

ABSTRACT

Trauma and Exile: A Torturous Journey to Selfhood in Selected Novels by
Caribbean Women Writers

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Trauma Studies is classified as a relatively new discipline in academia. As a theoretical framework, it was first developed by Sigmund Freud in his analysis of World War I combat soldiers, who experienced severe stress-induced symptoms due to extreme conditions on the battlefield. Over the last twenty years, it has evolved into a reputable theory, applicable to studies in literature, history, and sociology, to name a few.

This thesis aims to utilize trauma theory in its examination of female migration patterns in selected texts by Caribbean women writers. The female protagonists in these narratives experience some form of trauma which they desperately try to escape through exile. The result is disastrous, as these individual traumas problematize stable identity construction, and follow protagonists to their new homes of relocation. These women battle constantly with a painful past, and the prospect of an uncertain future. Passing on traumatic legacies from mother to daughter is also featured in these narratives, shedding new light on the mother-daughter relationship; a recurring theme in Caribbean women's writing.

Contemporary accounts of trauma in narrative indicate that a return to the site of trauma is necessary to initiate the healing process. I also suggest that these texts provide a space for the articulation of the pain of survivors as well as a medium for sensitizing others to the intricacies of the human condition.

Keywords: Caryn Rae Adams; trauma theory; Caribbean women writers.