Scientific Research Publishing

Advances in Literary Study, 2026, 14(4), 204-223
https://www.scirp.org/journal/als
ISSN Online: 2327-4050
ISSN Print: 2327-4034

The Dialectic of Restorative vs. Retributive Justice against a Post-War Background: An Examination of Elma Shaw's *Redemption Road*: *The Quest for Peace and Justice in Liberia*

Mamadou Abdou Babou Ngom

English Department, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Dakar, Senegal
Email: mamadou35.ngom@ucad.edu.sn

How to cite this paper: Ngom, M. A. B. (2026). The Dialectic of Restorative vs. Retributive Justice against a Post-War Background: An Examination of Elma Shaw's *Redemption Road*: *The Quest for Peace and Justice in Liberia*. *Advances in Literary Study, 14,* 204-223.
https://doi.org/10.4236/als.2026.144015

Received: June 24, 2026
Accepted: October 27, 2026
Published: October 30, 2026

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Abstract

The purpose of this investigation project is to analyse the dynamics of retributive and restorative justice in post-war context, with Liberian novelist Elma Shaw's *Redemption Road* serving as a stepping-stone. Countries coming out of conflict are oftentimes faced with how to mediate peace and reconciliation without cultivating impunity by letting perpetrators of wanton violence get off the hook of justice. Should precedence be given to restorative justice or distributive justice? This question splits post-war conflict actors down the middle, with some arguing that for real peace and reconciliation to take hold a line must be drawn under the past whilst others foreground punishment of wartime atrocities as a bulwark against impunity. Restorative justice advocates forgiveness and forgetting whereas distributive justice pushes for just deserts as a sure-fire way to achieve reconciliation and peace. In *Redemption Road*, Elma Shaw's lead character Bendu Marie Lewis epitomizes the hard line and, accordingly, strives with every fibre of her being to get perpetrators of gruesome violence during the Liberian civil war to book. Her adamant rebuttal of the call for her to "*forget, let it go*", or "*let bygones be bygones*" (9) says a mouthful. The murder of Commander Cobra towards the end of the narrative feels like poetic justice for Bendu who cheated death over her all-out drive against impunity. Methodology-wise, the paper taps into an approach predicated upon direct quotes from the novel under study, literary theory as well as perspectives from the social sciences, e.g., sociology, psychoanalysis, and political science.

Keywords

Retributive Justice, Restorative Justice, Post-War Reconciliation, Impunity, Liberian Civil War

1. Introduction

1.1. About the Author of *Redemption Road*

Elma Shaw is Liberia-born novelist, journalist, film maker and women's rights activist. Her debut novel *Redemption Road*: The Quest for Justice and Justice in Liberia earned her in 2008 a literary prize, the national Award for Fiction in Liberia. Back in 2021, she was conferred upon The African Sheroes Award for Outstanding Writer/Novelist in recognition of her invaluable service to literature and her uplifting engagement in humanitarian work. Elma Shaw is conspicuous by an unyielding commitment to championing issues pertaining to female empowerment and freedom, justice and peace in the backwash of war. Having lived through the horrors of the Liberian civil war, she knows only too well the psychological trauma of internecine warfare. The title of the novel under review, in the author's own words, "*comes from the name of the road where* 12 *prominent government officials were executed on April* 22, 1980, *shortly after the coup*" (Interview). *Redemption Road* is what Elma Shaw brings to the party when it comes to helping war survivors, not the least of whom are women who bore the brunt of the conflict, navigate their multifaceted ordeal and find closure through the mediation of justice.

1.2. *Redemption Road*: A Synopsis

A riveting novel, *Redemption Road* by Elma Shaw came out in 2008 to critical acclaim. Set in Liberia under the administration of former warlord turned president, Charles Taylor, this work of fiction recounts through the perspective of Bendu Marie Lewis the ordeals of war survivor's quest for peace and justice. Bendu's chance encounter downtown Monrovia with a one-time rebel commander named Commander Cobra turns out to be a game changer in her post-war life. She makes it a point to push back on a time-honoured culture of impunity by working flat out to get perpetrators of war atrocities brought to book. Besides, Bendu sets up an NGO meant to counsel war survivors, mostly women, in how to pick the pieces of their lives post-trauma and move on. The counselling sessions where women are encouraged to put into word their war-related woes are revealed to yield dividends in that they have gone a long way to breaking what Bendu calls "the wall of silence". Despite being exhorted countless times by relatives and friends to drop it out of fear for her safety, Bendu isn't having any of it. Back-scratching attempts, intimidatory tactics, blackmailing, mental and physical violence by people high up in government circles cut no ice with her. Interestingly, the murder of Commander Cobra towards the end of the narrative feels like poetic justice for Bendu and women survivors of the Liberian civil war that the narrator equates with a nightmare.

1.3. Background

Post-war context is oftentimes fraught with excruciating challenges that have the

potential for tearing apart the social fabric of a nation. The significance of peace and reconciliation clashes with the moral and legal imperatives of justice. Reconciliation when articulated with the redemptive value of judicial payback does not fly in the face of memory but rather paves the path to forgiving and harmony. Paramount though forgiving may be to the psychological wellness of a victim, it is neither meek acceptance of wrongdoing nor total exculpation of the perpetrator of moral responsibility. It is instead an overcoming of feelings of resentment and anger towards an offender (Govier, 1999: p. 59). Canadian-philosopher Trudy Rose Govier elaborates upon forgiving as follows: "*To forgive is not to renounce the moral judgment that an action is wrong, because it is only wrong actions that need to be forgiven. Nor is forgiving the same as excusing or condoning. When we forgive, we assume that there is something to forgive, a wrong action for which the offender was responsible. Nor is forgiving incompatible with punishment*" (p. 60). Just as wrongdoing comes with the territory of human existence, so is forgiving a core human value crucial to peace and harmonious communal living. Having said that, forgiving and punishment do not counterbalance each other. Forgiving registers a readiness to draw a line on anger and resentment with an eye towards proper healing whilst punishment, especially in the context of post-war, is meant to serve as a deterrent. So, in Govier's estimation, it would be misguided to construe forgiving and punishment as both sides of the same coin. As she clearly posits: "*it may be the result of punishment that an offender is led to acknowledge and feel remorse for his wrongdoing*" (p. 60). In this sense, punishment carries a deterrent value.

Behind the surface of the dyadic notions of peace and reconciliation, it bears stressing, lurk two antagonistic outlooks with regard to conflict resolution: what Brian Chaggu calls the Western model and the African one (Chaggu, 2023: p. 73). In African belief systems, the community is supposed to be front and centre in any conflict resolution. Punitive measures as a way of correcting (criminal) wrongdoing take a backseat to a communal praxis whereby dialogue cum public confession of crimes serve as recipes for peace and reconciliation. With the advent of colonization, traditional mechanisms of ironing out differences gave way to another approach predicated upon punishment. Chaggu mentions Gacaca as a way of going about conflict resolution based upon indigenous knowledge (Chaggu, 2023: p. 74). More to the point, in the aftermath of the demise of apartheid, the new Black-led government had to ponder over a sure-fire means to eschew revenge by the formerly oppressed against the oppressors of yesteryear. The setting-up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was arguably modelled on the *Gacaca* in Rwanda; it reflected an understanding of conflict resolution anchored on African indigenous belief systems. Deserving elaboration is that South African worldview has much to with the concept of Ubuntu which inter alia underscores the interconnectedness of human beings, and urge their bonding on the basis of their common humanity. The late South African moral philosopher and theologian of international repute, Augustine Shutte states: "*the concept of Ubuntu embodies an understanding of*

what it is to be human and what is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfilment. It is an ethical concept and expresses a vision of what is valuable and worthwhile in life. " (Shutte, 2001: p. 2) Ubuntu is ethics-informed. To live out a sense of ubuntu is tantamount to dissolving one's self into the communal, to seeking one's happiness through another person. The bedrock of our common humanity rests on such cardinal values as compassion, justice, truthfulness without which inter-human relationships mean nothing. In African traditional thought, the purport of the communal world is overriding. The late Nigerian poet, philosopher and academic all into one, Ifeanyi A. Menkiti points out that in African belief systems, personhood is embedded into sociality (Menkiti, 1979: p. 171): "*The reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever these may be. And this primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically, but also in regard to epistemic accessibility*". The African outlook on conflict resolution starkly differs the Western one. While African philosophy pushes for restorative justice through communal harmony and reconciliation, the West favours retributive punishment through legal frameworks, namely bringing to book the offender as a way of making it possible for the victim to find closure.

In peace and reconciliation theory, these dyadic opposite views translate as "restorative" and "retributive" justice. The African worldview foregrounds truth-telling and communal dialogue as a way of healing wounds from, for instance, broken relationships or violence in warfare. Conversely, the Western perception of reconciliation prioritizes retribution to alleviate the victim's suffering and thereby deactivate the psychological yearning for revenge.

The paper is structured around four pillars. Firstly, I'll lay out the introduction. Secondly, I'll address the theoretical framework within which this article is situated, viz. Justice Theory. In this sense, I'll expand upon the notion of justice by bringing up two of its main components—restorative and distributive justice. Thirdly, I'll delve into the necessity of justice as a prerequisite to genuine reconciliation and peace. Lastly, I'll explore the daunting challenges of laying traumatic memories to rest. As stated briefly in the abstract, over and above direct quotes from the novel under study, I espouse an approach predicated on the social sciences and literary theory and criticism. The rationale behind this methodological approach is anchored on the desire to shed light on the quasi lifelong fallout from a trauma exposure and the need for counselling sessions as a way out for survivors. Sociological perspectives will help better grasp the dynamics of retributive and restorative justice in the context of post-conflict. The extent to which justice for survivors of wanton cruelty is crucial to mediating peace and reconciliation is highlighted. The application of literary theory and literary criticism in my analysis of *Redemption Road* will doubtless provide more insights into questions about justice, trauma, and the excruciating challenges of peacebuilding against a post-war background.

2. Theoretical Framework

The notion of justice has spawned quite a lot of controversy, making it a vexed

issue in scholarly circles. It encompasses fairness, ethics, objectivity, truthfulness, or what not. What is justice in the first place? The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines it as "*the fair treatment of people*" (Eighth Edition). In his Nicomachean Ethics, Greek antiquity thinker Aristotle expounds on the concept of justice by contrasting it with injustice. He writes that justice is "*the sort of habit or character that makes men apt to do what is just, and which further makes them act justly and wish what is just.*" Speaking of injustice, he views it as "*the sort of character that makes men act unjustly and wish what is unjust*" (Aristotle, 1906: p. 136). The twentieth-century American philosopher, economist and journalist Henry Stuart Hazlitt pushes back on the idea of justice being an alternative to Happiness. In the same breath, he foregrounds justice as bolstering up what in his philosophy he calls Social Cooperation[1]. He sees justice as a means to an end, namely the 'better distribution' of Happiness. He writes: "*Justice is the name we give to a set of rules, relationships, arrangements, that do most to promote voluntary Social Cooperation. The most just rules are those rules governing distribution, ownership, reward, and penalties that, while minimizing the temptations to antisocial behavior, maximize the encouragements and incentives to effort, production and mutual helpfulness.*" (Hazlitt, 1998: p. 257)

When justice is found wanting in a given society, it's the slippery slope towards chaos. Justice, peace, equality, and harmony are crucial for the motley components of a society to fulfil personal and collective needs. John Rawls was an uber-prominent American political and ethical philosopher who expounded on the notion of justice in a seminal work titled Theory of Justice. Rawls (1999) pours cold water on the idea that justice is achieved when the majority in any society enjoys moral and physical well-being. His conception of justice is encapsulated in the philosophical mantra "Justice as fairness". For Rawls (1999), quite a lot of elements go into bringing about the conditions of a just society. He avers: "*…justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by the greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many. Therefore, in a just society the*

[1]Henry Hazlitt's premise is that the recipe for people in a given society to live in harmonious peace to the benefit of all is what he terms "social cooperation". The American philosopher and economist is at pains to point out that the individual must get subsumed into the whole for the fulfilment of society all together. He adumbrates the interconnectedness of personal goals and those of society at large: "*The ultimate goal of the conduct of each of us, as an individual, is to maximize his happiness and well-being. Therefore, the effort of each of us, as a member of a society, is to persuade and induce everybody else to act so as to maximize the long-run happiness and well-being of a society as a whole*" (Hazlitt, 1998: p. 35). In this sense, the greatest happiness of the greatest number entails the rejection of individualism as a mode of life and espouse the collective with an eye to general full-blown happiness. According to Hazlitt, the individual cannot achieve their goal of personal happiness by trampling on the liberties and rights of other members of the society. His definition of the latter term says a mouthful: "*Society itself may be defined as nothing else as the combination of individuals for cooperative efforts*" (35). John Rawls sees eye to eye with Hazlitt in his perception of justice, saying "*a society is a cooperative venture for mutual advantage*" (4). More to the point, there is no divorcing Justice from strengthening social cooperation. As Henry Hazlitt writes: "'*Justice' itself consists in observance of the rules or principles that do most, in the long run, to preserve and promote social cooperation*" (13). Justice takes its meaning from the existence of social cooperation.

liberties of civic citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests" (pp. 3-4). Justice should prevail without fear or favour.

The dynamics of justice in post-war context roughly fall into two categories: retributive and restorative justice. In addition to being contradiction in terms, they often fuel conflict resolution debates. Reconciling the driving necessity to tackle head-on impunity with the imperative to work flat out to ensure national cohesion can turn out to be something of a tall order. Restorative justice favours inclusive negotiation as key to the peace building process whilst retributive justice underscores punishment as crucial to fighting impunity and, accordingly, restoring warfare survivors' dignity. An American criminologist and trail blazer in restorative justice theory, Zehr (2003), while taking cognizant of the difficulty facing criminologists in arriving at a workable consensual definition of restorative justice, was able to define it in a way that, all things equal, captures its essence. He writes: "*Restorative justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offence to collectively identify and address harms and needs and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible*" (Zehr, 2003: p. 40). Here Zehr concretely emphasizes that restorative justice aims for reconciliation through dialogue. In this sense, for healing to materialize the victim should buy in their offender's plea for forgiveness. Restorative justice inter alia urges the survivor to come to terms with their psychological and physical wounds once the offenders manage to make amends for wilful wrongdoing. Restorative justice leans more towards dialogue and forgiveness to achieve peace and reconciliation. To what extent is restorative justice conducive to rock-solid peace? Zehr (2003) strikes a sanguine note: "*Restorative has high acceptance in high context situations where victims and their families forgive offenders if he or she admits guilt and takes responsibility. Enmity and revenge that has gone on for generations can be ended in days, leading to forgiveness and forgetting. In the famous Pustho song, 'verbal wrong needs verbal repair'*" (p. 43). The victim can, albeit grudgingly, bring himself to forgive. But his forgiveness is effective only if the offender somewhat pulls his weight by confessing to his crime.

Having said that, many a theorist push back against restorative justice, arguing that it fosters impunity and that it has, perhaps more importantly, the potential for encouraging wrongdoing. Retributivism slams peace-building process without so much as just deserts. Retributivism is anchored on the moral obligation to make an offender accused of crimes face the full force of the law. That is, retributivism works as deterrent. An American legal scholar, Berman (2008) points out that punishment is "*understood as an intentional human response to wrongdoing designed to inflict suffering or bad treatment, or the like*" (2). He views retributivism as "*a family of theories that purport to justify criminal punishment by reference to a wrongdoer's negative desert*" (p. 1). It would be misguided to perceive just desert as perfunctory or ill-informed revenge. Punishment is meant instead as a bulwark against impunity in societies having gone through internecine warfare.

3. Retributive Justice as a Prerequisite to Genuine Reconciliation

The madness of war is apt to give rise to trauma which oftentimes defies being lived down or narrated. Elma Shaw's lead character, Bendu Marie Lewis, exemplifies no end the travails of trauma[2] victims who struggle to find closure in the absence of justice. Bendu experienced wantonly gruesome acts of violence at close quarters. *Redemption Road* is set in war-torn Liberia. Amidst mayhem and horrendous suffering brought about by internecine warfare, Bendu wheelbarrows her grandmother out of harm's way. Her humanity, act of courage and selflessness are so jaw-dropping as to baffle passers-by who cannot help but advise her to think of herself: "*Leave that wheelbarrow, you girl! Your old Ma's looking dead already. Just leave her!*"; "*Old Ma's time is finished! She's old, you're young. Come let's go*!" (Shaw, 2008: pp. 3-4). Nothing daunted, she soldiers on, unheeding her Granny May's plea for her to run away: "*Leave me baby. Go. Save yourself*!" (p. 5). War and its attendant gruesome aftermath are seared on Bendu's memory, so much so that she is not, repeat not, amenable to any idea of coming to terms with her past without justice being done. Over and above her personal trauma[3], Bendu is bruised by a

[2]Over the last thirty years psychic trauma has generated quite a lot scholarly interest, so much so that there is a huge body of literature on trauma studies. Since its emergence in the early 1990s, trauma theory has extended its reach into fiction, hence the term (Post) colonial trauma fiction. Due to its complexity and the difficulty in fathoming out its workings, many definitions have been provided with regard to trauma. It is within the ambit of this paper to go through the gamut of the definitions. But America academic and prominent authority on trauma studies, Cathy Caruth, has given a definition that bears highlighting. She writes: "*In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearances hallucinations and other and other intrusive phenomenon*" (11). What stands out in this definition is the intricacy associated with the response that the survivor unknowingly tries to bring to his experience. The "intense personal suffering" entailed in trauma gets re-enacted in subtle and harrowingly difficult ways. Nightmares, dreaming, flashbacks and the like factor into the 'intrusive phenomena' to which Caruth alludes. Trauma resists being lived down as the victim finds it pretty much impossible to draw a line under his traumatic exposure, the memory of which keeps haunting him night and day, so that his life is utterly upended. Cathy Caruth's submission that "*To be traumatized is to be possessed by an image*" says a mouthful.

[3]The Liberian civil war was a bottomless trail of woes for the fictionalized survivor of Bendu Marie Lewis. Following her abduction, she was taken to the rebel stronghold of Duluma, where she was brow-beaten into becoming a rebel's wife. Interestingly, Bendu has a chip on her shoulder about an embarrassing secret, viz. a crime she did during her painful spell in Dulumu. When Commander Cobra, in a move calculated to blackmail Bendu into relinquishing the idea of getting him prosecuted for war crimes, asks, "*Can I press charges for what you did the day you left us*?" (Shaw, 2008: p. 100). Here, he is hinting at Bendu's inexplicably astounding call to refuse to nurse her baby from Samson, and left the camp. That's the dark secret trailing Bendu ever since her sudden departure from Duluma. Although any point during the narrative did she substantiate away her unconscionable attitude to her new-born baby, I allow myself to venture an explanation, namely that Bendu conceived an unwanted pregnancy from what Claudia Card calls martial rape, that I have fleshed out on in the text. Rape-related pregnancy is par for the course according to Susan Brownmiller. She points to double-edged downside of pregnancy by rape for the survivor: "*Not only might the female be subjected at will to a thoroughly detestable physical conquest from which there could be retaliation in kind, a rape for a rape, but the consequences of such a brutal struggle might be death or injury, not to mention impregnation and the birth and the birth of a dependent child*" (Brownmiller p. 16). Rather than be left coping with adaptive challenges to nurse a child whose father forced himself upon her, Bendu elected to dump the baby in Duluma and decamped. The reader learns from the narrator that she left Duluma "*with*

collective trauma. The two-pronged hue of her traumatic experience carries over into her post-war life. To give a sense of what the civilians went through, Bendu's mind flashes back to the war atmosphere: "*The sound of the machine guns was louder and they heard screaming in the distance behind them. Screams were almost drowned out though, by the piercing wails of several abandoned babies and small children by the road side. Their parents or guardians were either unable or unwilling to carry them further, or had simply lost them in the confusion*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 3). Remembering a traumatic exposure is not a push-over by any means. That's why Bendu remembers through the perspective of an observer, to wit the narrator. The mere fact that memories of the war are brought up serve as a reminder that there is no drawing a line under the atrocities without justice being done.

The Liberian civil war exacted a heavy toll, not least amongst women. Little wonder that Bendu and other like-minded women have seen fit to set up Peace In Practice (hereafter referred to as PIP), to wit a non-governmental organization whose aim is to bring succour and solace to victims of traumatic exposure. The human toll of what the narrator refers to as "*the nightmare that was the war*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 9) is so overwhelming as to utterly sour Bendu's life. Actually, she can't seem to get her head around survivors' push to draw a line under the past without their getting so much as justice: "*A year with the fighters had changed her life forever, and she couldn't understand how so many survivors could say so easily 'forget, let it go', or 'let bygones be bygones'*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 9). A pioneering trauma theory pundit Judith Lewis Herman appositely posits that "*Atrocities…refuse to be buried*" (9), namely that, as stated previously, a traumatic experience escapes being lived down. In this sense, the past keeps haunting the survivor to the point of turning their here and now into something of a hellhole. Cathy Caruth is then spot-on when she contends that one of the baffling hallmarks of trauma is its belated *assimilatedness*, viz. the victim somewhat knows nothing about their experience at the time when it occurs but rather belatedly when it appears in weird forms. She writes that *trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature-the way it was precisely not known in the first instance-returns to haunt the survivor later on.* (Caruth, 1996: p. 4)

Bendu is a study in how the memory of a traumatic experience can be awakened in next to no time. After a counselling session, Bendu and her colleague Agnes left the office of PIP together. The latter went to find a taxi back home whilst the for-

nothing but pain in her heart and the clothes on her back" (Shaw 120). The searing memory of that appalling act kept haunting her at every turn: "*Over the years Bendu's thoughts drifted to baby Girl*" (Shaw p. 120). Eventually, in a bit to salve her conscience, Bendu took it upon herself to come clean about this dark secret. Through a tracing assistant working for the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), called Gabriel, Bendu was reunited with her daughter, now called May Davies, the first name being that of her grandma whilst the family name "*was the last name of Hannah's rebel 'husband*" (Shaw p. 208). Hanna and Oretha were daughters of Ma Musu, the middle-aged woman who is described by Bendu as a shoulder to cry on. Circumstances surrounding her being in rebel hands are narrated on page 52. Arguably, Bendu has found closure what with Commander Cobra now a goner and her being reunited with her daughter.

mer decided to drop by the Oriental Bakery on Mechlin Street to get some bread. Just like that, she came upon Commander Cobra. That chance encounter caused harrowing memories to come flooding back. Needless to say she literally froze. Witness how the narrator describes Bendu's mien after the shock sight: "*Bendu broke into a sweat and began to tremble. A pain-ful (*sic) *knot formed in her stomach and she suddenly felt faint. She glanced in the direction of the gas station again. The sideburns were gone, but it was definitely him … She lowered her head to get the blood flowing back to her brain, and the feeling of faintness of sub-side. Images and sounds raced through her mind. Shouting, screaming, blood, gunfire, bodies, babies crying. Above it all, she thought she could hear her heart beating*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 28). Bendu passed out for a reason at the sight of Commander Cobra. If anything, he is, so to speak, a throwback to the worst period that she spent in rebel hands. Upon being separated from her dying grandmother, Bendu was abducted by the rebels and taken to Duluma, a rebel stronghold. There, she endured a fate worse than death. Her raw confession that "*I was forced to be a rebel's wife*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 87) speaks volumes about her ordeal. She has a deep-seated mental imprint of her trauma at the hands of the rebels. When Calvin (a journalist friend of Bendu's) asked her over dinner how she managed to escape, she replied meltingly: "*He eventually abandoned me and after a while I just walked away from the camp*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 87). Calvin was wide-eyed with astonishment. He could not help ascertaining that Bendu was in earnest: "*He's abandoned you*?" Bendu's candour bears testimony: "*Yes. He just got up one day, packed his things, left the house, and never came back*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 87). Phallic power and gender-based violence are inscribed into Bendu's trauma. In addition to being an act of unfathomable violence, rape scars the psyche of the victim forever. As a result, it qualifies as trauma.

Rape, it bears stressing, is an assertion of male power meant to humiliate, nay dehumanize the victim. There is always an element of disparaging subordination in rape. A desire to show off manliness cum domination is inscribed in a man's unconscionable move to force himself on a woman. An American journalist, feminist and activist all into one, Susan Bronwmiller wrote in 1975 a signal book where she expounds at length upon the root causes of rape. One of the most significant takeaways of her theory is her position that rape is nothing short of a form of sexual objectification of woman that, lo and behold, carries a display of male power. Brownmiller opines that "*It seems eminently sensible to hypothesize that man's violent capture and rape of the female led first to the establishment of a rudimentary male-protectorate and then sometime later to the full-blown of power, the patriarchy*" (Brownmiller, 1975: p. 17). Men exercise "power over[4]" (to borrow a term from John Halloway) women to impart a sense of powerfulness rooted in a hide-bound patriarchal culture. As Claudia F. Card, a late American

[4]For more perspectives on the twin notions of 'power over' and 'power to,' I would refer the reader to my article "Unpacking the Gendered-Edge of Slavery in pre-Colonial Africa: A Critical Reading of *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* by Ayesha Harruna Atta" in *Cognizance Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, Vol.3, Issue.12, December 2023, pp. 367-388.

philosopher of world renown, appositely writes: "*Rape is a cross-cultural language of male domination (that is, domination by males; it can also be domination of males). This is its symbolic social meaning*" (Card, 1996: p. 7). Significantly, rape in the context of war (martial rape) takes on a different hue to what is termed civilian rape. In a powerful research paper, Claudia Card addresses the egregious phenomenon of martial rape. She writes that the end-game of martial rape is to "*splinter families and alliances and to bind not women to men but warrior rapists to one another. The activity of martial rape, often relatively public, can serve as a bonding agent among perpetrators and at the same time work in a variety of ways to alienate family members, friends and former neighbours from each other, as in cases where the perpetrators had been friends or neighbours of those they later raped*" (Card, 1996: p. 7). Rape wraps up being normalized by dint of being used as a weapon of war. It is noteworthy that against a warfare background, it can be a defence mechanism for women who may accept, albeit grieving inwardly, to be raped in return for protection. In a one-on-one with Calvin, Bendu acknowledges that she was not altogether unhappy about being a rebel's wife since Samson served as her shield against harm. She lifts a veil about her covenant of sorts with Samson: "*I was forced to be with him, but we became like real partners in a way. He provided food. I cooked. He gave me protection, and he gave me a place to stay. Without him I was alone. Other men could bother me, and I would have to beg people for food…all kinds of things*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 87).

The chance encounter between Bendu and Commander turns out to be a game change in the narrative. Going forward, the young woman's existential code (to borrow a term from a late literary giant of international renown, Milan Kundera) is geared towards getting Commander Cobra arrested with a view to facing justice. Bendu Marie Lewis marks herself off from other war-trauma survivors in that she is single-minded in her grim determination to bring war crime perpetrators to book. Her unwavering stance on justice for the victims is anchored on a firm belief that fair administration of justice to the fullest extent of the law in a post-war context may serve as a bulwark against impunity. More to the point, it has the potential for providing a sure-fire pathway to closure for survivors. On the flip side, frenzied push for restorative justice in the name of reconciliation would be tantamount to sugar-coating the harrowing consequences of wilful acts of violence. When reconciliation is not predicated on truth, it may turn hollow with the likelihood that perpetrators of atrocities still at large may feel emboldened to have no qualms about backsliding when the occasion arises. The merit of restorative justice lies in the fact that it is anchored on truth-seeking. Michael P. Scharf and Paul P. Williams lays out the purport of truth in peace-building: "*In the context of peace building, truth relates to an accurate understanding and recording of the causes of a conflict, as well as which parties are responsible for which actions, and which parties, including individuals, may be characterized as the victims or the aggressors*" (Scharf & Williams, 2003: p. 163). Conflict resolution processes aim for genuine stability and peace, which can only be mediated when efforts are an-

chored on truth and justice.

In a post-conflict context, offenders must be made to see the errors in their way and held accountable. Reconciliation may be looked on as an ideal attainable only when underpinned by truth, which passes through justice. Punishment is not so much meant as revenge in peace-building process but as a deterrent. The bestial instincts of man are somewhat allowed free rein in war. The wounds, psychological or otherwise physical, leave lasting scars on the survivors. Reconciliation is crucial to mitigating the traumatic memories that keep haunting every inch survivors of gruesome violence. But it is fraught with challenges and pitfalls. American sociologist Louis Kriesberg's definition of reconciliation captures its intricacy. He writes: "*the term reconciliation generally refers to the process of a mutual conciliatory accommodation between enemies or formerly antagonized groups. It often refers to the process of moving toward a relatively cooperative and amicable relationship, typically established after a rupture in relations involving extreme injury to one or more sides in this relationship*" (Kriesberg, 2007: p. 2). Seen from this perspective, enacting reconciliation entails parties to a conflict willing to sink their differences for the sake of peace. But the catch is that the wronged party may drag their feet about reconciliation and peace as long as justice is not done. In a post-conflict context, reconciliation and lasting peace hinge on the necessity of accountability through fair justice.

As a woman who experienced first-hand horrendous violence during the civil war, Bendu is dead set against forgetting or blanket forgiveness. Despite exhortations from many quarters to drop seeking justice for herself and war victims, Bendu isn't having any of it. She remains unyielding in her determination to bring perpetrators of violence during the civil war to face the music. This, in her mental universe, is the only pathway to genuine reconciliation. During a counselling session, Bendu, Rosetta, Agnes, and Josephine are discussing which reconciliation pattern is befitting for Liberia as it emerges from a long bloody war. Rosetta pushes back on forgiveness, asking, "*Does forgiving someone mean letting them get away with what they did*?" (Shaw, 2008: p. 147). While confessing that she is still struggling with that question, Bendu makes it clear that she is not out for revenge. She makes a distinction between revenge and justice: "*Well is it really revenge we want*? … *Or is it really justice*?" Then she clearly comes down on one side of the fence: "*In my case I see that peace for me will only come if there is some form of justice*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 147). Bendu is on moral high ground. Forgiveness is anathema to her as it feels like betrayal to those who rely on her to find closure through justice. She said: "*It's not that I don't want to forgive him. I don't just don't want to be a disappointment to other girls or the victims who can no longer speak up. Feel like I'm doing this for them too. Forgiving seems like taking the easy way out. Like I would no longer be struggling for justice*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 153). When you think about it, two views are opposing: restorative justice and retributive justice. The former is championed by the likes of Bendu and Rosetta whereas the latter is espoused by Agnes, namely PIP's coordinator. She and her

colleague Bendu are poles apart when it comes to post-war reconciliation. Agnes' advice to Bendu "*not to let the past rule your future*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 16) speaks to a conception of post-conflict peace building anchored on forgetting. Forgiveness or forgetting, it bears stressing, does not come easy to a trauma survivor. Trauma victims are constantly haunted by the past in forms of hallucination, flashbacks, dreams, you name it. Resisting the praxis of restorative justice as a path to peace does not so much betoken a mind-set of vindictiveness but an utter rejection of memory erasure and impunity. It is, above all, an ethical stance. Thus, "*For Bendu, forgetting was out of the question, but remembering and doing nothing about it was even worse*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 11). She advocates remembering with a view to closure, which can occur only though justice. Justice (when it is applied without fear or favour) is apt to help trauma recovery as it may pave the way for reconciliation. Justice emphatically encapsulates the virtue of peace. Estelle rightly posits that, "*Justice conveys the idea that somewhere there is concern for fairness, possibly for peace, and for the well-being of others*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 96). Aspirations for social justice are nonsensical when they feed upon impunity for atrocities.

Arguably, Elma Shaw's vision of fiction is anchored on a deep-dyed belief that art must reward virtue and pillory vice. Literature in the creative sense of the word is about human experience, and, accordingmly, meant for human consumption. In this light, readers must not get out of a reading experience, feeling that evil has triumphed over good. There is no divorcing fiction from morality in that it is supposed to be the wellspring of cardinal values to disseminate and foster around the world. Actually, the intellectual underpinnings of what has come to be termed Ethical Literary Criticism (ELC) were sown in a powerful research paper by the Chinese scholar Nie Zhenzhao. In "Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism," The Chinese academic points out that the ambit of ELC as a theoretical framework is "*to unpack the ethical features of literary works, to describe characters and their lives from the vantage point of ethics, and to make ethical judgements about them*" (Nie, 2015: p. 83). In the same vein, prominent British literary theorist and critic Terry Eagleton views literature as being part of and parcel of what he calls "moral technologies". Literature, in Eagleton's estimation, features prominently in "moral technologies". He defines moral technology as "*consist* [ing] *of a particular set of techniques and practices for the instilling of specific kinds of value, discipline, behaviour, and response in human subjects: and one rather important type of moral technology in our own day goes under the name of Literature*" (Eagleton, 1985: pp. 96-97). Terry Eagleton acknowledges that forms of moral technology abound. However, he argues that the literary moral technology takes pride of place. In his view, "*the literary technology does not simply teach one specific moral value (though it surely does this too): its primary end is simply, as it were, to teach one to be moral*" (Eagleton, p. 98). Morals are woven into the redemptive functions of fiction. For a work of fiction to prove its worth, villains of the piece must meet their nemesis in one form or another. In this sense, the literary device

known as poetic justice reinforces the ethical dimension of literature. Coined by Thomas Rymer in the fag-end of the eighteenth-century, poetic justice is an authorial choice consisting in apportioning reward or punishment according to character good deeds or misdeeds.

The ethical demands placed on literature are not lost upon Elma Shaw. Commander Cobra's nemesis is a telling instance. In her grim determination to seek distributive justice against the erstwhile rebel commander, Bendu leaves no stone unturned. When she chanced upon Moses Varney, the memory of her ordeal in Duluma, "*a place of darkness and gloom*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 197), came flooding back to her with the force of a dam break. She managed to pull herself together, though. She vowed to press charges against Commander Cobra, saying to her deputy, Agnes: "*He's going to pay for what he did to me, and for all the other atrocities he committed. I'm going to prosecute him for war crimes*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 34). Bendu concretely emphasizes the collective. Her planned prosecution of Commander Cobra spills over her own self to embrace all survivors of wanton violence during the civil war. In a one-on-one with Bendu, Counsellor Gray voices his misgivings that failing "*something like a Truth and Reconciliation Commission or a War Crimes Tribunal here in Liberia, it will be very hard to bring any warlord or ex-combatant to justice*" (Shaw, 2008, p. 124). As if rejecting any idea of letting bygones be bygones, Bendu recollects the harrowing atrocities that she has witnessed first-hand (125, 126, 127). Then in reply to Counsellor Gray's pledge that "*I'll do everything in my power to help you arrest Moses Varney*," Bendu replies in no uncertain terms: "*This is not really about me and Moses Varney anymore. It's a lot bigger than that*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 127). What drives Bendu is hard-line stance on wartime perpetrators of atrocities is that she wants to ensure that a culture of impunity does not take a foothold in post-war Liberia. So her fight extends beyond her personal trauma to encompass a collective trauma. The Liberian civil war brought about collective suffering of epic proportions, meaning that the people have undergone what American prominent sociologist Jeffrey Alexander terms 'cultural trauma' upon which he elaborates as follows: "*Cultural trauma occurs when a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental ways and irrevocable ways*" (Alexander, 2015: p. 3). Every stratum of Liberian society was bruised by the madness of the civil war. Bendu adamantly pushes back on attempts to cow her into forgoing her call to prosecute as the ghost of the infamous rebel commander haunts her every inch: "*I can't even sleep at night, knowing he's somewhere out there*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 38). Failure to cause Cobra to face the music of his atrocities redounds to her psychological well-being. When Agnes warns her to be cautious, "*You know, you might be putting your life in danger*", she is unapologetically bold: "*Well, that would be better than keeping my soul in prison*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 74). Bendu chooses honour over cowardice.

4. Silence and Corruption as Challenges to Laying the Ghost of Traumatic Memories to Rest

One of the most excruciating challenges facing trauma survivors is putting their experience into words. In the backwash of traumatic exposure, the victim looks as if their mental universe were utterly upended, so that piecing together the different strands of the past and make them into a coherent whole apt for narration can turn out to be a high order. The life-shattering event represented by trauma, and hallmarked by its glaring suddenness cum its 'unassimilated' nature at the time it occurs (Caruth, 1996: p. 11), gives rise to a fragmentation of memory that makes it even more difficult for the survivor to recollect what happened. A broken psychological state from a trauma encounter implies that remembering faithfully past experiences in a linear chronological way may be an uphill struggle. In a well-researched paper, psychoanalysts Dori Laub and Nanette C. Auerhahn point out that the survivor's drive to eschew knowledge about their experience goes with the territory of trauma exposure. They write: "*It is the nature of trauma to elude our knowledge because of both defence and deficit. The knowledge of trauma is fiercely defended against, for it can be a momentous, threatening, cognitive and affective task, involving an unjaundiced appraisal of events and our own injuries, failures, conflicts and losses*" (Laub & Auerhahn, 1993: p. 287). The unexpectedness and violence that hallmark trauma imply that the victim may have difficulty in knowing the ins and outs of what happened to them. If a trauma survivor remembers any details of their trauma exposure, they are prone to store them into the subconscious.

Speaking through her lead character, Elma Shaw calls attention to the physical and psychological ordeals associated with narrating a trauma encounter. Trauma survivors are known to experience psychological impediments to objectifying what they have gone through. Little wonder that this facet of trauma exposure is addressed in *Redemption Road*. When Calvin tackles his friend Bendu about the difficulties of PIP, she holds her breath for a moment and then confides: "*One obstacle we face with every group, at least in the beginning, is a wall of silence*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 19). Bendu's confession vindicates Judith Herman in her submission that "*Traumatic memories lack verbal narrative and context; rather they are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 27). PIP attempts to break the logjam of silence through counselling sessions whereby survivors are encouraged to overcome emotional and personal hindrances to articulating their traumatic experience as a sure-fire healing mechanism. Bendu emphasizes that the inability to narrate one's experience of trauma is, in the African context, culture-bound: "*It's difficult getting some women to open up and talk about what happened to them. It's not just in the African culture to bare our souls in public. So when someone is too deeply hurt we don't push too hard, we just let her benefit from the stories of those who are able to share*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 19). The multifaceted impact of trauma can doubtless be mitigated big time through the medium of storytelling and verbalization. Depending upon the nature of the

trauma experience, one of the backwash effects is that it can leave a trail of anxiety and shame which may culminate in self-isolation. There is potentially a sense of relief gripping a survivor when they manage to beat the odds of physical and psychological barriers in order to come clean about their trauma encounter. Rosetta, Josephine and Tenneh exemplify the healing properties of storytelling and verbalization with regard to trauma. Plainly, there is a gruesome story of traumatic experience behind each of these lives as "*Like almost everyone in the country, the three girls had suffered terribly during the war and were trying to deal with various symptoms of post-traumatic stress*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 22). They were invited by Bendu and Agnes to each "*write a letter to the person who had caused them the greatest pain during the war*" (23). Tenneh's letter stood out to PIP's coordinators. This short one-on-one between Agnes and Tenneh about the effectiveness of the letter-writing as a recipe for healing is revealing: "*You did well, Tenneh,*" *she said.* "*It hurts very much now because it's like you just put alcohol on your sore, but what does it alcohol do?*" "*The alcohol will make it better,*" *the girl answered, smiling at the simple analogy* (Shaw, 2008: p. 25). To be sure, trauma therapy offers an off-ramp for trauma survivors. Thus storytelling as a communal experience of sharing can help a trauma survivor unburden themselves, thereby making the road to recovery somewhat less bumpy. Words carry meaning beneath the surface of their articulation. Healing properties are woven into the sociality of storytelling. Hence its relevance to trauma treatment. Psychotherapists Michael White and David Epston developed what came to known as Narrative Therapy, whose end-game is to help people work through their problems by objectifying them. Key to narrative therapy is Externalizing. They adumbrate its purport as follows: "*Externalizing is an approach that encourages persons to objectify and, at times, to personify the problems that they experience as oppressive. In this process, the problem becomes a separate entity and thus external to the person or relationship that was ascribed as the problem. Those problems that are considered to be inherent, as well as those relatively fixed qualities that are attributed to persons and relationships, are rendered less fixed and restricting*" (White & Epston, 1990: p. 38). In this light, externalizing may be a way of mitigating the acuity of one's problems.

In addition to silence, intimidatory tactics and corruption stand in the way of justice against a post-war background. Perpetrators of wanton violence seek to dodge accountability and justice as they know that they are marked. They can threaten to go back to war or try to do away with anyone suspected of being on their tail. Commander Cobra is a case in point. He waylaid Bendu in her flat, manhandled and abducted her. The reader learns from Bendu that the taxi driver who drove them to the beach was "*apparently part of the whole plot*" (Shaw, 2008: p.107). Varney attempts to play on the young woman's nerves: "*I could kill you right now and throw you in the water, or you could drop the charges*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 97). For all that, Bendu remains unfazed. Then Commander Cobra threatens to go public about a crime she made during her spell in Duluma and concealed from

her family. He tries to pin Bendu down by blackmailing her: "*Will you drop the charges or will I tell them*?" (Shaw, 2008: p. 100). Bendu was able to get off the hook thanks to her strong character and feistiness (Shaw 2008: p. 102). Following her experience of a break-in, she decides to press charges against the mastermind behind the onslaught, to wit Moses Varney, aka Commander Cobra. After all, she sustained serious injuries to the head which necessitated medical attention (108). However, she draws a blank. Her failure to get her case against Varney prosecuted reflects a challenge facing countries emerging from internecine warfare, corrupt practices in high-level state circles make it way too difficult for justice to prevail. In a good research article, Dominik Zaum and Christine Cheng underscore how much of a drag corruption is on post-conflict reconciliation efforts: "*Corruption has become an increasing salient issue both for societies transitioning from war to peace as well as for major donors, such as the World Bank, that help fund these transitions. As the international community has become more involved in post-conflict peacebuilding, it has also become apparent that corruption deeply affects all aspects of the recovery process, including activities such as institution building, DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration), reconstruction and economic development*" (Cheng & Zaum, 2011: p. 1). Corruption is a huge hindrance to progress and development, more so to peace and reconciliation in countries emerging out of war.

Post-conflict reconciliation drives are always fraught with pitfalls. Former warlords put skin in the game as they strive flat out to eschew the juggernaut of justice. The memory of their wartime crimes haunt them, so that they stop at nothing to pervert the course of justice. Peace that comes with retributive justice is anathema to them. As said earlier, Bendu's chance encounter with Commander Cobra signals a game changer in her life in that it added more fuel to her determination to find some kind of closure through justice. But Bendu faces headwinds from several quarters. When Commander Cobra receives an anonymous call, informing him "*about someone trying to get the courts after you*," he replies bullishly: "*It won't happen sir. Our guys are in the right places. No one will let it happen*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 75). Warlords somewhat can dish it out but they can't take it. For them, a successful peace-building process spells blanket amnesty or total impunity. That's why the likes of Bendu are viewed as freaks of nature, a bunch of wet blankets that must be cowed into utter submission at all costs. Justice in post-war Liberia feels like a Holy Grail to Bendu and like-minded war survivors despite the fact that they are dead set against impunity. The judicial system is heavily weighted against them. In a post-conflict context, the need for peace is counterbalanced with the imperative of accountability for war crimes. Hope of achieving sustainable peace is a pipedream without gutsily tackling head-on the issue of the non-repetition of wanton atrocities through prosecution of those deemed responsible. *Redemption Road* teaches us that delaying tactics meant for keeping retributive justice at bay oftentimes come from quarters that have skin in the game.

Bendu knows only too well that the real threat to peace in post-war Liberia is

impunity. With the manifold fall-out from the gruesome atrocities committed still excruciatingly raw, unconscionable preference of blanket impunity over accountability may be a short-lived game plan. It then stands to reason that she pushes back every inch against impunity in any shape or form. She sort of pooh-poohs Counselor Gray's suggestion of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission or War Crimes Tribunal in Liberia. In the same breath, she brings up one amongst many grisly instances of war time atrocities the wanton cruelty of which makes a mockery of the preposterousness of impunity. Utter disregard for human life betrays itself in the disgusting violence unleashed on unarmed civilians during the war. She recounts: "*We never knew what to expect at checkpoints. Sometimes everyone would be waved by, but most of the time someone would be pulled out of line for a senseless death. Sometimes the fighters even made a game or a joke out of it. Sometimes they'd choose a pregnant woman and make a bet on whether she was carrying a boy or a girl, then they'd cut her open to see who won*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 125). Bendu appositely characterizes the child soldier "*as the most dangerous kind of fighter*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 125). When you are conscripted at an impressionable age, the likelihood is that you'll obey orders (no matter how unlawful) like a lamb to the slaughter house. Children have no sense of morals or ethics.

Granted that Bendu did not get due process in her abduction case against Commander Cobra. However, the latter's cold-blooded murder lands her in judicial hot judicial water, which speaks to the lop-sidedness of the judiciary in post-war Liberia. State authorities suspect Bendu of knowing a thing or two about the murder of Commander Cobra, which puts her in police's bad books. Details of her arrest and nerve-wracking questioning at police headquarters are narrated from p. 177 to 182. What really stands out is the feeling of unfair administration of justice gripping Bendu. Out of desperation, she boldly confronts Lieutenant Tarpeh: "*What's going on here*?" She doubles down without so much as letting the police officer get a word in edgeways: "*Men like Varney are allowed to go about with impunity, and I am being punished for something I didn't even do*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 183). Bendu stands on her dignity. Her reactive attitude to Lieutenant Tarpeh's dispassionate handling of the cases involving her points to anger as being a driver of rebellion against ill treatment or injustice. Bendu is angry for a reason. Krista K. Thomason views anger as a natural way of fight back against wrongdoing. She writes: "*anger is part of the recognition that another person has treated me with disrespect or ill-will. Feeling anger is not a matter of merely believing that this is the case or making a judgment that an event of a certain kind has occurred.* […]. *Anger is an emotional protest or resistance to an expression of ill will*" (Thomasson, 2020: p. 94). Bendu denied any responsibility for the murder of Moses Varney. Nonetheless, she spent a night in police custody. Her unfair raw deal at police's hands carries an encapsulation of Elma Shaw's sense of downbeat outlook as to the effectiveness of the judiciary in post-war Liberia. Justices in post-war Liberia live by their wits. Upholding the rule of law is the least of their cares. For Bendu the judiciary lets the people down as "*integrity won't put food in their*

children's mouths" (Shaw, 2008: p. 139). Corrupt practices eat away at grassroots' trust in the administration of justice. More significantly, in a post-war context it makes it even harder for survivors of atrocities to find closure through accountability. Significantly enough, Cobra's undoing feels like poetic justice.

Commander Cobra has eschewed justice until the end. His cold-blooded murder carries an encapsulation of a fitting punishment for his horrendous atrocities Bendu's confession "*Cobra is dead and I have nothing to feel anymore*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 184) speaks volumes. Arguably, the novel ends on an upbeat note. After a lot of soul-searching, Bendu takes it upon herself to unburden herself by putting pen to paper. She makes it a point to share the letter with Agnes. Her call to let go, although it "*was one of the hardest things I ever did, but it has also been one of the greatest*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 214), feels in many regards like deus ex makina. She starts contemplating what seemed unpalatable to her, namely managing to "*at last-to find a safe place between remembering and forgetting*" (Shaw, 2008: p. 214). Her new charitable characterization of Samson, "*In a way he was a victim, I suppose, like all of us. Or, more accurately, a survivor*" (215), is a testament to that sanguine changing mood.

In the final analysis, Elma Shaw's *Redemption Road* is a testament to the quasi intractable challenges of exacting retributive justice, in post-conflict situations. The kind of tug of war between retributive and restorative justice hampers frantic efforts towards full-blown peace. Over and above being a mirror to the multifaceted ravages of war-induced psychological trauma, whose human face is inter alia epitomized in the story by the lead character Bendu Marie Lewis, *Redemption Road* offers insightful reflections on the dynamics of reconciliation. Bendu's unwavering stand on the necessity of hard-hitting punishment for war crimes as a sure-fire way to not only stave off a culture of impunity, but also to smooth the path for closure, bears commending. Retributive justice does not betoken a spirit of revenge. Instead, it is geared towards preventing a repetition of wanton violence. On the other hand, the end game of restorative justice is to build bridges between both sides of the divide for the sake of peace even without punishment. The paper argues that preference of rehabilitation and dialogue over penal accountability as a spring-board for a lasting peace, could potentially set the stage for a culture of impunity, thereby kicking wholesome closure into the long grass.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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