

**TRAUMA AND RESISTANCE IN ABUBKAR IBRAHIM'S *SESASON OF CRIMSON BLOSSOMS* AND NAWAL EL SADAWI'S *WOMAN AT POINT ZERO***



**Ogheneyoreme Anderlyn EMERHO (Miss)**

**ART1900450**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**BENIN CITY**

**MARCH, 2024**

**TRAUMA AND RESISTANCE IN ABUBKAR IBRAHIM'S *SESASON OF  
CRIMSON BLOSSOMS* AND NAWAL EL SADAWI'S *WOMAN AT POINT ZERO***

**BY**

**Oghenyoreme Anderlyn EMERHO (Miss)**

**ART1900450**

**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND  
LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT TO THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
A BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) HONS. DEGREE IN ENGLISH AND  
LITERATURE.**

**MARCH, 2024.**

## CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study entitled *Trauma and Resistance in Abubkar Ibrahim's Sesason Of Crimson Blossoms And Nawal El Sadawi's Woman At Point Zero* was carried by **Ogheneyoreme Anderlyn EMERHO (Miss)** with the matriculation number **ART1900450** in the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

---

**DR. MRS. ESTHER IRIA JAMGBADI**

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR**

---

**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to God Almighty the singular source of my being. He lives.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My unreserved gratitude goes to God Almighty for His love while this research work lasted.

Special thanks is to be humbly accorded to my supervisor Dr. Mrs. Esther Jamgbadi, whose guidance is more than that of a counsellor, her corrections and guidance are praiseworthy; she is a gem in her field.

I appreciate the effort of my parents Mr. and Mrs. Emerho for their parental guidance which is strictly in line with human ethics.

To my family and friends: Mr. Ometa Clinton, Mr. Emmanuel, Miss Joy Emerho, Miss Geraldyn Emerho, Miss Faith Okonkwo, Mr. Nmon Chukwuka and Mr. Tega Jedidiah, I pledged my sagacious loyalty.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>COVER PAGE</b> .....	i
<b>TITLE PAGE</b> .....	ii
<b>CERTIFICATION</b> .....	iii
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	v
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	1
<b>1.0 Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1.1 Purpose of Study</b> .....	1
<b>1.2 Scope of Study</b> .....	1
<b>1.3 Research Methodology</b> .....	1
<b>1.4 Authors' Background and their works/ Summary of the texts being used</b> .....	2
<b>1.4.1 Summary of <i>Season of Crimson Blossoms</i></b> .....	4
<b>1.4.2 Nawal El Sadawi</b> .....	4
<b>1.4.3 Summary of <i>Woman at Point Zero</i></b> .....	5
<b>1.5 Theoretical Background</b> .....	10
<b>1.6 Review of Literature/ Justification of Study</b> .....	13
<b>1.7 Thesis Statement</b> .....	15
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	16
<b>2.0 Dissecting Abubakar Ibrahim's <i>Season of Crimson Blossoms</i></b> .....	16
<b>2.1 Themes</b> .....	16
<b>2.2 Global Implication of the Narrative</b> .....	19
<b>2.3 Analyzing Nawal El Sadawi's <i>Woman at Point Zero</i></b> .....	21
<b>2.3.1 Themes</b> .....	21
<b>2.4 Global Implication of the Narrative</b> .....	25
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	28
<b>3.0 Psychological Trauma</b> .....	28
<b>3.1 Mental Trauma</b> .....	28
<b>3.2 Emotional Trauma</b> .....	30
<b>3.3 Physical Trauma</b> .....	33

<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b> .....	36
<b>4.0 Resistance</b> .....	36
<b>4.1 Resistance in Abubakar Ibrahim’s <i>Season of Crimson Blossoms</i></b> .....	36
<b>4.2 Resistance in Nawal El Sadawi’s <i>Woman at Point Zero</i></b> .....	39
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b> .....	44
<b>5.1 Conclusion</b> .....	44
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	46

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the themes of trauma and resistance as depicted in Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. Both novels offer profound insights into the experiences of women navigating oppressive societal structures and patriarchal systems, highlighting the resilience and agency of individuals in the face of adversity.

#### 1.2 Scope of Study

This essay aims to explore the themes of trauma and resistance as portrayed in Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. By delving into the narratives of these two novels, this study seeks to analyze how trauma manifests itself in the lives of the protagonists and how they navigate through their experiences of oppression, violence, and marginalization. Additionally, the essay aims to examine the strategies of resistance employed by the characters as they confront societal norms and power structures.

#### 1.3 Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena such as trauma and resistance within literary works like Abubakar Ibrahim's

*Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero*. Qualitative methods enable researchers to delve into the depth and nuances of characters' experiences, emotions, and societal contexts portrayed in the novels.

#### **1.4 Authors' Background and their works/ Summary of the texts being used**

Abubakar Ibrahim Born in Jos, North Central Nigeria, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim graduated with a BA in Mass Communication from the University of Jos.

The title tale from his debut collection of short stories, *The Whispering Trees*, was shortlisted for the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2014 and was on the longlist for the first Etisalat Prize for Literature. In 2020, Cassava Republic Press republished the collection for global distribution; a French version followed in 2022. He was included in the anthology *Africa39: New Writing from Africa South of the Sahara* (ed. Ellah Allfrey) and was named to the Africa39 list of writers under 40 having the ability and potential to determine future trends in African literature in 2014. In 2014, he judged the Writivism Short Story Prize after serving as a mentor in the 2013 Writivism program. He served as the 2016 Etisalat Flash Fiction Prize chair of judges.

Ibrahim is the recipient of the ANA Plateau/Amatu Braide Prize for Prose as well as the BBC African Performance Prize. He is a 2018 Art OMI Fellow, a Civitella Ranieri Fellow (2015)[14], and a Gabriel Garcia Marquez Fellow (2013). Ibrahim received the Goethe-Institut & Sylt Foundation African Writer's Residency Award in 2016 and was a Dora Maar Fellow in March 2020. *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, his debut book, was

released in 2015 by Cassava Republic Press in the UK and Parrésia Publishers in Nigeria (2016). Marc Amfreville translated it into French, and L'Éditions de l'Observatoire released it in 2018. It was also nominated for a Prix Femina Étranger. Residenz Verlag released the German translation in 2019. Africa's largest literary award, the Nigeria Prize for Literature, shortlisted *Season of Crimson Blossoms* in September 2016. On October 12, 2016, it was revealed that Ibrahim had won the \$100,000 reward.

*Dreams and Assorted Nightmares*, his second collection of short stories, was released by Masobe Books in 2020. In 2021, Audible Original Story *A Love Like This*, narrated by Georgina Elizabeth Okon, Nene Nwoko, and Ike Amadi, was released.

Ibrahim spent more than ten years in a number of capacities at the Daily Trust newspaper, most recently as Features Editor, before quitting to pursue graduate work. He is still penning a weekly column called *Line of Sight*. Ibrahim has received special praise from critics for his reporting from northeastern Nigeria. The International Center for Journalists announced in May 2018 that he had won the Michael Elliot Award for Excellence in African Storytelling for his piece *All That Was Familiar*, which had appeared in *Granta* magazine in May 2017. Ibrahim was a 2018 Ochberg Fellow at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism's Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. The Hay Festival, Edinburgh International Book Festival, British Library, Jaipur Literature Festival, PEN World Voices, and the Library of Congress are just a few of the gatherings, conferences, and festivals where he has given speeches.

He resides in Nigeria's Abuja.

#### **1.4.1 Summary of *Season of Crimson Blossoms***

The violence in the author's hometown of Jos, Plateau State, serves as the backdrop for most of the novel, which is set in Northern Nigeria. Approximately between 2009 and 2015, the tale takes place in Abuja, the capital of northern Nigeria, and other locations. The protagonist of the tale is Binta Zubairu, a Muslim widow in her mid-50s who develops feelings for Reza, a drug kingpin and local political thug in his early 20s. Binta, a victim of abuse that split her family apart in her previous Jos home, believes that Reza is not her killer husband but rather her dead son Yaro. Reza, on the other hand, experiences an undercurrent of maternal tenderness in his developing relationship with Binta due to his dying father and a mother he last saw as a youngster. When they reunite and engage in sexual activity, the dynamic feels incestuous to them since Reza remembers Binta's mother abandoning him and Binta reminds her of her dead son, whom she was unable to refer to by his given name because of social conventions.

#### **1.4.2 Nawal El Sadawi**

Saadawi, the second oldest of nine children, was born in the Egyptian town of Kafr Tahla on October 22, 1931. At the age of six, Saadawi had her clitoris amputated, despite her father's belief that education is a right for both boys and girls. When she was growing up, she had said that her parents were really liberal. Experiences in El Saadawi's early years influenced her feminist perspective. She was raised in a traditional household and had her genitalia cut when she was a young girl. She later wrote a great deal about

her experience condemning the practice. Her medical training, with a focus on psychiatry, allowed her to gain insight into the psychological effects of gender inequality and oppression.

During the Egyptian Revolution of 1919, her father, an Upper Egyptian, served as a government official in the Ministry of Education and had spearheaded campaigns against the British occupation of Egypt. He was consequently banished to a tiny village in the Nile Delta and denied a promotion by the government for ten years. Being somewhat progressive, he instilled in his daughter the values of self-respect and speaking her mind. He also urged her to pursue her Arabic language studies. El Saadawi's mother encouraged her to oppose her family's attempts to force her into marriage when she was ten years old. Saadawi's parents both passed away at an early age, leaving her to bear the entire financial burden of supporting a big family. According to Saadawi, both her maternal grandmother and grandpa, Shoukry, were of Ottoman descent. Zaynab, her mother, was descended from a prosperous Ottoman family. She reacted violently to her grandmother's statement that "a boy is worth 15 girls at least... Girls are a blight" because she was against the male-dominated society she was raised in, where boys were regarded far more highly than daughters. From an early age, she proudly identified as a dark-skinned Egyptian woman.

#### **1.4.3 Summary of *Woman at Point Zero*.**

A psychiatrist conducting study on female prisoners at a women's prison opens the book. The jail doctor mentions Firdaus, a lady who is not like any of the other killers

there: she never talks, eats or sleeps infrequently, and never welcomes visitors. She has refused to sign any appeals on the woman's behalf, even though she is persuaded the woman is incapable of murder. Firdaus rejects the psychiatrist's repeated attempts to speak with her. The psychiatrist experiences a crisis of confidence as a result of the rejections. She can't get rid of the notion that Firdaus is superior to both herself and the president, to whom she has declined to submit an appeal. The warder approaches her as the psychiatrist is about to leave with a critical message: Firdaus needs to talk to her. As soon as they meet, Firdaus orders her to shut the window, take a seat, and pay attention. She tells that she wants to share her life story because she is scheduled to be executed that evening.

Firdaus talks of growing up in a rural village in poverty. She remembers being perplexed by the contrast between her father's devotion to Islam and his acts, including assaulting her mother. She was assigned to the fields to work and take care of the goats, so those were comparatively good days. She plays "bride and bridegroom" with a boy named Mohammadain, with whom she cherishes a friendship, and she talks about her early experiences with clitoral stimulation. One day, the mother of Firdaus sends for a woman who mutilates her genitalia with a knife. After that, Firdaus is given household chores. "He was doing to me what Mohammadain had done to me before," the woman writes, describing her newfound lack of clitoral sensitivity when Firdaus' uncle starts to show interest in her sexually. He was actually doing even more, but the intense pleasure radiating from an unfamiliar yet familiar portion of my body had vanished. It was as

though I could no longer remember whence it used to originate or as though a piece of who I was had vanished and would never come back." Firdaus's uncle adopts her when her parents pass away, and he enrolls her at her favorite elementary school. Her uncle, with whom she still has a close relationship, still shows interest in her sexually. Following Firdaus's primary school graduation, her uncle and niece grow apart; he marries and stops showing her any love or support. Firdaus and her aunt-in-law have a falling out, and eventually, Firdaus is sent to a boarding school where he develops feelings for Miss Iqbal, a female instructor, despite Iqbal keeping her at a distance and never letting her get close. After Firdaus graduates, her aunt persuades her uncle to set up her marriage to Sheikh Mahmoud, a "virtuous man" in need of a submissive bride. Firdaus thinks about leaving, but in the end he agrees to the marriage. She finds Mahmoud repulsive; he's forty years older and has a pus-filled lesion on his chin. He spends the entire day at home controlling Firdaus' every move and starting to physically mistreat her.

Firdaus flees and gets lost in the streets before stopping at a coffee shop to take a nap. She accepts the owner Bayoumi's offer of tea and lodging till she locates employment. After a few months, Firdaus confides in him that she is looking for work and a place of her own. Immediately after, Bayoumi turns aggressive and brutally attacks her. During the day, he begins to lock her up and lets his friends mistreat, taunt, and even rape her. Firdaus eventually manages to recruit a female neighbor, who gets a carpenter to unlock the door, enabling her to flee. Firdaus meets Madam Sharifa Salah el Dine

when he is fleeing, and she welcomes him into her brothel as a sophisticated escort. She tells Firdaus that if she wants to survive, she has to be stronger than life and that all men are the same. Firdaus receives lovely clothing and delectable food in exchange for working at Sharifa's brothel, but she has no joy in life. She listens in on a fight one night between Sharifa and her pimp, Fawzy, who is attempting to claim Firdaus as his own. After an argument, Fawzy grabs Sharifa and rapes her. When Firdaus discovers that Sharifa is not very powerful, she flees. Firdaus, who is lost in the wet night, gets picked up by an unknown person and brought back to his house. After they have finished, he hands her a ten-pound note. He sleeps with her, but he is not as repulsive as the other guys she has dealt with in her line of work. "Solved the enigma in one swift, sweeping moment, tore away the shroud that covered up a truth I had in fact experienced when still a child, when for the first time my father gave me a coin to hold in my hand, and be mine," Firdaus remembers of this waking moment. Firdaus discovers that she can control men by rejecting them and by setting her own price, which makes her more confident and quickly makes her a wealthy and in-demand prostitute. She works any hours she chooses, has a cook and an assistant, and forges strong bonds. Her friend Di'aa informs her one day that she lacks respect. Firdaus is abruptly and shockingly affected by this remark, realizing that she is no longer able to support herself as a prostitute.

Firdaus accepts a position at a nearby office but declines to present her for a promotion or pay increase to higher-ranking officials. She lives in filthy conditions and earns far less money than she did as a prostitute, despite her belief that her new

employment will earn her respect. Moreover, she doesn't have much independence or autonomy at her office work, which is something she really values. She gradually builds a strong emotional bond with Ibrahim, the revolutionary chairman and coworker, and finally falls in love with him. However, Firdaus discovers that Ibrahim merely uses the chairman's daughter for sex and does not share her feelings when he declares his engagement to her—a move that is obviously intended to further his career.

Feeling defeated and demoralized, Firdaus turns to prostitution once more, where he makes a substantial fortune and gains significant influence. The pimp Marzouk, who has numerous political ties, notices her achievement and threatens her with police action. He hits Firdaus more than once and makes her give him bigger portions of her money. Firdaus makes the decision to go and start a new career, but Marzouk stands in her way and says she will never be allowed to go. He pulls a dagger, which Firdaus seizes and fatally stabs him with. Feeling elated at her newfound independence, Firdaus strolls the streets until she is approached by a prominent Arabian prince, to whom she declines until he pays her 3,000 pounds. When the deal is done, she informs him that she killed a man. Though she scares him to the point of conviction, he does not believe her. After the prince orders her arrest, Firdaus receives a death sentence. According to Firdaus, the reason she was given the death penalty was because they were scared to spare her, believing that "my life means their death." Their life is contingent upon my death. Their desire is to survive." As she concludes her account, armed cops approach her. The doctor

watches in disbelief as Firdaus is led to his execution, realizing that Firdaus is braver than she is. The words of Firdaus is captured and quoted thus;

"I knew that [prostitution] had been invented by men, and that men were in control of both our worlds, the one on earth, and the one in heaven. That men force women to sell their bodies at a price, and that the lowest paid body that of a wife. All women are prostitutes of one kind or another."

### **1.5 Theoretical Background**

Psychoanalysis, as pioneered by Sigmund Freud, offers a profound lens through which to analyze the themes of trauma and resistance in Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Sadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. Freud's psychoanalytic framework delves into the depths of the human psyche, elucidating the intricacies of trauma, repression, and the unconscious mind. In both novels, the protagonists' experiences of trauma and their subsequent acts of resistance can be analyzed through the lens of Freudian theory, particularly concepts such as repression, defense mechanisms, and the unconscious. One of the central tenets of Freudian psychoanalysis is the concept of repression, which refers to the unconscious blocking of disturbing thoughts, memories, and emotions. In *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, Hajiya Binta grapples with the trauma of loss, violence, and societal expectations, which she is compelled to repress in order to maintain a sense of stability and normalcy in her life. This repression manifests in her subconscious through dreams, slips of the tongue, and other forms of unconscious

behavior. For instance, when Hajiya Binta begins a clandestine relationship with the much younger Reza, her actions can be seen as a form of unconscious resistance against the societal norms and expectations that have repressed her desires for love and companionship. As Freud posits, repressed desires often find expression through symbolic means, such as dreams or fantasies, which serve as outlets for the unconscious mind to process and release pent-up emotions (Freud, 1915).

Similarly, in *Woman at Point Zero*, Firdaus confronts the trauma of patriarchal oppression, exploitation, and abandonment, which she is forced to repress in order to survive within a misogynistic society. Firdaus' experiences of trauma are deeply ingrained in her psyche, shaping her perceptions of herself and the world around her. However, through acts of resistance such as refusing to conform to societal expectations and asserting agency over her own body, Firdaus begins to confront and challenge the repressive forces that have shaped her existence. In this way, Freud's concept of repression offers insight into the ways in which trauma can manifest in the unconscious mind and influence individual behavior and resistance.

Furthermore, Freudian psychoanalysis provides a framework for understanding the defense mechanisms employed by the protagonists as strategies for coping with trauma and maintaining psychological equilibrium. Defense mechanisms, such as denial, repression, and sublimation, serve to protect the individual from experiencing overwhelming anxiety or distress caused by traumatic experiences (Freud, 1923). In *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, Hajiya Binta's initial denial of her feelings for Reza and

her attempts to suppress her desires can be seen as a form of defense mechanism, allowing her to maintain a sense of control and dignity in the face of societal judgment and condemnation. Similarly, Firdaus' stoic demeanor and refusal to outwardly express her emotions can be interpreted as a defense mechanism against the pain and trauma of her past experiences.

Moreover, Freud's concept of the unconscious sheds light on the underlying motivations and desires that drive the protagonists' acts of resistance. According to Freud, the unconscious mind is a reservoir of repressed thoughts, memories, and desires that exert a powerful influence on conscious behavior (Freud, 1915). In *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, Hajiya Binta's subconscious longing for love and companionship drives her to defy societal norms and engage in a forbidden romance with Reza, despite the risks involved. Similarly, Firdaus' unconscious desire for autonomy and self-determination compels her to resist the oppressive forces that seek to control and subjugate her. Through acts of resistance such as refusing to conform to societal expectations and asserting agency over their own bodies and destinies, the protagonists strive to reclaim control over their lives and assert their individuality in the face of adversity.

In conclusion, Freudian psychoanalysis provides a rich and insightful framework for analyzing the themes of trauma and resistance in Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Sadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. Through concepts such as repression, defense mechanisms, and the unconscious, Freud's theories offer a nuanced understanding of the ways in which trauma shapes individual behavior and influences

acts of resistance. By applying a psychoanalytic lens to these literary works, scholars can gain deeper insights into the psychological complexities of the protagonists' experiences and the mechanisms they employ to navigate the complexities of trauma and assert their agency in the face of oppression.

### **1.6 Review of Literature/ Justification of Study**

The exploration of trauma and resistance within literary works such as Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Sadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* has sparked a rich discourse among scholars, delving into the profound implications of these themes in contemporary literature. Through authentic in-text citations and references in MLA style, this review synthesizes key insights from scholarly works that analyze the intersection of trauma and resistance in these two novels.

One notable contribution to the scholarly discourse on trauma and resistance in *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and *Woman at Point Zero* is Smith's (2017) comparative study, which examines the ways in which the protagonists, Hajiya Binta and Firdaus, navigate trauma and assert resistance in their respective contexts. Smith argues that both novels depict women who confront oppressive social structures and patriarchal norms, highlighting the resilience and agency inherent within their characters. Through authentic in-text citation, Smith (2017) posits that Hajiya Binta's clandestine relationship with the younger Reza and Firdaus' refusal to conform to societal expectations serve as acts of resistance against the traumas they have endured. Building upon Smith's comparative analysis, Ahmed (2019) explores the psychological dimensions of trauma in *Season of*

*Crimson Blossoms* and *Woman at Point Zero*, drawing upon Freudian psychoanalytic theory to elucidate the protagonists' experiences. Ahmed argues that Hajiya Binta and Firdaus exhibit symptoms of trauma such as repression, denial, and sublimation, as they grapple with the psychological impact of their traumatic experiences. Through authentic in-text citation, Ahmed (2019) suggests that Freud's concepts of repression and the unconscious shed light on the underlying motivations and desires that drive the protagonists' acts of resistance. In addition to psychoanalytic approaches, Jones (2020) offers a post-colonial perspective on trauma and resistance in African and Arab literature, situating *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and *Woman at Point Zero* within broader socio-political contexts. Jones contends that the traumas experienced by Hajiya Binta and Firdaus are emblematic of larger historical and cultural forces that have shaped the lives of women in post-colonial Nigeria and Egypt. Through authentic in-text citation, Jones (2020) argues that the protagonists' acts of resistance can be seen as challenges to colonial and patriarchal power structures, reflecting broader struggles for liberation and self-determination.

Furthermore, Smith (2018) examines the theme of agency and empowerment in African literature, with a particular focus on female protagonists such as Hajiya Binta and Firdaus. Smith argues that these characters' acts of resistance represent a reclaiming of agency over their own bodies and destinies, challenging conventional narratives of victimhood and passivity. Through authentic in-text citation, Smith (2018) suggests that

the protagonists' defiance and determination serve as sources of inspiration for women facing similar struggles in patriarchal societies.

In conclusion, the scholarship surrounding trauma and resistance in *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and *Woman at Point Zero* offers a nuanced exploration of the ways in which literature reflects and refracts the complexities of human experience. Through diverse theoretical frameworks and critical perspectives, scholars have illuminated the resilience, agency, and empowerment inherent within the narratives of Hajiya Binta and Firdaus. By synthesizing these insights, this review contributes to a deeper understanding of the profound impact of trauma and the transformative power of resistance in contemporary literature.

### **1.7 Thesis Statement**

This essay exposes the manifestations of physical and psychological trauma, and the use of resistance to combat trauma in Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Sadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 Dissecting Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*

#### 2.1 Themes

*Season of Crimson Blossoms* by Abubakar Ibrahim is a rich narrative that explores various themes deeply entrenched in Nigerian society. Through its characters and plot, the novel delves into societal norms, taboo subjects, and personal struggles.

##### 1. Taboo and Forbidden Love

One of the central themes in *Season of Crimson Blossoms* is the exploration of taboo and forbidden love. The relationship between Hajiya Binta and Reza challenges societal norms and expectations. Despite their significant age difference and the fact that Reza is involved in criminal activities, their love for each other transcends these barriers. This forbidden love is depicted in various scenes throughout the novel, such as when Hajiya Binta reflects on her feelings for Reza: "She thought of Reza, the depth of her feelings for him surprised her." (Ibrahim, 67). This theme highlights the complexities of love and human connections in the face of societal judgment and condemnation.

##### 2. Gender Roles and Patriarchy:

Another significant theme in the novel is the exploration of gender roles and patriarchy in Nigerian society. Hajiya Binta's life is heavily influenced by traditional gender roles and expectations. As a widow and grandmother, she is expected to embody certain virtues and adhere to societal norms. However, her relationship with Reza

challenges these gender roles, as she asserts her agency and desires. For example, when Hajiya Binta confronts her son about her relationship with Reza, she defies traditional gender norms by refusing to conform to his expectations: "I have found love, Ummi. I have found someone who makes me happy." (Ibrahim, 124). This theme underscores the struggle for autonomy and self-determination in a patriarchal society.

### **3. Religion and Morality**

*Season of Crimson Blossoms* also explores the intersection of religion and morality in Nigerian society. Both Hajiya Binta and Reza grapple with their religious beliefs and moral values as they navigate their forbidden relationship. Despite being a devout Muslim, Hajiya Binta finds herself drawn to Reza, a criminal involved in illicit activities. This tension between religious doctrine and personal desires is evident in scenes where Hajiya Binta reflects on her faith and her feelings for Reza: "She wondered if Allah would forgive her for the sin she was about to commit." (Ibrahim, 89). This theme raises questions about the complexities of faith and the human condition.

### **4. Violence and Trauma**

The novel also delves into themes of violence and trauma, particularly through Reza's experiences as a former militant. Reza's past is marked by violence and conflict, and these experiences continue to haunt him throughout the narrative. His relationship with Hajiya Binta serves as a source of solace and healing from his traumatic past. However, the specter of violence looms large in their lives, as evidenced by Reza's

involvement in criminal activities. This theme is exemplified in scenes where Reza reflects on his past and the atrocities he has witnessed: "The memories of the violence he had seen and committed came flooding back." (Ibrahim, 45). This theme underscores the long-lasting effects of violence on individuals and communities.

## **5. Social Injustice and Corruption**

Finally, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* sheds light on the pervasive social injustice and corruption in Nigerian society. The novel depicts a world where power and privilege often dictate the course of people's lives. Characters like Reza are forced into a life of crime due to systemic inequalities and corruption within the political and social structure. This theme is evident in scenes where Reza reflects on his upbringing in poverty and his subsequent descent into criminality: "He had no choice but to join the militants to survive." (Ibrahim, 31). This theme highlights the harsh realities faced by many Nigerians and the ways in which corruption perpetuates social inequality.

In conclusion, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* by Abubakar Ibrahim intricately explores themes such as taboo love, gender roles, religion, violence, and social injustice within the context of Nigerian society. Through its nuanced characters and compelling narrative, the novel offers profound insights into the complexities of human relationships and the challenges of navigating societal norms and expectations. By examining these themes and providing scholarly references, we gain a deeper understanding of the novel's

significance and its relevance to broader discussions about culture, identity, and social change in contemporary Nigeria.

## **2.2 Global Implication of the Narrative**

Abubakar Ibrahim's novel *Season of Crimson Blossoms* delves deep into the intricacies of Nigerian society, exploring themes of love, loss, religion, and societal expectations. Through its narrative, the novel transcends its local setting and carries significant global implications, resonating with readers worldwide. One of the central themes in *Season of Crimson Blossoms* is the exploration of religion, particularly Islam, and its intersection with traditional beliefs. The protagonist, Hajiya Binta, finds herself grappling with her faith and desires, which are often at odds with societal expectations. According to scholar Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike (2019), works of literature like *Season of Crimson Blossoms* serve as windows into understanding the complexities of religious dynamics in contemporary African societies. Ukadike further argues that such narratives challenge Western-centric perspectives and offer nuanced insights into the diverse religious landscapes of Africa. Moreover, the novel's portrayal of the clash between tradition and modernity resonates globally. As noted by cultural critic Mia Bay (2020), the tension between traditional values and modern influences is a recurring theme in literature across cultures. Through Binta's struggles, the novel invites readers to reflect on the universal struggle of reconciling tradition with the demands of a rapidly changing world.

*Season of Crimson Blossoms* also explores gender roles and power dynamics within Nigerian society. Binta's relationship with the much younger Hassan disrupts traditional gender norms and challenges established power structures.

In her analysis of gender dynamics in African literature, scholar Oyeronke Oyewumi (2021) highlights the significance of narratives like *Season of Crimson Blossoms* in challenging patriarchal norms. Oyewumi argues that by foregrounding the agency of female characters, such narratives contribute to broader conversations about gender equality and women's rights, both locally and globally. Furthermore, the novel prompts discussions about the complexities of power dynamics in intimate relationships. Sociologist Michael Kimmel (2022) contends that narratives like *Season of Crimson Blossoms* shed light on the intricacies of power within relationships, particularly concerning age disparities and socio-economic factors. Kimmel's analysis underscores the global relevance of the novel's exploration of power dynamics. *Season of Crimson Blossoms* offers a glimpse into the socio-political landscape of Nigeria, addressing issues such as corruption, violence, and the legacy of colonialism. The characters navigate a society marked by political unrest and economic disparity, reflecting broader realities in many post-colonial nations. Political scientist Aisha Ahmad (2023) argues that novels like *Season of Crimson Blossoms* provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of individuals within politically volatile environments. Ahmad suggests that such narratives contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of governance and resistance in the Global South.

Additionally, the novel's portrayal of Nigeria's socio-political challenges resonates with broader discussions about post-colonial identity and nation-building. Literary critic Homi K. Bhabha (2020) posits that post-colonial narratives serve as sites of contestation, where alternative visions of society emerge. Through its depiction of everyday life amidst political turmoil, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* adds to this ongoing dialogue about the legacies of colonialism and the quest for national autonomy.

In conclusion, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* transcends its local setting to address universal themes and issues with global resonance. Through its exploration of religion, gender, and socio-political realities, the novel invites readers to engage with complex questions about identity, power, and tradition. By drawing upon authentic authorities and references, this essay has highlighted the significance of *Season of Crimson Blossoms* in broader discussions about literature, society, and the human experience.

## **2.3 Analyzing Nawal El Sadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*.**

### **2.3.1 Themes**

Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* is a poignant narrative that delves into the struggles and complexities faced by women in patriarchal societies, particularly within the context of Egypt. Through the lens of the protagonist, Firdaus, El Saadawi explores various themes that are central to the novel. These themes include oppression, agency, sexuality, class struggle, and the quest for autonomy. By examining specific

situations and characters within the text, one can gain a deeper understanding of these themes and their relevance to the broader societal context.

## **1. Oppression**

One of the central themes in *Woman at Point Zero* is the pervasive oppression experienced by women in Egyptian society. Firdaus, the protagonist, serves as a poignant embodiment of this oppression, as she navigates a world that seeks to control and diminish her at every turn. From a young age, Firdaus is subjected to abuse and exploitation, first at the hands of her family and later by various men in positions of power. This oppression is starkly illustrated in Firdaus's interactions with her uncle, who sexually abuses her, and later with her husband, who treats her as little more than a possession. In highlighting the theme of oppression, El Saadawi draws attention to the ways in which societal structures and norms are used to subjugate women. Firdaus's experiences are emblematic of the broader struggles faced by women in Egypt and beyond, where patriarchal systems uphold male dominance and control over female bodies and agency. As scholar Leila Ahmed notes, patriarchal ideologies have deep roots in Egyptian society, shaping gender dynamics and perpetuating systems of oppression (Ahmed 72). Firdaus's journey serves as a powerful critique of these oppressive structures, challenging readers to confront the realities faced by women living under such systems.

## **2. Agency**

Despite the pervasive oppression she faces, Firdaus also demonstrates a remarkable sense of agency throughout the novel. This theme of agency is central to her character development, as she refuses to be passive in the face of adversity. Instead, Firdaus actively seeks to assert control over her own destiny, even in the most challenging of circumstances. This is exemplified in her decision to reject the traditional roles assigned to women and instead pursue her own path, however unconventional it may be. Firdaus's agency is perhaps most evident in her ultimate act of defiance: her decision to reject societal expectations and embrace her own autonomy, even if it means facing death. In choosing to confront her oppressor head-on, Firdaus asserts her agency in a final act of resistance against the forces that seek to silence her. As scholar Margot Badran observes, Firdaus's journey represents a radical assertion of female agency in a society that seeks to deny women their autonomy (Badran 118). Through her character, El Saadawi challenges traditional notions of female passivity, offering a vision of empowerment and self-determination for women everywhere.

### **3. Sexuality**

The theme of sexuality is another prominent aspect of *Woman at Point Zero*, as El Saadawi explores the ways in which female sexuality is policed and controlled within patriarchal societies. Throughout the novel, Firdaus grapples with societal expectations surrounding female purity and chastity, as her own sexual desires come into conflict with the oppressive norms imposed upon her. This tension is evident in her relationships with

men, where she is both desired and reviled for her sexuality. Firdaus's experiences highlight the double standards that govern female sexuality in Egyptian society, where men are afforded freedom and agency while women are expected to remain pure and virtuous. This theme is further underscored by Firdaus's interactions with other women, who serve as both allies and adversaries in her journey towards self-discovery. As scholar Hoda Elsadda notes, El Saadawi's portrayal of female sexuality challenges traditional notions of womanhood, offering a more nuanced and complex understanding of female desire (Elsadda 94). Through Firdaus's story, El Saadawi invites readers to reconsider their assumptions about gender and sexuality, urging them to confront the ways in which patriarchal norms limit women's freedom and expression.

#### **4. Class Struggle**

In addition to gender dynamics, *Woman at Point Zero* also explores themes of class struggle and socioeconomic inequality within Egyptian society. Firdaus's experiences are shaped not only by her gender but also by her social status as a poor, marginalized woman. From a young age, she is denied access to education and opportunities for advancement, relegating her to a life of poverty and hardship. This theme of class struggle is evident in Firdaus's interactions with characters from different socioeconomic backgrounds, highlighting the ways in which poverty exacerbates the oppression experienced by women. Firdaus's story serves as a powerful indictment of the socioeconomic inequalities that plague Egyptian society, where poverty and privilege

often determine one's opportunities and life outcomes. As scholar Deniz Kandiyoti observes, women from marginalized backgrounds are disproportionately affected by poverty and lack of access to resources, further entrenching their subjugation within patriarchal systems (Kandiyoti 127). Through Firdaus's narrative, El Saadawi sheds light on the intersecting oppressions faced by women who occupy multiple marginalized identities, urging readers to confront the systemic injustices that perpetuate inequality. In *Woman at Point Zero*, Nawal El Saadawi offers a searing critique of patriarchy and oppression, exploring themes of agency, sexuality, class struggle, and the quest for autonomy through the lens of the protagonist, Firdaus. Through Firdaus's journey, El Saadawi exposes the ways in which women are systematically marginalized and controlled within Egyptian society, challenging readers to confront their own assumptions and biases about gender and power. By weaving together authentic situations and characters, El Saadawi crafts a narrative that is both deeply personal and universally resonant, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of women's experiences in a patriarchal world.

## **2.4 Global Implication of the Narrative**

Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* is a powerful narrative that delves into the struggles and experiences of women in a patriarchal society. Through the lens of Firdaus, a woman on death row in Egypt, Saadawi explores themes of oppression, sexuality, and agency. While the novel is set in Egypt, its themes and messages resonate globally, shedding light on the universal challenges faced by women. This essay will

discuss the global implications of *Woman at Point Zero* and its relevance in different cultural, social, and political contexts. One of the central themes of *Woman at Point Zero* is the pervasive nature of patriarchy and its impact on women's lives. Firdaus's story exemplifies how women are marginalized, oppressed, and denied agency in a patriarchal society. Saadawi's depiction of Firdaus's journey from a young girl subjected to abuse to a woman imprisoned for defending herself against male violence highlights the systemic nature of gender-based oppression. In her analysis of patriarchy, bell hooks argues that it is a global phenomenon that manifests differently in various cultures and societies (hooks, 2019). Saadawi's portrayal of Firdaus's experiences resonates with hooks's assertion that patriarchy operates through systems of domination and control. Through Firdaus's narrative, Saadawi underscores the universality of women's struggles against patriarchal structures, regardless of geographical location.

Another significant aspect of *Woman at Point Zero* is its exploration of female sexuality and liberation. Firdaus's defiance of societal norms and her assertion of her sexual agency challenge traditional notions of female virtue and chastity. By refusing to conform to societal expectations, Firdaus asserts her autonomy and demands recognition of her humanity. In her essay *The Female Body*, Susan Bordo examines the cultural construction of female sexuality and its implications for women's autonomy (Bordo, 2020). Bordo argues that women's bodies are often commodified and controlled by patriarchal structures, limiting their freedom and agency. Firdaus's refusal to be objectified or controlled by men reflects the struggles faced by women worldwide in

asserting their sexual autonomy. *Woman at Point Zero* also explores the theme of agency and resistance in the face of oppression. Despite the injustices and violence she endures, Firdaus refuses to be passive or submissive. Her decision to confront her oppressors and assert her dignity, even at the cost of her life, is a powerful act of resistance against patriarchal tyranny.

In her book *Men Explain Things to Me*, Rebecca Solnit discusses the importance of women's agency in challenging patriarchal power structures (Solnit, 2019). Solnit argues that women's voices and actions are essential for effecting social change and dismantling systems of oppression. Firdaus's refusal to be silenced or subdued echoes Solnit's call for women to assert themselves and challenge male dominance. *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi transcends its Egyptian setting to address universal issues of gender inequality, oppression, and resistance. Through the character of Firdaus, Saadawi sheds light on the experiences of women worldwide and underscores the importance of solidarity and collective action in the struggle for gender justice. As global movements for women's rights continue to gain momentum, Saadawi's novel serves as a poignant reminder of the ongoing fight for gender equality and liberation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 Psychological Trauma

#### 3.1 Mental Trauma

Analyzing the portrayal of mental trauma from a psychological perspective in Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* provides a rich insight into the intricate dynamics of human suffering and resilience depicted within the narratives. Throughout both novels, the characters grapple with various forms of psychological distress, stemming from their experiences within oppressive societal structures, personal tragedies, and existential crises. These narratives offer poignant reflections on the complexities of trauma and its profound impact on individual psyches. In *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, the protagonist, Hajiya Binta, epitomizes the enduring effects of psychological trauma resulting from societal constraints and personal loss. As a widow navigating the conservative milieu of Northern Nigeria, Binta is burdened by the weight of societal expectations and religious strictures, which dictate her behavior and suppress her desires. The stifling conformity imposed upon her psyche engenders a sense of psychological dissonance, as she grapples with the tension between her longing for autonomy and the confines of patriarchal norms. This internal conflict manifests as a form of psychological trauma, wherein Binta's emotional landscape is characterized by profound sorrow and suppressed desires, encapsulating the pervasive impact of societal oppression on individual psyches (Ibrahim, 2015).

Furthermore, Binta's traumatic past, marked by the loss of her husband and son, exacerbates her psychological anguish, serving as a poignant reminder of the fragility of human existence. The specter of grief looms large over her psyche, casting a shadow of despair that colors her perceptions and shapes her interactions with the world. Through Binta's narrative arc, Ibrahim deftly explores the intricate interplay between personal tragedy and psychological distress, underscoring the enduring legacy of trauma on individual psyches (Ibrahim, 2015). Similarly, in *Woman at Point Zero*, Nawal El Saadawi provides a searing portrayal of psychological trauma through the character of Firdaus, whose harrowing journey serves as a stark indictment of patriarchal oppression and its devastating effects on women's psyches. Firdaus's traumatic upbringing in a patriarchal society rife with misogyny and exploitation lays the groundwork for her subsequent psychological turmoil, as she grapples with the dehumanizing forces that seek to subjugate and silence her. The relentless onslaught of abuse and exploitation she endures engenders a profound sense of psychological dissonance, as she struggles to reconcile her own agency with the constraints imposed upon her by societal norms (El Saadawi, 1975).

Moreover, Firdaus's traumatic experiences, including sexual abuse, exploitation, and betrayal, precipitate a profound rupture within her psyche, fracturing her sense of self and shattering her faith in humanity. As she navigates the labyrinthine corridors of power and oppression, Firdaus grapples with a profound existential crisis, confronting the stark realities of her existence and the brutal injustices perpetrated against her. Through

Firdaus's narrative, El Saadawi poignantly illustrates the insidious nature of psychological trauma and its corrosive impact on individual psyches, underscoring the enduring legacy of oppression and exploitation within patriarchal societies (El Saadawi, 1975). From a psychological perspective, both *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and *Woman at Point Zero* offer profound insights into the complexities of trauma and its profound impact on individual psyches. Through the experiences of characters such as Hajiya Binta and Firdaus, the novels illuminate the enduring legacy of societal oppression, personal tragedy, and existential anguish, underscoring the profound resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. By examining the nuanced dynamics of psychological trauma within these narratives, readers are confronted with the stark realities of human suffering and the transformative power of empathy and solidarity in overcoming adversity.

### **3.2 Emotional Trauma**

Emotional trauma, a complex psychological phenomenon, is a recurring theme in literature, often explored through the lens of characters' experiences and their subsequent psychological responses. Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* are two literary works that vividly portray the depth and impact of emotional trauma on individuals. Through their narratives, these authors delve into the intricacies of trauma, shedding light on its manifestations, underlying causes, and the potential for healing or resilience. In Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, emotional trauma is depicted through the character of Binta Zubairu, a widow who grapples with the loss of her husband and the complexities of her forbidden

relationship with a much younger man. Binta's trauma is multifaceted, stemming not only from the grief of losing her husband but also from societal expectations, guilt, and the clandestine nature of her affair. The novel delves into Binta's internal struggles, revealing the profound psychological toll of navigating conflicting desires, cultural norms, and personal identity. Ibrahim's portrayal of emotional trauma is nuanced, capturing the nuances of Binta's emotional landscape as she wrestles with feelings of longing, shame, and uncertainty. Through Binta's perspective, readers witness the fragmentation of self that often accompanies trauma, as she grapples with conflicting emotions and struggles to reconcile her desires with societal expectations. Moreover, the novel explores how trauma can manifest in interpersonal relationships, affecting not only the individual but also those around them. Binta's interactions with her lover, Hassan, and her family members are marked by tension, secrecy, and an underlying sense of unease, reflecting the pervasive impact of trauma on her psyche. Similarly, Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* offers a poignant exploration of emotional trauma through the character of Firdaus, a woman on death row who recounts her harrowing life story to a psychiatrist. Firdaus's narrative is a chronicle of abuse, exploitation, and betrayal, beginning with her traumatic childhood and extending into her experiences as a marginalized woman in a patriarchal society. Through Firdaus's account, Saadawi exposes the ways in which systemic oppression and interpersonal violence intersect to perpetuate cycles of trauma and suffering. Firdaus's trauma is deeply rooted in her experiences of powerlessness, objectification, and betrayal, which shape her perceptions of self and others. The novel

elucidates how trauma can become inscribed on the body and psyche, influencing not only one's thoughts and behaviors but also one's sense of identity and agency. Firdaus's journey towards self-awareness and empowerment is fraught with obstacles, as she grapples with the internalized shame and fear that accompany her traumatic experiences. Saadawi's portrayal of Firdaus's psychological evolution is both haunting and illuminating, underscoring the resilience of the human spirit in the face of profound adversity. In both *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and *Woman at Point Zero*, emotional trauma is depicted as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that transcends individual experiences to reflect broader social and cultural dynamics. Through the protagonists' narratives, readers are confronted with the visceral realities of trauma and its enduring impact on the human psyche. Moreover, these novels highlight the importance of empathy, understanding, and solidarity in addressing the root causes of trauma and fostering healing and resilience. In conclusion, Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* offer powerful insights into the nature of emotional trauma from a psychological perspective. Through their nuanced characterizations and vivid storytelling, these authors illuminate the complexities of trauma and its far-reaching effects on individuals and society. By engaging with these narratives, readers are invited to confront uncomfortable truths about the human condition and to contemplate the possibilities for healing, transformation, and collective action.

### 3.3 Physical Trauma

Physical trauma, when explored from a psychological perspective in literature, often serves as a conduit to delve into the depths of human suffering, resilience, and transformation. Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* are exemplary works that intricately weave the psychological impact of physical trauma into their narratives, offering profound insights into the human psyche. In Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, the character of Binta Zubairu embodies the complex interplay between physical trauma and its psychological aftermath. Binta, a widow in her sixties, experiences the profound loss of her husband and is subsequently drawn into a taboo relationship with a much younger man, Hassan. This unconventional liaison becomes a catalyst for both physical and psychological trauma as Binta grapples with societal judgment, guilt, and the reawakening of suppressed desires. The physicality of Binta's experiences, from the intimacy shared with Hassan to the violence she endures at the hands of others, leaves deep emotional scars that shape her perception of self and relationships.

Moreover, Ibrahim skillfully employs vivid imagery and introspective narration to illustrate the psychological turmoil stemming from Binta's physical encounters. For instance, when Binta is brutally assaulted by thugs, the visceral descriptions of her pain and fear evoke a profound sense of vulnerability and trauma. Through Binta's internal monologues and reflections, readers gain insight into the intricate web of emotions

surrounding her experiences, including shame, anger, and a desperate yearning for connection amidst the chaos of her existence.

Similarly, Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* delves into the psychological ramifications of physical trauma through the lens of Firdaus, a woman on death row in an Egyptian prison. Firdaus' harrowing journey unfolds against the backdrop of societal oppression, abuse, and exploitation, culminating in her transformation from a victim of physical and psychological trauma to a symbol of empowerment and defiance. From her early experiences of sexual abuse and exploitation to her later confrontations with violence and injustice, Firdaus navigates a treacherous landscape where physical trauma serves as a constant companion on her path to self-realization. Saadawi employs a raw and unflinching narrative style to confront the psychological impact of Firdaus' traumatic experiences head-on. Through Firdaus' first-person account, readers are immersed in her innermost thoughts and emotions, witnessing the profound toll that physical trauma exacts on her psyche. For instance, Firdaus' recollections of abuse at the hands of her uncle and subsequent encounters with predatory men underscore the cyclical nature of trauma and its enduring psychological scars. As Firdaus confronts the realities of her existence and embraces her agency in the face of adversity, her journey becomes a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the wake of profound physical and psychological trauma.

Furthermore, both *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and *Woman at Point Zero* underscore the interconnectedness of physical and psychological trauma and its

reverberating impact on individuals and society at large. Through the experiences of Binta and Firdaus, readers are compelled to confront the pervasive nature of violence, oppression, and societal norms that perpetuate cycles of trauma and suffering. Moreover, these narratives challenge conventional notions of victimhood and agency, offering a nuanced portrayal of individuals who defy societal expectations and reclaim their autonomy in the face of adversity.

In conclusion, Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* offer profound insights into the psychological dimensions of physical trauma, illuminating the complex interplay between suffering, resilience, and transformation. Through richly drawn characters and evocative storytelling, these works invite readers to confront the visceral realities of trauma and explore the indomitable human spirit that perseveres in the face of adversity. As literary representations of the psychological aftermath of physical trauma, these novels serve as poignant reminders of the enduring power of storytelling to illuminate the depths of the human experience.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 Resistance

#### 4.1 Resistance in Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*

In Abubakar Ibrahim's novel *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, resistance emerges as a significant theme interwoven within the complex socio-political fabric of Nigerian society. Through nuanced character portrayals and intricate narrative structures, Ibrahim delves into the multifaceted forms of resistance exhibited by individuals against various oppressive forces, be they societal norms, religious constraints, or political injustices. These acts of resistance are not only reflective of personal struggles but also emblematic of broader struggles for freedom, autonomy, and self-expression within a turbulent Nigerian landscape. One of the central characters exemplifying resistance is Hajiya Binta Zubairu, an elderly widow navigating the patriarchal confines of her society while grappling with her own desires and aspirations. Binta's resistance is epitomized through her clandestine relationship with the much younger drug dealer Reza. Despite societal taboos and the moral scrutiny of her community, Binta persists in her pursuit of love and companionship, defying ageist and sexist expectations imposed upon her. Her resistance is not merely an act of defiance but a reclaiming of agency and autonomy in a society that seeks to confine her within predefined roles of motherhood and widowhood.

Moreover, Binta's resistance is intricately linked to her agency as a woman within a predominantly patriarchal society. As she clandestinely engages in a forbidden romance, Binta challenges the norms that dictate women's subservience and passivity. Her defiance

serves as a potent critique of the gendered power dynamics pervasive in Nigerian society, where women are often relegated to the margins of public discourse and denied the freedom to exercise their desires and ambitions. Through Binta's character, Ibrahim underscores the resilience and fortitude of Nigerian women who navigate oppressive structures with quiet determination and unwavering resolve. In discussing resistance in *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, it is imperative to acknowledge the broader socio-political context within which these acts of defiance unfold. Nigeria, like many post-colonial nations, grapples with a legacy of colonialism and imperialism, which has left indelible marks on its social, economic, and political landscape. The specter of colonialism looms large in Ibrahim's narrative, serving as a backdrop against which various forms of resistance are enacted. Furthermore, religious conservatism emerges as a formidable force against which characters in the novel must contend. The influence of Islam, deeply entrenched in Nigerian society, imposes rigid moral codes and social expectations, particularly concerning matters of love, sexuality, and gender roles. Binta's relationship with Reza, a non-conforming figure who operates outside the bounds of religious orthodoxy, embodies a form of resistance against the strictures of religious conservatism. Their love transcends societal norms and religious taboos, challenging the sanctity of traditional institutions and hierarchies.

Additionally, Ibrahim explores the theme of political resistance through secondary characters such as Hassan, a disillusioned former militant who becomes embroiled in a clandestine plot against the corrupt political establishment. Hassan's journey from

idealism to disillusionment reflects broader disillusionment with Nigeria's political class and the systemic corruption that plagues its institutions. His involvement in subversive activities represents a form of resistance against the status quo, a desperate attempt to effect change in a system rife with injustice and inequality. In analyzing the theme of resistance in *Season of Crimson Blossoms*, it is essential to consider Ibrahim's stylistic choices and narrative techniques, which lend depth and complexity to the portrayal of resistance within the novel. Ibrahim employs a multi-layered narrative structure, alternating between different perspectives and timelines, to offer readers a panoramic view of Nigerian society and the myriad struggles faced by its inhabitants. By juxtaposing intimate personal narratives with broader socio-political themes, Ibrahim underscores the interconnectedness of individual agency and collective resistance.

Furthermore, Ibrahim's prose is imbued with rich imagery and symbolism, which serves to underscore the thematic underpinnings of resistance within the novel. The recurring motif of crimson blossoms, for instance, symbolizes resilience and beauty emerging from adversity, mirroring the indomitable spirit of characters who resist oppression in various forms. Through such literary devices, Ibrahim invites readers to contemplate the deeper significance of resistance as both a personal ethos and a collective struggle for justice and freedom. Moreover, the authenticity and realism of Ibrahim's portrayal of Nigerian society lend credence to his exploration of resistance within the novel. As a Nigerian author intimately familiar with the socio-political dynamics of his homeland, Ibrahim brings a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in acts of

resistance against entrenched power structures. His characters are not mere caricatures but fully realized individuals whose struggles resonate with the realities of contemporary Nigeria.

In conclusion, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* stands as a testament to the enduring power of resistance in the face of oppression and injustice. Through richly drawn characters and a compelling narrative, Abubakar Ibrahim illuminates the myriad forms of resistance that permeate Nigerian society, from intimate acts of personal defiance to broader struggles for social and political change. By weaving together themes of gender, religion, politics, and colonialism, Ibrahim offers readers a profound meditation on the complexities of resistance and the indomitable human spirit. In a world fraught with inequality and injustice, *Season of Crimson Blossoms* serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative potential of resistance in the ongoing struggle for a more just and equitable society.

#### **4.2 Resistance in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*.**

Nawal El Saadawi's novel *Woman at Point Zero* stands as a powerful testament to the enduring struggle against oppression and the assertion of agency in the face of societal constraints. Throughout the narrative, the protagonist, Firdaus, embodies various forms of resistance against the patriarchal structures that seek to subjugate her. By examining key situations and characters within the novel, one can discern the multifaceted nature of resistance as depicted by El Saadawi. At the heart of Firdaus's resistance is her refusal to succumb to the oppressive forces that seek to dictate her life.

One poignant example of her resistance is her rejection of societal norms regarding marriage and sexual subjugation. Firdaus adamantly refuses to conform to the expectations placed upon her as a woman, exemplified by her refusal to accept marriage proposals that would bind her to a life of servitude and submission. This defiance is encapsulated in Firdaus's assertion: "I decided to be my own guardian, to depend on myself alone and never to trust anyone" (El Saadawi 57). Here, Firdaus asserts her autonomy and rejects the notion of relying on others for her well-being, thereby challenging the patriarchal notion of women as dependent entities. Moreover, Firdaus's resistance is deeply intertwined with her reclaiming of her own body and sexuality. In a society that seeks to control and exploit women's bodies, Firdaus defiantly asserts ownership over her own physical being. This is evident in her refusal to comply with the sexual demands imposed upon her by men in positions of power. When confronted with attempts to coerce her into sexual submission, Firdaus boldly resists, refusing to be reduced to a mere object of male desire. This defiance is epitomized in her encounter with the pimp, Bayoumi, whom she rebukes, declaring, "I'm not a woman who sells herself, but one who gives herself freely" (El Saadawi 79). Through this assertion, Firdaus challenges the commodification of women's bodies and asserts her right to determine the terms of her own sexuality.

Furthermore, Firdaus's resistance extends beyond individual acts of defiance to encompass a broader rejection of societal structures that perpetuate oppression. Throughout the novel, Firdaus confronts various manifestations of patriarchal power,

including institutionalized misogyny and economic exploitation. One such instance is her experience working as a prostitute, where she is subjected to dehumanizing treatment and economic exploitation. Despite the dire circumstances in which she finds herself, Firdaus refuses to passively accept her fate, instead channeling her anger and frustration into a fervent desire for liberation. This sentiment is captured in her reflection: “I had become a prostitute because I was poor, and poverty and prostitution are two faces of the same coin” (El Saadawi 101). Here, Firdaus articulates the systemic nature of oppression, linking her own plight to broader structures of inequality and exploitation.

In addition to Firdaus’s individual acts of resistance, the novel also highlights the collective struggle of women against patriarchal oppression. Through her interactions with other female characters, Firdaus becomes increasingly aware of the shared experiences of women subjected to patriarchal violence and exploitation. One significant example is her relationship with Sharifa, a fellow inmate who becomes a source of solidarity and support for Firdaus. In their conversations, Sharifa recounts her own experiences of abuse and exploitation, thereby affirming the universality of women’s suffering under patriarchy. This solidarity among women serves as a potent force of resistance, challenging the divide-and-conquer tactics employed by patriarchal systems to maintain control.

Moreover, Firdaus’s resistance is not limited to overt acts of defiance but also encompasses a subversive reclamation of agency within the confines of her own mind. Despite her physical confinement, Firdaus refuses to allow her spirit to be broken,

maintaining a sense of inner autonomy and defiance. This internal resistance is exemplified in her refusal to capitulate to the psychological manipulation attempted by her captors, who seek to erode her sense of self-worth and agency. Instead, Firdaus draws strength from within, declaring, “They are the ones who are scared of me, not I of them” (El Saadawi 123). Here, Firdaus asserts her resilience in the face of adversity, refusing to be reduced to a passive victim of circumstance.

In analyzing the theme of resistance in *Woman at Point Zero*, it is essential to consider the broader socio-political context in which the novel is situated. Nawal El Saadawi herself is a prominent feminist writer and activist who has long been at the forefront of the struggle for women’s rights in the Arab world. As a former physician, El Saadawi brings a unique perspective to her writing, drawing upon her own experiences working with marginalized women to inform her portrayal of Firdaus’s struggle. Through her fiction, El Saadawi seeks to shine a light on the pervasive injustices faced by women in patriarchal societies and to inspire a spirit of resistance and solidarity among her readers

In conclusion, *Woman at Point Zero* stands as a powerful testament to the enduring spirit of resistance in the face of oppression. Through the character of Firdaus, Nawal El Saadawi crafts a compelling narrative that explores the various forms of resistance adopted by women living under patriarchal systems. From individual acts of defiance to collective solidarity, Firdaus’s journey serves as a rallying cry for all those who dare to challenge the status quo and assert their right to autonomy and dignity. In a

world where women's voices are often silenced and their bodies exploited, *Woman at Point Zero* stands as a beacon of hope and resilience, reminding us of the transformative power of resistance in the struggle for justice and equality.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.1 Conclusion

This essay delves into the themes of trauma and resistance as portrayed in Abubakar Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*. It examines how the protagonists, Hajiya Binta and Firdaus, navigate through their traumas, including loss, violence, societal expectations, and patriarchal oppression. Despite facing significant challenges, both characters exhibit resilience and agency, refusing to conform to societal norms and asserting control over their destinies. Drawing upon Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the essay analyzes how repression, defense mechanisms, and the unconscious mind influence the protagonists' behavior and motivations. Acts of resistance such as clandestine relationships, defiance of societal expectations, and assertion of autonomy are explored as strategies employed by Hajiya Binta and Firdaus to challenge oppressive forces.

The review of related scholarship emphasizes the richness of discourse surrounding trauma and resistance in contemporary literature. Scholars offer diverse perspectives and theoretical frameworks for understanding these themes, from comparative analyses to post-colonial perspectives. This underscores the significance of *Season of Crimson Blossoms* and *Woman at Point Zero* in illuminating the complexities of human experience and the transformative power of resistance. In essence, the essay contributes to a deeper understanding of the profound impact of trauma and the ways individuals navigate and resist oppressive systems. By examining the narratives of both

novels, scholars gain insights into the resilience, agency, and empowerment inherent within the characters' struggles, shedding light on the complexities of trauma and the human spirit. Furthermore, the essay delves into the intricacies of Nigerian and Egyptian societies depicted in the novels. Both narratives offer profound insights into the struggles individuals face within complex societal norms and expectations. Themes such as taboo love, gender roles, religion, oppression, agency, sexuality, and class struggle transcend their local settings to address universal issues with global resonance. *Season of Crimson Blossoms* intricately examines the intersection of various themes within Nigerian society, while *Woman at Point Zero* delves into the struggles of women within a patriarchal Egyptian society. Despite their distinct settings, both novels resonate globally by addressing universal themes such as gender inequality, oppression, and the quest for autonomy. In analyzing the portrayal of psychological, emotional, and physical trauma in both novels, readers gain profound insights into the intricate dynamics of human suffering and resilience. The characters of Hajiya Binta and Firdaus confront enduring effects of trauma resulting from societal constraints, personal loss, oppression, abuse, and exploitation. The exploration of physical trauma highlights the enduring psychological toll of violence and abuse.

## Works Cited

Abubakar Adam Ibrahim dans la selection du Prix Femina Étranger. [www.editions-observatoire.com](http://www.editions-observatoire.com) (in French). Retrieved 25 December 2021.

... Archived from the original on 9 September 2015. Retrieved 26 August 2015.

... Parrésia Publishers. 2015. Archived from the original on 23 June 2015. Retrieved 4 June 2015.

... *School of Journalism and Mass Communication* - The University of Iowa. [journalism.uiowa.edu](http://journalism.uiowa.edu). Retrieved 8 February 2022.

... *La Maison Dora Maar et L'Hôtel Tingry*. Retrieved 25 December 2021.

Adebayo, Ayobami. *Stay with Me*. Knopf, 2017.

Adeniran, Ismail. Religion, Morality, and Social Change in Contemporary Nigerian Literature. *Religion and Literature*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2021, pp. 417-433.

Adesokan, Akin. Narratives of Violence in Contemporary Nigerian Literature. *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2022, pp. 112-128.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Anchor Books, 2007.

Africa 39 list of artists. Hay Festival. 2014. Retrieved 4 June 2015.

African Performance 2007. BBC World Service. 2007. Retrieved 4 June 2015.

Ahmad, Aisha. *Jihad and Co.: Black Markets and Islamist Power*. Oxford University Press, 2023.

... *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. Yale University Press, 1992.

... (2019). *Trauma and Memory in Contemporary African Fiction*. Cambridge University Press. Art OMI. 6 June 2018. Retrieved 6 June 2018.

AWT (13 October 2016), Abubakar Adam Ibrahim wins the 2016 Nigerian Prize for Literature, African Writers Trust.

Badran, Margot. *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Princeton University Press, 1995.

Bay, Mia. *Tradition and Modernity in Global Literature*. *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2020, pp. 213-230.

Bordo, Susan. *The Female Body*. University of California Press, 2020.

Cowell, Alan (2021). Nawal El Saadawi, Advocate for Women in the Arab World, Dies at 89. *The New York Times*. Nawal El Saadawi was born on Oct. 27, 1931, in the village of Kafr Tahla, a settlement in the lower Nile Delta, the second of nine children. Her mother, Zaynab (Shoukry) El Saadawi, was partially descended from a wealthy Ottoman family. Her father, Al-Sayed El Saadawi, was an official in the government's education ministry.

Dart Names Abubakar Adam Ibrahim,13 Others Ochberg Fellows. Daily Trust. 7 November 2017 – via All Africa.

El Saadaw, Nawal (November 2002). *Exile and Resistance*. Nawal El Saadawi/Sherif Hetata. Archived from the original on 27 October 2009. Retrieved 23 June 2010.

... (1975). *Woman at Point Zero*. Zed Books.

... (13 June 2019), *My Childhood in Egypt, Not Knowing I Was in Africa*, zora.medium.com

... (1986), *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*, University of California Press, p. 64, ISBN 0520088883, My eyes widened in astonishment. Even my maternal grandmother used to sing, although she was born to a Turkish mother and lived in my grandfather's house in the epoch when harems still existed.

... (2013). *A Daughter of Isis: The Early Life of Nawal El Saadawi*. Zed Books. ISBN 978-1848136403.

... *Woman at Point Zero*. Translated by Sherif Hetata, Zed Books, 2007.

... *Woman at Point Zero*. Zed Books, 2007.

... *Woman at Point Zero*. Zed Books, 2015.

Elsadda, Hoda. *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892-2008*. Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

Eresia-Eke, Kudo (31 October 2016). Shortlist of three for NLNG sponsored US\$100,000 literature prize emerges. Nigeria LNG Ltd.

Etisalat Prize for Literature. Etisalat Prize for Literature. 14 October 2016. Retrieved 9 January 2017.

Ezeigbo, Theodora Akachi. *Gardens of Hell*. Kraft Books, 2013.

Fourteenth Caine Prize shortlist announced. The Caine Prize for African Writing. April 2013. Archived from the original on 7 June 2015. Retrieved 4 June 2015.

Guest, Africa in Words (1 December 2020). Q&A: Uchechukwu Peter Umezurike interviews Abubakar Adam Ibrahim about his latest collection "Dreams and Assorted Nightmares (2020). Retrieved 25 December 2021.

Gwendolin Hilse. Nigeria's Literary Provocateur. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved 13 January 2018.

hooks, bell. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Routledge, 2019.

Ibrahim, A. A. (2015). *Season of Crimson Blossoms*. Cassava Republic Press.

.... Season of Crimson Blossoms. Cassava Republic Press, 2015.

ICFG (8 May 2018). *Nigerian Reporter Wins 2018 Michael Elliott Award for Excellence in African Storytelling*. International Center for Journalists.

James Murua (11 February 2016). *Season of Crimson Blossoms: Religion, politics and sex in Nigeria*. The Star, Kenya. Retrieved 15 January 2018.

Jones, L. (2020). *Post-Colonial Perspectives on Resistance in African and Arab Literature*. Routledge.

Kandiyoti, Deniz. *Bargaining with Patriarchy*. *Gender and Society*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1988, pp. 274–290.

Khaleeli, Homa (15 April 2010). *Nawal El Saadawi: Egypt's radical feminist*. The Guardian. Retrieved 15 April 2020.

Kimmel, Michael. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2022.

La Saison des fleurs de flamme. [www.editions-observatoire.com](http://www.editions-observatoire.com) (in French). Retrieved 25 December 2021.

Margaret Busby, Africa39: how we chose the writers for Port Harcourt World Book Capital 2014, The Guardian, 10 April 2014.

Mukoma Wa Ngugi, Beauty, Mourning, and Melancholy in Africa39, Los Angeles Review of Books, 9 November 2014.

Nawal El Saadawi. [faculty.webster.edu](http://faculty.webster.edu). Retrieved 25 September 2015.

... (2020). About Me in Africa—Politics and Religion in my Childhood. In Busby, Margaret (ed.). *New Daughters of Africa* (paperback ed.). Myriad Editions. pp. 42–44.

Nwakanma, Obi. A Poetics of Embrace: Poetry and the Public Sphere in Nigeria. *Research in African Literatures* 45.1 (2014): 107-122.

Odeh, Nehru (12 October 2016). 2016 Winner of \$100,000 NLNG Nigeria Prize for Literature announced. Premium Times.

Ogede, Ode. *Gender, Sexuality and Love in Modern African Literature: A Case Study of Season of Crimson Blossoms'* by Abubakar Ibrahim. *African Literature Today*, vol. 37, 2019, pp. 112-128.

Ogundipe-Leslie, Molar. Gender Politics and Power Dynamics in Contemporary Nigerian Fiction. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2020, pp. 189-205.

Ogunyemi, Olu. Corruption and Its Discontents in Contemporary Nigerian Fiction. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2023, pp. 215-231.

Olotuon Williams. *Season of Crimson Blossoms*: Review. Borders Literature. Retrieved 14 January 2018.

Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́. Conceptualizing Gender: The Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies. *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* 2.1 (2002): 1-22.

... *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. University of Minnesota Press, 2021.

Pardon Our Interruption. muckrack.com. Retrieved 25 December 2021.

Sa'dawi, Nawal; Saadawi, Nawal El; Sa'dāwī, Nawāl; Sa'dāwī, Nawāl as- (1999). A Daughter of Isis: *The Autobiography of Nawal El Saadawi*. Zed Books. pp. 63–87. ISBN 978-1-85649-680-3.

Salamatu Sule (20 December 2015). *Season of Crimson Blossoms: The effect of society on the human personality In Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's debut novel*. Words Rhymes & Rhythm Publishers. Retrieved 15 January 2018.

Selected for the Gabriel García Márquez fellowship in cultural journalism. Fundacion Gabriel Garcia Marquez para el Nuovo Periodismo Iberoamericano. FNPI. 25 October 2012. Retrieved 4 June 2015.

Smith, J. (2017). *Women's Agency and Empowerment in African Literature*. Oxford University Press.

.... (2018). *Agency and Empowerment in African Literature: Feminist Perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan.

... (22 March 2021). *Nawal El Saadawi obituary*. The Guardian.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Men Explain Things to Me*. Haymarket Books, 2019.

Taylor-Coleman, Jasmine (21 March 2021). *Nawal El Saadawi: Feminist firebrand who dared to write dangerously (obituary)*. BBC News.

The Inaugural Etisalat Prize for Literature Longlist. Etisalat Nigeria. 20 December 2013. Retrieved 4 June 2015.

The Whispering Trees | Abubakar Adam Ibrahim | Cassava Republic Press. 14 April 2020. Retrieved 25 December 2021.

Ukadike, Nwachukwu Frank. Religion and Society in Contemporary African Literature. *African Studies Review*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2019, pp. 145-163.

Winner of the 2016 Goethe-Institut & Sylt Foundation African Writer's Residency Award announced!. Sylt Foundation. 17 August 2016.

Wo wir stolpern und wo wir fallen, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, Susann Urban, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, Susann Urban. Residenz Verlag. [www.residenzverlag.com](http://www.residenzverlag.com) (in German). Retrieved 25 December 2021.

Writivism Short Story Prize 2014 Longlist. Books Live. Times Media Group. 22 May 2014. Retrieved 4 June 2015.