985, and the country was rated one of the countries with the highest cases of AIDS in the global record. Also, Habib and Volny-Anne submit that Botswana has the 4th highest HIV prevalence in the world, with one in every five people between the ages of 15 and 49 testing positive for the virus. However, the World Health Organisation, Makhema et al., and Batisani et al. have affirmed that Botswana, in collaboration with international organisations, has successfully embarked on programmes and treatment strategies to combat the epidemic, and this has aided a drastic decline in the spread of the disease and mortality in the country. Although some programmes have been introduced to mitigate the spread and effects of the virus in Botswana, HIV/AIDS still remains a traumatising reality, especially for some of the carriers, and this is partly linked to abuse in the country. These scholars have established the existence of trauma stressors, and have explained government's intervention in combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Botswana. However, few scholars have simultaneously discussed abuse and HIV/AIDS epidemic as trauma stressors in Botswana within the ambit of trauma studies in African literature. The study aims to examine how abuse and the HIV/AIDS epidemic pose as trauma stressors in Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* and Lauri Kubuitsile's *The Fatal Payout*, and the responses of the affected characters to these realities.

Synopsis of the Selected Texts

When Rain Clouds Gather focuses on a community, Golema Mmidi, in the eastern part of the present-day Botswana. It tells the story of how a refugee, Makhaya Maseko flees the oppressive apartheid South African society to live as a refugee in Botswana. He discovers that in Botswana, the citizens also have their share of personal and collective challenges. He associates with characters such as

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Dinorego, Gilbert Balfour, Mma Millipede and Paulina Sebeso. Shortly after he settles in Botswana, Gilbert Balfour engages him to supervise an agricultural programme, which involves training the villagers on new ways of farming. Makhaya succeeds at this, and it opportune him to meet with Paulina Sebeso. After settling in the village, Makhaya discovers how the Warrant Chiefs perpetrate corruption, embezzlement and harassment. Although faced with oppositions from the Chiefs, he collaborates with Gilbert to develop the village and eventually through his affair with Sebeso, he gradually finds healing.

The Fatal Payout is a portrayal of some societal challenges and vices in the postcolonial Botswana society, the impact on the victims, and how the responses of affected victims to these challenges. The depicted challenges and vices include bribery, corruption, murder, suicide, and prostitution. John Mogami is a firm and upright employee at the Roads Department in Botswana, and he is renowned for his intolerance for bribery and corruption in the firm. However, in order to restore peace in his home and satisfy his materialistic wife, he receives a bribe from an unqualified contractor, Dan Moore, through the latter's employee, Roland Simons. The secret is eventually revealed after Kgakgamatso, Mogami's clerk, is brutally murdered by an unknown person. This leads to Mogami's arrest. While Simons' identity is revealed as Kgagamatso's murderer, he shifts the blame on Moore, whom he murders shortly before he commits suicide.

Portrayals of Abuse in Colonial and Postcolonial Botswana in the Selected Narratives

In the selected texts, Head and Kubuitsile depict different forms of abuse inflicted on some characters. In *When Rain Clouds Gather*, Head depicts abuse within the home, through Mma Millipede and Sekoto's wife. The narrator reveals that the former was coerced into marriage to Ramogadi by her influential mother-in-law, as punishment for declining to warm Ramogadi's bed. Being married to a chronic drunkard and womaniser becomes a harrowing experience for Mma Millipede, and many years into her marriage, Ramogadi drives her out of their home and replaces her with her sister-in-law. Head explains that Mma Millipede's religious ways bored Ramogadi, and this propelled him towards driving her out of their home and replacing her with another woman. Unfortunately for Mma Millipede, their only child is "exiled to a far-off village because he could not be restrained from the urge of killing his father" (69-70).

Mma Millipede's case depicts how the impoverished are cheated by the privileged in society. The marriage was not based on love and mutual agreement, but it was initiated with an intention to punish a scrupulous lady. The society does not frown at how she is treated, but condemns Ramogadi when his brother commits suicide. This is a case of silence in the face of abuse of a woman in society. A similar case is seen through an unnamed character, who is described as Sekoto's wife. The author reveals that just as Ramogadi, her husband abandons her with their children and instructs her not to visit his official house. When the woman discovers that the said house is reserved as an allocation for hosting Sekoto's prostitutes, she fights alongside her son to end her husband's unfaithfulness, and this succeeds. These cases convey that

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abused women may choose to remain silent and helpless or fight against the menace in their homes. They also communicate that not all men are pleased with the abuse of women in the home, and in the course of fighting for the victims, some males get victimised, while others succeed.

Furthermore, in Kubuitsile's text, domestic abuse is discussed through Kubuitsile's character, John Mogami. As a government official, Mogami believes in living within his means, but this is not the case for his wife, Boitumelo. Boitumelo is described as an extremely materialistic woman, who continuously insults her husband due to his inability to provide them with a luxurious lifestyle (2,20). To introduce the situation in Mogami's home, Kubuitsile reveals that:

> Boitumelo always needed the best of everything- including a big, fancy house in Phakalane with big, fancy bank loan payments to match. The new car was the cause of the most recent problem. John wanted to buy a cheaper one but Boitumelo insisted that they had to have a BMW. And then there was the school. Two kids at the most expensive private school in Gaborone (2)

Mogami finds it uncomfortable to live off loans, and for this, Boitumelo subjects him to constant verbal abuse, which affects his peace and self-esteem. Gradually, his confidence as a man declines and this propels him to take a decision against his integrity. This tarnishes his image, but he admits his fault. In addition, the selected authors convey abuse as an anomaly in the workplace. In Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, Sebeso's husband is introduced as a man who worked as "a bookkeeper for a certain large company" for sixteen years. He gradually acquires property until a sum of two thousand pounds is embezzled and some receipts are missing. Despite his years of service at the company, Sebeso's husband is indicted for a crime which he never committed (77).Unfortunately, this leads to his death. Similarly, in Kubuitsile's *The Fatal Payout*, Boitumelo, Thato and Simons symbolise employees who are victims of abuse in Botswana. Boitumelo is trapped by her boss into being assaulted by one of his best clients, Mr Raj. In this case, Boitumelo becomes a transactional item to further seal KB's and Mr Raj's partnership. This display of selfishness and unchecked materialism costs Boitumelo her marriage (20).

Similarly, abuse of employees is depicted through Thato, who introduces herself as an engineer in Moore's company. Although she is a minor character, she is instrumental in unravelling the mysteries behind Kgagamatso's death. Due to the series of harassment that her boss, Moore subjects her to, she eventually loses respect for him and earnestly wishes for an opportunity to retaliate against her boss' wickedness (76). Similarly, Thato's colleague, Roland Simons also depicts an employee of a manipulative and rude boss. Kubuitsile reveals that Simons is a frustrated, but helpless employee of a private construction company. Despite his sadness, he remains in the company in order to pay his bills. Early in the text, the author reveals that:

> He hated this job and the things that it made him do. He despised Dan Moore, an arrogant, despicable man who saw Ronald as a failure and treated him like his personal assistant

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> despite the fact that Ronald was seven years older than him and an experienced engineer…Ronald wasn't sure how he could take of it. He didn't like the way Dan Moore did things, but with Mike just about to start university and Gertrude's medical bills piling up with each passing day, he couldn't jeopardize things by changing jobs now. (5)

The cases of these affected employees, Sebeso's husband, Boitumelo, Thato, and Simons, explain the different experiences of employees and the callousness of some employers of labour in the colonial and postcolonial Botswana. It also conveys the fact that abuse in the workplace is not restricted to the female gender, but it is a traumatic reality experienced by male employees in Botswana.

In the same vein, abuse can also be discussed as an experience that is inflicted by leaders in society. In the selected texts, faulty leadership and societal systems result in abuse of the led. For instance, in a conversation with Mma Millipede, Makhaya Maseko reveals his experience as a young man, as well as the collective experience of abuse in an apartheid South African society. Through the character of Makhaya, Head describes how the unfriendly policy of apartheid encouraged unjust arrest and murder of blacks and coloureds in South Africa. On getting to Botswana, he discovers that the challenge of leadership is not restricted to South Africa. His host, Dinorego educates him on Golema Mmidi and the corrupt lifestyles of the Chiefs, Matenge and Sekoto.

As the plot develops, Head describes Sekoto as a great lover of luxurious cars, well-prepared food, and pretty girls. Also, his excessive love for food is evidenced in his obese stature. Due to his urge for women, he forbids his wife from visiting his official mansion since he entertains his concubines there (48). This reveals that apart from subjecting his wife to emotional abuse, he is fuelling the societal fund into satisfying his cravings. He appoints his brother, Matenge, as a chief to diplomatically avert Matenge's wrath. Matenge turns out to be a very despotic leader who instills fear in his subjects and hates their progress. Over time, the villagers have grown to understand that Matenge does not just summon an individual to the village's court "unless it was to destroy an inhabitant of Golema Mmidi" (184). They know that his government has never profited anyone because he seems to have been appointed purposely for their torture.

Also, Balfour's initiative on developing the agrarian economy in Golema Mmidiis an unwelcome idea to Sekoto. This is because the latter has earlier exploited his subjects through the village cattle speculator, Pelotona. The farmers are encouraged by Balfour's initiative, and they join the cooperative society (21). Towards the end of the narrative, Matenge's intention for summoning Paulina Sebeso is to punish her for becoming Makhaya's lover rather than being one of his royal concubines. He seeks an opportunity and makes it appear to the public that she is summoned to a local court of the village for not reporting her son's death (183). He subjects Sebeso, who has just lost her son, to great fear. This portrays an instance of emotional abuse. Golema Mmidi is a village where promiscuity is embraced by the majority of the indigenes and has been acknowledged as a normal practice. As a widow, Sebeso is harassed by men in

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Golema Mmidi, but she resists until she meets Makhaya. These forms of abuse: physical, verbal, and emotional, are depicted to result in depression, fear, and anger in the affected victims, and these are symptoms of PTSD. In some cases, they lead to the deathof the affected victim.

A Literary Representation of History and HIV/AIDS in Postcolonial Botswana

The epidemic, HIV⁄AIDS is a societal challenge in the history of Botswana, and this is represented in the selected texts. Kubuitsile discusses the issue of HIV/AIDS in Botswana through Kgakgamatso and Peter Tau**.** Kgakgamatso is introduced as Mogami's clerk and an HIV/AIDS patient, who finds it difficult to pay for her antiretroviral drugs. The character is murdered while striving to get enough funds for her drugs. Also, Peter Tau contracts the virus from Kgakgamatso through unprotected sex. Kubuitsile addresses this issue to discuss Botswana history and affirm the presence of the virus in Botswana. For instance, Denbow and Thebe assert that the country recorded its first case of AIDS in 1985 and shortly after this Botswana was among those with the highest rate of HIV cases globally (Denbow and Thebe: xx,1). In addition, the *2025 World Health Organisation data* posits that HIV/AIDS was the second highest cause of death in Botswana as at 2021, and new cases of the virus sprang up in 2023.

Kubuitsile sets her story to the prior 2002 period, a period in Botswana when antiretroviral drugs were not available for HIV/AIDS patients. This explains why Kgakgamatso toils and finds other means of making money apart from her salary, in order to pay for antiretroviral drugs. Also, Kubuitsile's position corroborates Habib's and Volny-Anne's submissions that Botswana has the 4th highest HIV prevalence in the world, with one in every five people between the ages of 15 and 49 testing positive for the virus. That is, a total of 370,000 people (25%), and the antiretroviral drugs were first donated freely in the country in 2002.

Escudero et al. opine that the free universal antiretroviral therapy programme was not restricted to Batswana alone but was extended to refugees within the confines of the camp. This implies that while following a court ruling in 2014, the prison inmates were also pronounced eligible to access the drugs. However, Volny-Annesubmits that the programme, which included controlling the birth outcomes of infants to women with HIV, was majorly restricted to Batswana. Therefore, Kubuitsile depicts in the text that the majority of the people living with HIV/AIDS in postcolonial Botswana are youth, and if not properly managed, the patients' status and responses could result in fatal consequences. The author addresses this through Kgakgamatso and Peter Tau. These characters are youth who contracted the virus due to ignorance, and unfortunately, this was a period when the antiretroviral drugs were not free for patients in the country. Hence, the text sensitises the public on modes of contracting the virus and the trauma that the people living with the virus experience, how traumatising this could be, the need to avoid unprotected sex as a prevention method, and how to manage the situation as a carrier. For instance, Tau contracts the virus from Kgakgamatso through unprotected sex, but due to the realisation that he is a patient, he feels shattered but decides to

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get medical help and join the carriers' society, in order to manage his status better.

Responses to Abuse and HIV/AIDS in the Selected Narratives

Just as other challenges in Botswana, abuse and HIV/AIDS have attracted diverse responses in Botswana, and this is depicted in Batswana literary texts, conceptually and theoretically. The selected narratives agree that in Botswana, people respond to abuse and the epidemic through trauma. This aligns with the Caruthian postulation that trauma is a reaction to an unforeseen or unbearable violent event that is not fully comprehended as it occurs, but which returns later through repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena. The overwhelming effect of characters' traumatic experiences attracts some reactions–depending on the severity of the situation . Also, reactions to these experiences can be from an individual or a group. Psychological responses to abuse and HIV/AIDS are described through characters such as Makhaya Maseko, Paulina Sebeso, her husband, Matenge, Mma Millipede, the indigenes of Golema Mmidi, John Mogami, Roland Simons, Kgakgamatso Mapelo and Peter Tau. Apart from the Caruthian interpretation, the responses discussed in this paper are in line with the American Psychiatric Association's Posttraumatic Stress Disorder symptoms as well as the postulations of some trauma experts. This is because the majority of the stated characters developed PTSD due to either of the trauma stressors stated in the paper.

In Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, abused or oppressed characters reacted differently to abuse. For instance, while still in South Africa, Makhaya, just like other youth, responds to the oppressive apartheid policies through excessive alcoholism, fornication, and militancy, and these earn him a jail term. Hence, to prevent further abuse and to heal from the pain that society has inflicted on the society and him, Makhaya flees to Botswana, and this describes American Psychiatric Association's concept of avoidance. However, when he arrives in Botswana, he realizes that society is not exempted from challenges. Through a flashback and a dialogue with Mma Millipede, Makhaya explains the reason for his hatred, especially for the leaders and religion. He further understands that Golema Mmidi is not different from South Africa, after his first visit to Matenge's house. Makhaya re-experiences the dehumanising effect of apartheid in Golema Mmidi. Periodically, he flashes on the pain that he was subjected to in South Africa, and this defines the APA's description of intrusion. Although in the Caruthian description Makhayais wounded emotionally (Caruth), he seeks healing through his association with progressives such as Dinorego, Mma Millipede, Balfour and Paulina Sebeso (128). In the course of healing, he contributes to community development, rehabilitating his abused mindset and learns to love again. Although Makhaya's departure from his country reflects avoidance, Botswana becomes a healing space and his association with others is therapeutic for him.

Similarly, Paulina Sebeso's past and the circumstances surrounding her relocation to Golema Mmidiare revealed through a flashback. She is described as a woman who decides to quickly forget her traumatic past, shortly after losing her husband and their property. Her decision to move to Golema Mmidi with her two children and start a new life portrays avoidance. She sees Botswana as a safe haven, but shortly afterwards, the society becomes

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challenging for her family. For instance, since she is a widow, Sebeso is bullied by promiscuous men and teased by the less enlightened women in the village, but she ignores these and channels her energy towards self-development. The remote location for the rearing of cattle in the village deprived her son, Isaac of access to schooling until he dies of famine in the forest (170). The news of Isaac's death and Matenge's summons shatter Sebeso, but she seeks healing in her affair with Makhaya. For Sebeso, community service and her affair with Makhaya serve as therapy and aid her healing from her traumatic experiences in Golema Mmidi. Losing her husband is an unforeseen and overwhelming experience, but the recurrence of painful experiences in the form of having an abusive leader such as Matenge, and losing her son, conceptualise the Caruthian trauma.

In addition, Paulina Sebeso's husband resorts to suicide not just because of his cultural belief but because of the indictment which led him into depression. This depicts a change in cognition and mood. Also, he does not believe in a future where he can overcome the shame and pain, but this explains the suicide. This defines Ross'sconceptualisation of foreshortened future as a response to trauma. That is a psychological injury, which involves the victims' loss of trust, meaning and hope about what the future would hold.

Also, Mma Millipe debattles with the pain of losing the man she loves, Dinorego, as she is coerced into marrying Ramogadi. She re-experiences the pain of being cheated on, disgraced out of her matrimonial home, and having her only child banished from the village. These culminate and trigger her extreme religiousness and experience in the village. This depicts trauma. Also, Mma Millipede's decision to remain in a toxic marriage without complaining, and her being useful to society, despite being a divorcee and a lonely mother, exemplify a case of resilience. This can be described as a dynamic process involving positive adaptation to one's circumstances in the face of significant adversity (Luthar and Cicchetti).The character's response to her abusive experiences conveys that domestic abuse is not an excuse for waywardness in society, but the victim could benefit society as a counselor to guide the youth aright in all spheres. Her friendship with other characters such as Dinorego, Maria,Sebeso, Balfour and Makhaya results in these characters' growth.

Furthermore, the abused indigenes of Golema Mmidi, who have lived in fear and complacency for long, respond to Matenge's abusive government towards the end of the story. Apart from living in fear under Matenge's rule, they are exploited, and due to the leader's unconcern forhis subjects' wellbeing, the villagers experience a costly famine. The villagers reach their tolerance peak and react through a protest when a bereaved Sebeso is unjustly summoned by Matenge. When the villagers are informed about Sebeso's summons, they make up their minds to challenge Matenge for all his past deeds against them:

> They gathered their tattered clothes and shuffled towards the centre of the village…The news travelled swiftly from hut to hut, and men and women immediately set down their chores for the day and made their way to the village centre. They were even excited in a silent way as though they had known this day would arrive when they would all face their

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> persecutor of many years…But they were the people of GolemaMmidi to whom too many tyrants and unscrupulous men had said no, no, no, and people like the people of GolemaMmidi could not be hunted, hounded, banished , and persecuted forever and forever and forever. (184-185)

This depicts another instance of the Caruthian conceptualisation of trauma. This also communicates that a revolution is needed to eradicate autocracy in society. Matenge's reaction conveys that some autocrats are weak and dull people, who enforce submission on their subjects by instilling fear in them.

InKubuitsile's *The Fatal Payout*, Simons experiences abuse continuously from his abusive boss, Moore, and this explains the reason why he eventually murders the latter (80).This corroborates McFarlane and Van der Kolk's position on how trauma victims could transfer blame on others rather than focusing on the trauma itself. Apart from his boss' rudeness, Simons battles with the pain of seeing his sick wife daily, the reality that he has a wayward son, and the financial responsibilities that hinder him from quitting his job. The character confesses that he did not intend to murder Kgakgamatso, but he was angry at her non-challance even when he was strangulating her. Also, his angry outburst towards Simons describes the American Psychiatric Association's description of change in arousal and reactivity. Prior to the period, he is a docile, friendly, and submissive employee, but the realisation that his secret is out results in the change in reactivity.His decision to commit suicide also aligns with this. Simons' option for suicide corroboratesStatistics Botswana and the Ministry of Health's description of the high rate of suicide in postcolonial Botswana. Also, Thato's anger towards her boss, Moore depicts a reaction to abuse. The character treacherously meets with the detective, Kate Gomolemo to explain how he is not just capable of abusing his staff, but also committing murder. The plot is twisted as Simons turns out to be the culprit and not Moore. However, Thato's attitude depicts anger and a symptom of PTSD.

In addition, Kgakgamatso, Peter Tau, and society depict responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the text. For instance, Kgakgamatso is introduced as a clerk but is burdened by her illness as a virus carrier. She spends so much on purchasing antiretroviral drugs, and since her salary is insufficient to address this burden, she takes to prostitution. She opts for prostitution to make money and also to punish males, who would always want unprotected sex with her. Her depressed state stirs anger against the male gender and this depicts a form of PTSD. This is portrayed when one of her victims, Peter Tau approaches her to enquire if he had not transmitted the virus to her, but her response reveals her satisfaction (28). Tau is pained and disappointed that he fell victim and lost the opportunity of getting married to his fiancée. Also, Kgagamatso blackmails her boss to bribe her to keep silent on the latter's crime (25). This is done to make money for her medication, but this route leads to her untimely death.

Unlike Kgagamatso, Tau seeks medical help and joins a society to help him manage his status. This depicts a different approach of HIV/AIDS patients to the reality of their status in Botswana. In addition, Kgakgamatso manages her health condition discreetly, due to her fear of stigmatization at work and the possibility of being relieved of her job. In essence, Kubuitsile sensitises readers

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that in Botswana, some people living with HIV/AIDS tend to take wrong steps due to society's perception of the virus, while others who know better seek help because there are groups willing to accept and help them. Currently Botswana has introduced various programmes to ameliorate the conditions of victims and control the spread of the virus (World Health Organisation; Makhema et al.; Ramogola-Masire et al., 2020; Batisani et al.).

In the selected narratives, the selected authors portray that not all characters who had traumatic experiences such as mild or chronic abuse and HIV/AIDS ended up as trauma patients. This implies that realities such as abuse or HIV can occur in society but they may not always pose as trauma stressors. In a comparative analysis of the texts, the study posits that there are some areas of convergence and divergence in the authors' narratives. Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* represents a description of abuse as a factor enhancing trauma in the colonial Botswana society due to the author's personal experience.

In 1964, Bessie Amelia Head fled South Africa, alongside other refugees, and moved to get a teaching appointment in Botswana, which was then referred to as Bechuanaland. She later gained popularity in Botswana, and this was one of the factors that triggered the emergence and growth of Botswana literature. Head, Ravenscroft, and Eilersen reveal that Head fled South Africa as a refugee due to the unfriendly apartheid policy in 1964 and started work as a teacher in Serowe. This was prior to her full-time writing profession. Just as Makhaya with Gilbert, Head also had an engagement with an agriculturalist, Vernon Gibbert, and this experience influenced the birth of her novel, *When Rain Clouds Gather*. Although she was born in South Africa, her acknowledgement of Botswana as a therapeutic home propelled her to apply for citizenship, and she became a Motswana (a Botswana citizen) in 1979. Hence, discussing some of her personal experiences through her character, Makhaya, is a form of healing from her painful traumatic experiences. This is an instance of scripto therapy and this is what. Similarly, the portrayals of marital and societal abuse through characters such as Sekoto's wife, Mma Millipede and a widow, Paulina Sebeso, is a subtle explanation of her marital experience, which led to her separation from her husband in 1963. The abuse also explains the fate of some women in such a patriarchal society. However, Head empowers these characters to become strong forces in Golema Mmidi. Her belief in the marriage institution, complementarity of both genders, and women's contribution to societal growth depict her as a womanist. Similarly, the portrayal of workplace abuse through Sebeso's husband subtly recounts Head's departure from her teaching job in Serowe, after a sexual advance from the school headmaster. Hence, she creates a platform for scripting her experiences as a form of therapy. This is in line with scholars such as Herman, Mayaki and Omobowale and Adebiyi-Adelabu. Her decision to make a literary self creates the character, Makhaya who narrativises his past. This also explains Ankersmit's definition of trauma I, which explains healing can be attained through narrativising the traumatic experience of a trauma patient. He opines that this lessens the effects of a traumatic experience and aids forgetting it.

While Head can be described as a pioneer of Batswana literature, who naturalised in Botswana after fleeing South Africa relays her past through her story, Kubuitsile is a naturalised award-winning American Motswana literary writer, who emerged in the 1990s. Her story was borne from the realities of

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people in the postcolonial Botswana society. Kubuitsile is not relaying a personal experience, but has written to comment on some postcolonial societal realities in Botswana. However, both writers corroborate Akporobaro's and Sarumi's submissions that a literary writer's life reflects social realities and such a writer acts as both a citizen and a social worker, in order to ensure change, development, tranquility and safety in such a society. That is, as a victim and an observer, the writers write to effect change in society.

While Head sets her story in Golema Mmidi, during the colonial period, Kubuitsile setshers in the postcolonial Gaborone. That is, Head focuses on the rural Botswana, while Kubuitsile describes trauma in the urban Botswana society. In her text, Kubuitsile portrays how abuse within the home and workplace, and the epidemic HIV/AIDS are traumatic experiences, which sometimes facilitate trauma in postcolonial Botswana. In line with Head's position, living with HIV is a traumatic experience, and a trauma stressor through Kgagamatso, but it may not result in trauma if the patient seeks help as Peter Tau does. In the same vein, mild or chronic exposure to abuse in the home or workplace can be described as traumatic experiences, which can enhance trauma. However, abuse cases such as Mogami's, Boitumelo's and Thato's do not result in trauma, unlike Simons' case. This leads to the patient committing murder twice and suicide. In essence, Head and Kubuitsile convey that trauma can be disastrous just as in Simons' case, but can lead to healing if help, narrativising the experience, and association with others are encouraged, just as in Makhaya's case. Furthermore, both authors use the 3rd person narrative technique to achieve a limitless depiction of the depth of trauma or the experience in each victim and their reactions, even when other characters are absent.

Conclusion

Botswana literature has emerged as a platform for the depiction of traumatic experiences, trauma, and the responses of affected victims in Botswana. In the selected narratives, abuse and HIV/AIDS were described as catalysts of trauma in Botswana, and these are evidenced by recurrent cases of physical and psychological traumatic experiences. These attract reactions such as angry outbursts, depression, avoidance, bribery, corruption, blackmail, murder, and suicide. Although the selected narratives are set in the rural colonial and urban postcolonial Botswana societies respectively, the motifs are similar: suicide, death, pain, HIV/AIDS, torture and trauma. The narrations are written in the 3rd person narrative technique, which enhances the unlimited flow of information, especially about the characters. Also, the selected texts affirm that Batswana literary authors either write as victims or reporters of traumatic experiences. This explains how Head aptly depicts her past gruesome experiences in an apartheid South African society and in exile, through Makhaya. She concludes by calling for a revolution as panacea for autocracy in Africa. Similarly, Kubuitsile writes to reflect the postcolonial realities of ills such as abuse, bribery, corruption and HIV/AIDS, especially among the youth in society. Despite the government's efforts at combating the virus in Botswana, Kubuitsile submits that being an HIV patient is a continuous traumatic experience, and she conveys that rather than engage in vices, such people could seek help on how to manage their status. Hence, through the selected texts, the study posits that Batswana literature depicts abuse and the HIV/AIDS epidemic

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as trauma stressors in Botswana society, making the literature provide a platform for the discussion of literary and trauma studies in African literature.

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