

Madness and Free Association in Evelyne Mpoudi Ngolle's *Sous la cendre le feu*

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Abstract

Psychoanalytic insight facilitates the analysis of works of art through which literary analysts are able to access the psyche of authors and their characters. (M.M. Schwartz and D. Willbern: 1982). One of such psychoanalytic devices is free association. Free association technique applied during psychotherapy sessions provides a royal road into the psyche of humans as can be observed in Mina's case in Mpoudi Ngollé's *Sous la cendre le feu*. This paper concludes that repression of negative and unpleasant experiences lived within patriarchal limitations, as promoted by African male hegemonic traditions, subjects women-victim of oppression to anxiety disorder which may occur in the form of depression, schizophrenia, obsessive disorders, depersonalisation, derealisation among others.

It seems natural to think about literature in terms of dreams. Like dreams, literary works are fictions, inventions of the mind that, although based on reality, are by definition not literally true. Like a literary work, a dream may have some truth to tell, but, like a literary work, it may need to be interpreted before that truth can be grasped. (R.C. Murfin, (internet article: accessed 30 May 2011: 502)

Introduction

Evelyne Mpoudi Ngollé, a Cameroonian novelist, was greatly influenced by her English teacher, to whom she dedicated her debut novel, *Sous la Cendre le feu* (1990) in which Mina, the

novel's protagonist suffers from trauma and madness in her matrimonial home.

Free association is a method by which psychoanalysts allow patients suffering from anxiety disorders to talk freely about threatening, unresolved and unpleasant conflicts they experience in life, be it in their childhood or adulthood. If for any reason an individual is unable to express repressed unpleasant negative experience or ungratified libido, Freud claims that this results in anxiety disorders and by reliving these repressed feelings during psychotherapy sessions, the patient is able to gradually lead a normal life again. This method has been skilfully applied by Evelyne Mpoudi Ngollé in *Sous la cendre* for, Mina, at the end of the novel is able to lead a normal life after she has undergone psychotherapy sessions under the surveillance of a psychotherapist, Dr Lobé.

Many African feminist writers who have treated the theme of madness suffered by women in their literary texts have also named patriarchy as one of the primary causes of women's mental debilities (Osaki, 2002). In this category, we find Buchi Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood*, Ama Ata Aidoo in *Anowa*, Mariama Bâ in *Un chant écarlate*, Bessie Head in *A Question of Power* (1974), and Calixthe Beyala in *Tu t'appelleras Tanga*, among others. Moreover, the importance of madness of women as portrayed in African and Caribbean women's writings is underscored by Veit-Wild in *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature* (2006) and Lyons Tobert (2007) in her unpublished dissertation entitled *Making Sense of Madness: A Study of the Theme of Madness in Selected Novels of Mariama Bâ, Ken Bugul, and Myriam Warner-Vieyra* where they each respectively explore the theme of gendered violence as a precursor to madness in women in patriarchal settings.

Madness is a mental way of functioning in terms of conduct and thought behaviour which society adjudges abnormal, defective, aberrant, bizarre and undesirable Osaki, (2002). While it may be

argued that there is no fixed definition of madness, Lilian Feder's definition as quoted by Osaki (2002) will be adopted in this paper because of its aptness in describing Mina's psychological state in *Sous la cendre*. Madness, is thus defined as:

a state in which unconscious processes predominate over conscious ones to the extent that they control them and determine perceptions of and responses to experience that, judged by prevailing standards of logical thought and relevant emotion, are confused and inappropriate (internet article accessed on 18 August 2011).

Like the feminist authors cited above, Ngollé presents her protagonist, Mina, as a psychological wreck who could have been mentally destroyed but for timely psychotherapeutic interventions. These psychotherapeutic interventions are what one can regard as the act of telling otherwise known as talking therapy, according to Bouchard (2007). In keeping with Irène Assiba d'Ameilda's opinion, Bouchard (2007) claims that "the act of telling produces extraordinary results... It brings forth life, liberates, restores sanity and ensures immortality" (65). Through this act of telling, Mina recounts her story in a narrative method that skilfully applies psychotherapeutic technique of free association. With this technique, Dr Lobé is able to dig into Mina's subconscious:

... Vous savez, les problèmes les plus graves qui secouent le psychisme de l'adulte-ont souvent leurs racines dans leur enfance. Si nous gardions intactes nos souvenirs d'enfance, peut-être serions-nous en mesure de mieux expliquer certains de nos comportements d'adultes (90).

... You know, the greatest problems that shake the psyche of an adult often have their roots in their childhood. If we kept our childhood memories intact, perhaps would we be capable of explaining some of our adulthood behaviours. (My translation).

Mpoudi Ngollé, in an interview with *Amina* (May 1991), affirms that people are often different from what they appear to be on the outside. This statement adequately underscores the author's presentation of Djibril Mohammadou's personality, and, of course, Mina's father:

Ce n'est pas par hasard. Le titre était déjà trouvé depuis le début de l'histoire. La cendre paraît froide, mais dessous il y a de la braise. Les gens cachent en eux ce qu'ils sont vraiment, mais on le découvre tôt ou tard, même s'il n'y a qu'illusion (83).

It is not by hazard. The title was already discovered from the beginning of the story. Ash appears cold, but underneath, there are live coals. People hide in them what they truly are, but one discovers it sooner or later, even if it is only an illusion (My translation).

The title of the novel seems, therefore, to have been chosen as a result of human nature that is in most cases characterized by hypocrisy and generally man's propensity for doing good and bad. Ngollé seems to be affirming in *Sous la cendre* that the evil that man is cannot be hidden just as the smoke cannot be hidden, and that, no matter how good a human being tries to be, his or her real personality comes to the surface in a matter of time, doing away with the persona in critical moments.

In tandem with Ngollé's philosophical disposition towards man's unpredictable character, Mina makes a confession of what will truly be Djibril Mohammadou's human nature full of deception and contradiction to what his physical mien appears to depict.

Tout mon problème est là : dans le contraste qui existe entre Djibril tel qu'il se montre aux autres, et le Djibril réel, que je pense être la seule à connaître. C'est ahurissant qu'un individu soit capable d'une telle duplicité ; pour tous ceux qui connaissent je devrais dire croient connaître Djibril Mohamadou, il s'agit d'un homme admirable : calme, réfléchi, gentil, d'une serviabilité à nulle autre pareille, qui ne ferait pas de mal

à une mouche ; il ne sort de sa réserve que dans le cadre de sa profession, et l'on dit volontiers de lui qu'il est l'un des meilleurs avocats de la ville de Douala. Dans ce contexte, il passe aisément pour un bon mari et un bon père de famille. Du reste, il s'arrange pour que cela apparaisse ainsi, et j'ai toujours été consciente du fait que j'aurais beaucoup de mal à faire admettre que l'homme que j'ai épousé est tout à fait différent de celui que tout le monde connaît. (7-8).

All my problem lies there : in the contrast that exists between Djibril and how he presents himself to others, and the real Djibril, that I think I'm the only one to know. It is bewildering that an individual is capable of such a duplicity; for all those who know I should say who believe they know Djibril Mohamadou, he is an admirable man, calm, reflected, kind, agreeably comparable to none, who would not hurt a fly; he only goes out of his cocoon for professional reasons, one would say gladly of him that he is one of the best lawyers of Douala. In this context, he easily passes for a good husband and a good father. As for what remains, it's only a simulacrum, and I've always been conscious of the fact that it would be very difficult for me to admit that the man I married is completely different from the one the whole world knows (My translation).

Journey from sanity to madness

Using the foregoing as theoretical underpinning, this paper focuses on the psychological significances of free association in Evelyne Mpoudi Ngollé's *Sous la cendre*. Mina exists in two opposing modern but traditionally male-dominated worlds of emerging modern Cameroonian milieu and the traditional one. Young Mina is brought up in a supposedly 'monogamous' Christian family. As will be observed later, the core of Mina's eventual psychological disintegration is not farfetched from the notorious African patriarchal practices which allow men to relish in both unquestioned traditional polygamy and "modern polygamy". By "modern polygamy" we mean the habit of most

African men keeping illicitly consummated marital and or sensual relationships with other women either than their legal spouses. Patriarchal practices in this sense also do not exclude the constriction and preclusion of juvenal freedom of speech.

At age sixteen, Mina marries a young, pleasant, vibrant, and handsome man called Djibril Mohammadou, a Cameroonian from the Islamic north. Early in her childhood, Mina discovers to her chagrin that the angelic fascination she has for her father as God incarnate on earth is nothing but a farce, when, on an eventful day, it comes to her knowledge that her father is not the saint she believes him to be:

... eh bien, dans ma tête d'enfant, ce Père, je l'identifiais à mon père, inconsciemment. Je n'ai jamais pensé que mon père était Dieu, mais par je ne sais quelle logique puérile, je me disais qu'il était son représentant, qu'il était l'image terrestre de ce Père que l'on ne peut ni voir, ni entendre, ni toucher ... dès lors, je le croyais incapable de toutes ces mauvaises choses que l'on racontait sur tel ou tel autre voisin : le mensonge, le vol, l'infidélité, la médisance, la méchanceté et que sais-je encore ! (80).

... well, in my childish imagination, I identify this Father to my father, unconsciously. I have never thought that my father was God, but by some sort of juvenile logic, I told myself that he was his incarnate, that he was the earthly image of this Father who one neither sees nor hears, nor touches ... since then, I believed him to be incapable of all these stories of evils that people circulated about such or such other neighbour: lie, theft, infidelity, scandal, wickedness, and what more! (My translation).

Mina's shocking discovery of her father's illicit amorous affair with her mother's friend sentences her to a psychological trauma she finds difficult to express to anyone until adulthood when her mental health gives way leading to her admission into a

psychiatric hospital where she confesses to Dr Lobé, the psychoanalyst, who takes her through several sessions of psychotherapy. Shortly before Mina's discovery of her father's love escapades, she suspects that her parents must be experiencing turmoil as she interrogates her mother one day on her return from school "Maman? ... Papa et toi vous allez divorcer? (83). Mother? ... Father and you, are you getting divorced? (My translation). Rather than confide in her, Mina's mother refuses to bring her to the light of the goings-on in the family but would condemn her:

D'où te vient une telle idée ? Vous les enfants d'aujourd'hui, vous n'avez peur de rien, et les mots qui sortent de votre bouche sont plus grands que vous. Cours déposer ton cartable et va où je t'ai envoyée, gronda-t-elle ... (84).

Where do you get such an idea from? You children of nowadays, you fear nothing, and the words that come out of your mouth are bigger than you. Run and drop off your folder and go where I sent you, she snarled (My translation).

Mina obviously becomes disillusioned as a result of her mother's reaction to her question and worries. She declares, in a hopeless tone, the root cause of her psychological trauma and her future psychological imbalance:

Ma mère avait réagi violemment et n'avait pas répondu à ma question du tout, j'acquis ainsi la conviction que j'avais frôlé la vérité, et cela ne fit qu'accroître ma peur de l'avenir. Et si mes parents se séparaient eux aussi ? Si je me retrouvais un jour comme Prisca ? Une semaine plus tard, j'assistai sans l'avoir vraiment voulu à une scène qui vint aggraver cette angoisse viscérale qui m'habitait depuis un moment (84).

My mother reacted violently and did not respond to my question at all, thus, I became convinced that I had slightly touched the truth, and that only amplified my

fear of the future. And if my parents were separated also? If I found myself one day like Prisca? One week later, I witnessed without having truly wanted to, a scene which aggravated this visceral anguish which I harboured for some time (My translation).

Apart from her disillusionment and anguish, Mina becomes a victim of this familial crisis, a crisis which she is incapable of surmounting and ends up burying it in her subconscious. This event will eventually have tremendous negative psychological effects on her and will be the source of her anxiety disorder as the protagonist herself remarks:

Cette période de crise prit fin sans que je m'en sois rendu compte ... bref, tout était rentrer dans l'ordre. Mais pas pour moi, j'étais encore accrochée à la rancœur gardée de cette période de crise, je ne comprenais pas qu'ils aient pu, mon père et ma mère, passer l'éponge sur des faits qui m'avaient si profondément marquée (86-87).

This period of crisis ended without me realising it ... briefly, everything went back to order. But not for me, I still held on to the rancour of this period of crisis, I did not understand that my father and my mother, could treat with levity the actual events that profoundly marked my life (My translation).

Subsequently, four other major similarly depressing events occur in Mina's life, which by implication, render her psychically vulnerable to mental atrophy coupled with the crises above. The first of these four events is Mina's teenage pregnancy, as a result of her unprotected first attempt at sexual intercourse with her first boyfriend, Joël Edimo, a young medical student in the university who, during a casual holiday acquaintance, sleeps with Mina and impregnates her. This throws Mina into an abysmal dismay:

... il avait fallu que je rencontre Joël. Je me demandais maintenant ce qui avait pu me séduire en lui, au point de me faire oublier tous mes bons principes. Après lui avoir cédé une fois, je m'étais rétractée et n'avais plus voulu le

voir dans l'intimité, effrayée par ce que nous venions de faire et déçue de n'avoir rien ressenti de ce que j'avais lu dans les romans.

Naïvement, j'avais cru qu'en arrêtant là mon expérience, j'allais tout effacer comme sur une ardoise magique. Hélas, les conséquences de mon inconduite allaient peut-être marquer toute mon existence. (38)

... it became necessary for me to meet Joël. I wondered what could have seduced me in him, to the point of forgetting all my good principles. After having allowed him once, I was retracted from him and no longer wanted to be intimate with him, frightened by what we had just done and disappointed for not having felt any of those things I read in novels.

Naively, I had believed that ending my experience there, I was going to erase everything like a magic slate. Alas, the consequences of my conduct were perhaps going to mark the totality of my existence (38).

To compound her malaise, Joël refuses to accept responsibility for this pregnancy but by share providence, Djibril Mohammadou, who falls in love with Mina at first sight when they met at Sylvie's birthday party, accepts to father the unborn child.

Mina's marriage to Djibril is initially what one can describe as an exciting and exhilarating one until the intrusion of Djibril's sister, Hadja, who unfortunately plays the role of female patriarchal agency. It would be pertinent to allude to the negative turn of events during the visit of Hadja to the couple's family because it is at this point that the couple starts to gradually drift apart. Consequently, the atmosphere in Djibril and Mina's home becomes heavy, lacking the usual delight and spark; the love they share for each other and their children begins to fade away. The strain in Mina and Hadja's relationship becomes more tense by the day until both women stop talking to each other, and when

they do, it is in monosyllables. Mina remarks this uncomfortable situation:

Cela dura ainsi trois jours, au cours desquels l'atmosphère s'alourdit progressivement à la maison : Hadja ne faisait que des apparitions sporadiques, principalement pour aller aux toilettes, et alors elle traversait ostensiblement la cuisine, ignorant complètement ma présence, répondant à peine à mon bonjour (111).

That lasted for three days, in the course of which the atmosphere grew progressively heavy in the house: Hadja only made sporadic appearances, mainly to go to the toilet, and then she ostensibly passed through the kitchen, completely ignoring my presence, hardly responding to my greetings (My translation).

The altercations that ensue between Hadja and Mina as a result of the former's intrusion into the domestic affairs of Djibril and Mina and the cowardly manner in which Djibril handles this challenge would be the first indicator of the weakling Djibril Mohammadou truly is as well as the overall effect of the vicissitudes of the influence of extended family members in a modern African home setting within patriarchal confines. From the passage quoted below, Djibril's inability to keep his sister at bay from their marital space is highly resented by Mina:

Parallèlement, Djibril devenait de plus en plus irascible, s'emportant pour un rien. Il ne jouait même plus avec les enfants comme avant, et restait longtemps plongé dans la lecture de documents qu'il rapportait de plus en plus nombreux à la maison. ... Je voyais bien que devant cette grande sœur qui l'avait élevé parce que sa propre mère était restée longtemps souffrante après sa naissance, Djibril perdait tous ses moyens ; elle n'avait qu'à dire un mot pour que toutes les paroles de révolte préparées par Djibril rentrent dans sa gorge. Sa (c-à-d Hadja) seule présence semblait le paralyser, c'était ahurissant (111).

Similarly, Djibril became more and more irritable, flaring up at nothing. He was no longer playing with the children as before, and remained immersed in reading documents he brought home more and more. ... I observed quite well that in the presence of this big sister who raised him because his real mother was ill for a long time after his birth, Djibril lost all his senses; she only had to pronounce a word for Djibril to swallow all the speeches of revolt he had prepared. Her (i.e. Hadja) simple presence seems to paralyse him, it is bewildering (My translation).

Furthermore, Mina's discovery of Djibril's attempt to have sex with Essèbé, her sister, leading to the two sisters' bitter separation, contributes to Mina's nervous breakdown. The final straw that will break the camel's back is when Mina discovers that Djibril rapes their daughter Fanny, at age twelve. The rape of Fanny by Djibril catalyzes the eruption of previous contacts Mina has had with phobia and depression generating objects or situations in childhood.

J'étais dans la situation d'une personne qui a tellement bien caché un objet auquel elle tient, qu'elle se trouve ensuite dans l'incapacité de le retrouver. J'avais fermé une porte dans mon cerveau, et j'en avais égaré la clef. Depuis un certain temps, j'essayais de forcer la porte, mais mes efforts s'avéraient vains. A certains moments, parfois alors que je ne m'y attendais pas du tout, la porte s'entrouvrait un petit peu, et des images sans suite logique apparaissaient dans mon esprit embrouillé : ma fille Fanny, les deux bêtes en furie qui m'avaient tant effrayée quand je n'étais qu'une petite fille, puis Djibril, et enfin le gouffre infiniment profond dans lequel je sombrais (191).

I was in the state of a person who very much hides an object which she clings to, which she then finds herself unable to find. I have locked a door in my brain, and I have misplaced the key. For sometime, I tried to force the door open, but my efforts were in vain. At certain

moments, at times when I was not expecting it at all, the door opened a little bit, and images without a logical sequence appeared in my embroiled mind : my daughter Fanny, the two furious animals which so much scared me when I was only a little girl, then Djibril, and at last the infinitely profound gulf inside which I foundered (My translation).

Mina's internal turmoil as a result of the combination of these unpleasant experiences throws her into a state of mental confusion. Mina is aware she is hiding and holding on to something, but she is unable to locate or decipher what this trouble is because it is locked up in her subconscious. Deep inside her brain is this sentiment of feeling of loss locked up. She knows she seems to have lost the key of her chagrin which should bring her relief and healing. This experience is typical of individuals subjected to torment as a result of repression of unpleasant experience to the subconscious within the principles of Freudian psychoanalytic theory of the topography of the mind; until this lost key to the royal road of the psyche is found, such an individual remains in a psychologically imbalanced state. Mina's ability to relive these experiences will be the key to her mental health returning to normalcy, due to the psychotherapeutic sessions she undergoes with Dr Lobé. During these sessions, she is able to gradually relate threatening unresolved and unacceptable past conflicts which she has repressed into her subconscious:

Ce fait, je crois que c'est celui que le docteur Lobé attend. Je l'avais enfoui au plus profond de moi-même, pour ne jamais le révéler à personne, je l'y avais tellement enfermé que ma propre mémoire se refusait à le laisser remonter à la surface. Et alors s'était réveillée la chose qui hibernait en moi, et que mes responsabilités familiales m'avaient permis d'oublier : ma vieille angoisse avait repris possession de moi, était remontée lentement, envahissant mon être tout entier, rongéant mon cerveau. Et c'est pourquoi aujourd'hui je suis devenue folle (190-191).

This fact, I believe is the one Dr Lobé awaits. I have buried it in the most profound part of me, never to reveal it to anyone, I have so much locked it up that my own memory refused to bring it to the surface. And so it was that the thing that hibernated in me was revealed, and that which my domestic responsibilities made me forget: my ancient anguish had taken possession of me, it had resurfaced slowly, invading my being in its entirety, devouring my brain. And today, it is the cause of my madness. (My translation)

These revelations Mina makes, however, with what is known, in psychotherapeutic terminology, as resistance (Feldman, 1996), because Mina is, once in a while, unable to either discuss or remember some of the memories of her childhood experiences that culminate into her anxiety disorder. Dr Lobé remarks this at the end of one of Mina's psychotherapeutic sessions:

Mais ne vous inquiétez pas, nous prendrons le temps qu'il faut, et nous arriverons, si vous le voulez, à trouver ce qui vous bloque (79).

But do not worry yourself, we will take the time required, and we will discover, if you want, what blocks your memory (My translation).

Doris L. Obieje (2011), in her article entitled "La folie dans *La Folie et la mort* de Ken Bugul", claims that depression occurs as a result of deception and is one of the causes of madness. One is favourably disposed to agreeing with Obieje that Mina's madness must have occurred because of the deception she suffers from her significant others, firstly, her father, secondly, her husband Djibril and thirdly, her sister, Essèbé, all these three having been involved in immoral sexual acts that directly affect Mina's life and mental wellbeing. Mina has thus been deceived and disappointed by several people in her life who she has found unpredictable. Especially, the male gender who all seem to be at the bottom line of the deceptions she will ever experience in life.

During a conversation between Mina and her four year old child at the very beginning of the narrative, Mina exposes her madness as she becomes a depersonalized being, a psychological state that has rendered her family members, including her children, helpless and troubled:

Dis, Maman... c'est vrai que tu es devenue folle?

... C'est donc cela, les airs mystérieux que je perçois sur les visages autour de moi ; cela que masquent les regards tristes et fuyants de ma mère, de mes amies qui viennent me rendre visite à l'hôpital ; ... c'est cela qui se projette dans les yeux de mes enfants, dont les visites sont abrégées dès que leur père les sent au bord des larmes ... C'est donc cela, je suis folle ! (5).

Mother, is it true that you are mad?

...That is it, the mysterious expressions which I perceive on the faces around me; that which mask the sad and fleeing looks of my mother, of my friends who pay me visits at the hospital; ... same projects from the eyes of my children, whose visits are shortened once their father senses they are at the brink of tears ... That is it therefore, I am mad! (My translation).

Although her suffering from depersonalization disorder is interpreted as madness by Mina herself, her family members, friends and neighbours, Dr Lobé diagnoses Mina with a temporary depressive state, of which she will be cured after she has calmed down and is well rested. Despite this reassurance from her psychoanalyst, Mina remains worried and talks about her depersonalized state:

Le docteur Lobé ne m'a parlé que d'un état dépressif, qui nécessite beaucoup de calme et de repos, raison pour laquelle je dois rester hospitalisée jusqu'à ce qu'on note une amélioration certaine. Je sens bien à certains moments, qu'il y a une ombre quelque part ; qu'une certaine partie de moi-même m'échappe totalement. ... j'ai l'impression d'avoir été absente de mon propre corps ; je ne perçois aucun désordre précis, mais je sens

bien que quelque chose m'échappe, qu'en cherchant bien, je finirai par trouver (5-6).

Dr Lobé only told me of a depressive state, which necessitates a lot of calmness and rest, the reason for which I must remain hospitalised until a definite improvement is observed. I feel sometimes, that there is a shadow somewhere; that a certain part of me escapes from me totally. ... I feel as if I have been absent from my own body; I do not perceive any precise disorder, but I feel so sure that something escapes from me, that by searching thoroughly for it, I will find it in the end (My translation).

Madness resulting from having suffered from deception and betrayal of trust is not only observed in Mpoudi Ngollé's novel. Obieje (2011) notes several other instances in the novels of some African and Caribbean feminists. In Maryse Condé's *Pays mêlé* translated as *Land of Many Colours*, for example, she makes particular reference to Belle, who becomes mad because her lover deceives her. Mireille, in Mariama Bâ's posthumously published novel, *Un chant écarlate* translated as *Scarlet Song*, declines to a state of madness because of her husband's unfaithfulness to her. Mireille ends up poisoning her baby and stabbing her husband, Ousmane Guèye, to death. In the case of Mpoudi Ngollé's *Sous la cendre*, Mina, the protagonist becomes depersonalized, often experiencing an escape from her real self. However, with the application of psychotherapy, she receives a cure, and the novel ends with the couple happily reunited. Obieje (2011) referring to Cazenave, observes with respect to postcolonial African feminist writings that:

Un panorama de la littérature négro-africaine des années 80 montre un certain nombre de romans dont le protagoniste est un personnage féminin en voie de dépression, proche de la folie et en situation de marginalisation (93).

A panorama of black-African literature of the 80s show a certain number of novels whose protagonists are female at the point of depression, close to madness and in situation of marginalization (My translation).

Oppression and repression of ungratified libido and negative experiences may then be seen as a major cause of anxiety disorders in Mina because these factors seem to positively correlate. Ayo Kehinde (2006), commenting on Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*, pinpoints the penal factors of patriarchy on women. He succinctly notes that Coetzee's text "foregrounds symptoms of madness that emerge as a result of excessive patriarchal suppression" (170) which Magda the protagonist is subjected to.

Conclusion

It is obvious that Mpoudi Ngollé echoes other African feminist writers who have denounced the decadent effects of patriarchy on women. In doing this however, she emulates Buchi Emecheta's philosophical disposition, as well as the feminist voices of other liberal feminist avant-garde, that African men and women need each other to stamp out obnoxious patriarchal practices in order to achieve the ideal society they require. This same suggestion has been made by Akujobi (2008) who opines that there is a link between fictional madness portrayed in literary works and real madness as it exists in the society. In her view, mad people, particularly mad women, are a source of social concerns and do constitute a nuisance to the society at large.

The treatment of the theme of madness is not only restricted to the sphere of African female writers. Maryse Conde (1993), citing an array of West Indian feminist novels that dwell on the same subject notes that "mental breakdown, madness, and eventual suicide are common themes among feminist writers. This goes a long way to confirm that female madness is preponderant in societies where sexism exists.

Although, Mpoudi Ngollé fails to create an opportunity for Mina to deal with her psychological conflicts, before her condition disintegrates into madness, through available psychological defence mechanisms of sublimation, regression, projection, dreams, parapraxes, slip of the tongue, etc, she has demonstrated that it is possible to rescue the plethora of mad women, whose mental health have become compromised as a result of patriarchal oppression, through psychotherapy and restore them to a state of psychological balance.

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Lecture réaliste magique dans *Cent ans de solitude* de Gabriel Garcia Marquez

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Résumé

Plusieurs critiques littéraires des pays postcoloniaux, dont Flores, Slemon et Geoff Hancock, ont noté le rapport entre le roman réaliste magique et une attitude postcoloniale vis-à-vis de l'Histoire. Dans un roman réaliste magique, selon Carpentier et ses nombreux disciples, on voit le portrait d'une collectivité de la classe paysanne qui vit à une époque pré-technologique, qui a beaucoup de traditions orales et qui accepte que la réalité soit plus bizarre que la fiction. Cet article a pour objectif de voir les éléments du réalisme magique dans *Cent ans de Solitude* de Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Introduction

Bien que le terme littéraire soit souvent attribué à Alejo Carpentier, qui a parlé du "real maravilloso" dans la préface d'un de ses romans, *El reino de este mundo* (1949), l'origine du terme est européenne. C'est le critique d'art allemand Franz Roh qui l'a utilisé dans le titre de son livre *Nach Expressionismus (Magischer Realismus)* (1925) pour désigner comme "magique" l'acte de la perception dans la peinture post-expressionniste allemande (Graciela N. Rissi Della Grisa 50). Quand Ortega y Gasset a fait traduire ce livre en espagnol, l'expression y est devenue le titre, et le concept du "realismo magico" s'est mis à circuler dans les milieux littéraires hispanophones (Enrique Anderson Imbert 2). Les théories de Carpentier sur le "real maravilloso" ont cependant fortement marqué les études théoriques du réalisme magique. Angel Flores pour sa part, a répandu l'usage de ce dernier aux Etats-Unis dans un article qu'on a beaucoup cité à l'époque: *Magic Realism in Spanish American Fiction* (1955).