

Innovations

Sexual Assault and Trauma as Reflected in Amadu Maddy's "No Past No Present No Future" and Zakes Mda's "The Madonna of Excelsior"

Abera Kassaw

PhD candidate of English Literature, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Melakneh Mengistu

PhD, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Corresponding Author: **Abera Kassaw**

Abstract

Violence such as rape has been and continues to be the major problem in Africa. It is because defective family dynamic, sexualized racism, rape myths, patriarchal dominance, low legal system response to victims' cases etc. often exert ever more significant obstacles in bringing a paradigm shift in people's understanding towards victim reaction to sexual assault. Thus, it is vital to create a more trauma informed society and legal system in order to reduce the rate of sexual assault and to develop more effective criminal justice system responses to sexual assault cases. To this end, literary texts can play a paramount role since it can be used as a signpost to display victims' reaction to sexual assault. Therefore, the main objective of this article was to undertake a critical examination of the traumatic impacts of sexual assault reflected in Amadu's Novel "No Past No Present No Future" and Mda's novel "The Madonna of Excelsior", hoping to send signals to researchers to see the immense contribution which literary works can have to bring a paradigm shift in people's understanding towards the drastic emotional, and psychological damages of rape. A trauma theory dominantly informed by Freud, and Van der Kolk and Greenberg was applied to analyze and discuss the causes of sexual assault and its resultant impact towards the victim characters in the novels under study. The study findings revealed that betrayal and negative heterosexual encounters as the causes of trauma and eventual PTSD in Amadu's novel: "No Past No Present No Future". In addition, the study has also found that homosexuality has been presented as the haven for the traumatized character to come at peace with his present condition leaving his traumatic experience behind. On the other hand, sexualized racism, racial injustice, and poverty caused sexual victimization of the major character in the Mda's novel "The Madonna of Excelsior". In addition, the study also found that rape exposed the victim character to experience trauma, which was very hard to bear, and its impact cut through the victim character's life with emotional and psychological scars left behind. Furthermore, the study revealed that the victim character became prone to having flashback to memories which is a strong sign that PTSD develops in the novel "The Madonna of Excelsior". Based on these findings, using literary texts which specifically focus on the consequences of sexual assault to educate society about victims' reaction to rape is inexorably advisable and researchers in psychology can hopefully use the implications in this study to explore further the role of literature in reducing violence including rape and creating a health community life.

Keywords: 1.sexual assault, 2.trauma, 3.African literature, 4.Amadu, 5.Mda

1.1. Introduction

A friend of mine who heard that I was writing an article on sexual assault told me the following joke: a white woman who was raped while in a tour in small village in Africa stood in trial. The judge who had been listening to

the victim's plea turned to the defendant and asked him, "what do you think the court will charge you for the crime you committed?" The person alleged to have committed this crime answered, "I will marry her since it has always been the final verdict of the court." The defendant's answer, though it is a joke, touches off not only the low legal system responses to sexual assault victim's cases but also it appears as an indication of a culture which considers women as properties of men, thereby denying their voice in an important decision that involves their future life including marriage.

This joke thus can be understood as an irony of the suffering, frustration and muddle of the African women where low legal system response to sexual assault victims' cases, patriarchal attitudes and rape myths intricately work together. Attesting this, plethora of studies has shown that sexual assault and rape against children and adult people is a serious problem, with severe social and psychological outcomes for survivors in Africa (Crowford, 2012, and Smith, 2004). Worryingly, rape myths and patriarchal attitudes which encourage predatory sexual behavior, poverty, and inequality, grossly ignored legal processes or low legal punishments of perpetrators, and historical conditions such as slavery, apartheid, colonialism etc. are said to be some of the driving forces that increase the prevalence and rate of this crime (Arva, 2011). South Africa, for example, is one of the countries with the prevalence of rape at the highest level. One contributing factor is history. During the apartheid regime, rape was deeply connected to racial injustice and was seen as an inevitable part of the black women's lives. They were the victims of both black and white men because their economic, political, and cultural marginalization precipitated their exposure to the risk of sexual assault. Sadly, the demise of apartheid couldn't stop the rape statistics from escalating. Olubanjo (2012) notes the alarming rate of rape which takes place in South Africa as the following: "South Africa has the highest rape per capita rate with 1.2 rapes per 1000 people." (Olubanjo, 2012:24).

Having a more nuanced understanding of the prevalence of this violence in Africa, several Anglophone African writers use fiction to explore the negative impact of rape and sexual exploitation on the mental health of victims. In supporting this, Kurtz (2014) writes that "all aspects of contemporary African writing- who creates it, the language of expression, its favored forms, its predominant themes, its audience, how it is published, indeed all the conditions of its production and consumption- originate in the context of massive, continent-wide experience of deep social trauma (Kurtz, 2014 as cited in Akcesme, 2018:62). For example, Amadu Maddy in "No Past No Present No Future and Zakes Mda in "The Madonna of Excelsior" highlight the short-term and long-term effects of traumatic sexual events on the psychic wellbeing of people through the severe trauma of the victim characters.

However, what these sexual trauma narratives do in the way they alter the psychological experience of people especially in the forefront of traumatic sexual incidents is the most ignored and unstudied phenomena. This is because most of the studies done so far on this area, paying attention largely to surveying the responses of rape survivors, tended to ignore the potential of literary texts to be utilized as a lens through which the negative effects of sexual abuse on the social, physical, and psychological health of the victims are reflected. Therefore, this article identifies the character who has been raped and discuss the cause of her sexual abuse and explore how living with sexual trauma can be very hard to bear, and its impact cut through every facet of life with physical, emotional, and psychological scars left behind using trauma theory dominantly informed by Freud, and Van der Kolk and Greenberg.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

1.2.1. Rape, Trauma, and posttraumatic stress disorder

According to the World Health Organization (2011), rape is a sexual assault against a person without his/her consent, and it is often carried out with coercive means, physical force, abuse of power etc. A wide range of sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstances and settings. These include, for example: rape within marriage or dating relationships, rape by strangers, systematic rape during armed conflict, unwanted sexual advances, or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in-return for favours, sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people, sexual abuse of children, forced marriage or cohabitation, including the marriage of children, (WHO, 2011).

Sexual assault is one of the severe experiences that often subject victims to the risk of highly aversive trauma. Trauma refers to a psychic injury caused by a catastrophic and painful event such as sexual abuse, domestic violence, war, treachery, betray etc. (Colin and Hanna, 2020; Conroy and Cotter, 2017; Dunmore, Clark and Ehlers, 2001; Koss, 1993).

Freud develops some of his ideas about traumatic neurosis. In his seminal essay, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", he describes soldiers who returned from the battlefield and are no longer able to fight because of the symptoms that they have. These soldiers were overwhelmed particularly by inexorable gunfire and exploding shells all around them that cause them to become traumatized. It was something traumatic, overwhelming that they couldn't move beyond and this cause them to have recurring nightmares and flashbacks (Freud, 1995). Those nightmares and flashbacks can be seen as repetition compulsion. Meaning, the unattended memory of chaos, loss, bloodshed doesn't disappear. Instead, they cuddle into unknown interior presence which Freud calls shellshock (Freud, 1955:19).

Freud also points out the basic features of trauma. One of the distinguishing features of trauma is that the accident causes fright against the individual who experiences it since the accident occurs suddenly when the individual is being unprepared for the danger. The other feature that distinguishes trauma from hysteria is that the possibility for trauma to occur becomes high when an event or danger leaves no physical wound or injury to the victim. Apart from this, before an accident turns to be trauma there is time between the accident and its symptoms which Freud calls incubation period: "the time that has passed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is described as the 'incubation period', in a clear allusion to the pathology of infectious diseases" (Freud 1939, 67-8).

Similarly, the trauma of being assaulted can lead to fear, anger, anxiety, nightmares, emotional turmoil, feeling of betrayal, hypervigilance, irritability (Wilson, 2006; Dunmore, Clark, and Ehlers, 2001; Littleton, Axsom, Breikopf and Berenson, 2006). While some people escape with no long-term effects, others are unable to survive because of this experience continues to interfere with their everyday lives. They become incapable to save themselves from the risk of constant intrusion of the memories of the traumatic event. Over time, they find it very hard to integrate with the awful experience and they become more and more anxious about the experience, thereby affecting their psychic wellbeing (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998).

Though the saying goes "time heals every wound", the trauma of sexual assault and rape, being deeper and more intense, makes time itself fall short of a panacea to heal it. When people fail to learn from the experience and couldn't make restorative actions, instead develop post-traumatic stress disorder, they would find themselves in an increasing intensity of distress. PTSD is a psychological reaction occurring after experiencing a highly stressing event such as sexual violence, wartime combat, or physical violence etc. It is a mental condition that can affect a person who has had a very shocking or traumatic experience. PTSD is common among people who have experienced sexual assault or rape. Studies showed that roughly 70% of survivors of sexual assault experience significant levels of trauma, with 45% reporting symptoms of PTSD.

What's particularly dangerous about post-traumatic stress disorder is, it often doesn't count the traumatic event as something that happened in the past, but as something which is occurring all over again since the memory activates the same neurochemical cascade as the original event that then starts up the same feelings of panic and helplessness as if they are experiencing the event all over again. Because it is difficult for people with post-traumatic stress disorder to integrate traumatic experiences with their present conditions, they continue to live with the trauma instead of properly grappling the original event in the close rational mind and stripping it of its mystery. Consequently, "the personal meaning of the traumatic experience evolves over time, and often includes feelings of irretrievable loss, anger, betrayal and helplessness." (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998: 6).

The experience of post-traumatic stress disorder has its own impact on the way traumatized people process information. They are constantly haunted by the intrusions of the memories of the traumatic experience since they usually fail to integrate the traumatic events with other life experiences (Laub and Auerhahn, 1993 as cited in Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998:9). In addition, the victims will often turn either a victimizer or victim of future experiences similar to the original traumatic event. A person who was sexually abused is more likely to be abused

again or continue to be abused (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998: 11-12). Furthermore, trauma causes victims to be engulfed by the feeling fear, emotional turmoil, and mental breakdown. As a result, they often curve out different mechanisms to avoid the intrusions of the traumatic memories that evoke these feelings such as avoidance of anything which reminds their traumatic past, take drug or alcohol to “*numb awareness of distressing emotional states or utilizing dissociation to keep unpleasant experiences from conscious awareness*” (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998:12). The last but not the least, people with post-traumatic stress disorder may try to deal with their environment through emotional constriction, but their bodies continue to react to certain physical and emotional stimuli as if there were a continuing threat of annihilation. Consequently, they suffer from hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, and restlessness, they move immediately from stimulus to response without often realizing what makes them so upset, and they tend to experience intense negative emotions (fear, anxiety, anger, and panic) in response to even minor stimuli (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998:13).

1.3. Interpretation and Analysis

1.3.1. The Trauma of Heterosexual Experiences and Homosexuality as Coping Mechanism in Amadu's “No Past No Present No Future”

Amadu, from the start, entices the reader to feel and understand the array of factors which causes sexual trauma. He seems to have emphasized on negative sexual experiences as the major causes of Joe's psychical disturbances laid bare through symptoms of trauma and posttraumatic disorder.

Joe experienced an opposite sex for the first time with a woman named Mary by the time he spent Christmas with Ade's family. As the narrative unveils, Joe sees Mary for the first time when she strolls down the street being surrounded and beaten up by a crowd of people for she was alleged to sexual scandal of sleeping with different men. Both Joe and his friend Ade witness the moment with the deeper pity of the injustice that befalls upon Mary. Contrary to their present sympathy to Mary, Ade's mother expresses her revulsion towards Mary's imprudent sexuality: “*That Mary is a wayward girl. A good-for-nothing, she is. She is free and cheap.*” (Amadu, 1973:13). Her words highly influence both Ade and Joe. It caused them to perceive Mary as only a sexualized object.

After hours of the same day, Joe and Ade meet Mary in the nearby river washing her clothes. And it doesn't take these two friends that long to recognize the beauty of Mary. Joe approaches Mary and converse with her for a while. Then both Joe and Mary walk into the bush. Joe tries few things to seduce Mary: “*he laid his right hand on Mary's bare bosom and squeezed and squeezed*” (Amadu, 1973:16)). The temptation subsequently compels Mary to “*gave herself quietly.*” (Amadu, 1973:17).

In the middle of Joe and Mary making love, Ade, who has been watching the events unfold from a distance, appears and blackmails Mary into having sex with him otherwise he will tell her sexual imprudence to her aunt. Though Joe begs Ade not to, Ade gives deaf ear to him and rapes Mary right in the face of Joe:

Ade came up to them, looking intently at Mary. She had got up, looking down at the grass at her feet, half-dead and trodden down. Ade ignored Joe. It's my turn now, Mary, he said smiling cynically. No need to let you're your aunt know. Or would you rather? He held her hands apart. Joe snorted with anger. Ade waved him away... Ade was still smiling viciously. you know what the consequences are, Mary, don't you?. Frightful of what will happen to her, “*succumbed quietly without a word. She did not smile; she went down like a big, rootless cotton tree eaten up by earthworms.*” (Amadu, 1973: 17).

The incident exposed Joe to experience the bitter taste of being betrayed by a close friend. In addition, it solely put to the very idea of manhood into question, for he finds himself incapable of protecting the woman of his first sexual mentor from being raped. Joe's response to this event involves fright, helplessness, and hopelessness since the event occurred suddenly and out of his expectation: “*Joe Bengoh left them. He walked away feeling sick. He felt cheap and dirty. For the first time he thought he had come near to the real person of Ade John... a bad action for one he thought of highly as real friend. How could he be so grossly indifferent to friendship?*” (Amadu, 1973:17).

Immediately after a traumatic event, almost all people suffer from intrusive thoughts about what has happened (McFarlane, 1992; Creamer et al., 1992; Joseph, Yule, and Williams, 1995). Similarly, Joe becomes overwhelmed by the event which causes him to have a recurring thought about what happened. After he went through the motions of trying to get normal, his trying could go nowhere:

Joe Bengoh thought of his first sexual experience with Mary... how good and pleasant it had all been downstream, and then going upstream and into the bush. He tried not to remember it all. Ade coming on the scene and demanding his own pound of flesh like a black Shylock. He felt sick and suddenly placed his hand over his mouth. 'No, God, no. I waked away and left them. I hated them both. Ade deprived me of any self-respect and manhood. Mary, she killed any feeling I possess for a woman.'... that incident left an indelible scar on his subconscious (Amadu, 1973:23)

As the above extract highlights, the content of the memories recurs to his mind, demonstrating the intensity of the damage that the accident has caused on his psyche. The pain which invades him when he quickly shifts from the memory of his pleasurable walk with Mary to the memory of his shock explains how Joe is struggling to suppress and recreate the scene where he witnessed Ade raping Mary to a totally different scene: "*No, God, no. I waked away and left them*" (Amadu, 1973:23).

In addition, a sexual rape is dangerous to the victim, leaving her vulnerable to physical and psychological problems. When the act is committed in front of someone, that observer is left to grapple with it. And when the witness is more than just an observer and knows the victim before the act occurs, the experience will be more damaging, even traumatic. Joe witnessed his first sex mentor being raped. As a result, he becomes increasingly tormented by an overriding trauma which propels him to go into a difficulty on having trust and a positive view towards a heterosexual relationship: "*Ade deprived me of any self-respect and manhood. Mary, she killed any feeling I possess for a woman.*"... *that incident left an indelible scar on his subconscious.*"

Furthermore, the resultant impact of this traumatic event also manifests from the outset in his self-destructive behaviors such as excessive drinking, stealing, and less-trust of women: "*Joe Bengoh was furious. He flew into a tantrum and was like water on lighted petrol. From that day on, he had ventured outside the mission gates every night, combing every drinking-house, dancehall, and place of entertainment he could find. His best hide-out was Laddie's dance yard.*"

In fact, trauma is one of the fates to be human, and people inevitably get into traumatic experiences at some point in their life. The thing, therefore, is not the experience one gets into trauma, but the coping mechanism he/she uses to overcome the trauma. While there are people who effectively deal with their trauma and lead their lives normally, there are also other people who fail to overcome their traumatic experiences, and thus continually tainting their everyday lives. Joe seems determined to try different things to deal with his traumatic experience with Mary though none of which seem to help him, except worsening the intensity of his trauma. He starts-up, for instance, an affair with a woman named Bola, thinking that it would help him to deal with his painful heterosexual experience with Mary:

Joe Bengoh felt very strongly for Bola. He believed that he was in love with her. He had slept with her and she had been good and kind to him. Bola was his second try with women. She was no better class than Mary, but she had the same courage as himself, to survive and make the best of a rotten existence. If she failed him, God knows what he would become, or how he would react to women in the future. Mary was an unhappy mistake and had left a bitter after effect. He must not allow the incident to poison his mind. (Amadu, 1973: 28).

Despite the fact that Joe seems to establish to another heterosexual relationship hoping to get over his first unequivocally negative heterosexual encounter with Mary, the frustration and the fear of being betrayed which persistently swing his mind clearly affirms that his trauma is devastating to a large extent, affecting his behavior and individual functioning.

What contributes more on Joe's trauma is Bola's scant economic condition. Bola leads her life with the income she gains in prostitution. And things were not also easy for Joe to fulfill the basic needs she needed for survival. His little to no economic means could in no way enable him to even partially fulfill the basic needs which she is forced to gain by selling her body. Sadly, his poverty-stricken condition has brought his relationship with Bola to unfortunate end since it becomes the reason for her to leave him and startup a new life with a man of good fortune and prosperity:

Joe took taxi to Ex-Quaker Row 4. He had hardly had time to say good evening when Sabina startled, loud and clear and cynical: 'Bola done go for good. She done leave you for dry land. How you like dat?' she paused for it to sink in... 'Bola got tied up wit' a good diamon' man from East provinces. I tell you Joe, 'e sweep Bola from 'imbalance, everythin'. And 'e got money like sand down beach.'...(Amadu, 1973:38).

Her dumping him up have left a devastating impact upon Ade's psyche since he is never prepared for the above incident. As a result, we see him being conquered by intense fear, helplessness, and hopelessness. In relation to this, Van der noted that the way the victim assesses the accident and the subjective meaning he/she attributes to the accident makes that accident traumatic. Similarly, it is evident that Joe didn't initially develop PTSD until he happened to encounter the same sexual trauma again with Bola. Assessing his negative sexual experiences, he reached to an oversimplifying conclusion that any heterosexual relationship is a form of dreadful betrayal and women as symbol of evil.

Survivors of sexual trauma are at high risk of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to the American Psychiatric Association (1994), the diagnostic criteria for PTSD include exposure to a range of symptoms, such as reoccurring recollections or dreams of the event, persistent avoidance of all things associated with the trauma, numbing and lack of responsiveness, and increased alertness to perceived threats. National Online research center on violence against women). The case of Joe elucidates this case. His trauma stems from his negative sexual experiences. Understanding the intensity and scale of the pain that his sexual encounter with Mary caused on him, he tried to adjust himself and integrate the event as part of his past experiences by establishing another heterosexual relationship with Bola. Unfortunately, the second affair also turned out to be unsuccessful. It exposed him to experience another trauma that arouses his traumatic experience with Mary, and thereby he develops PTSD.

Indeed, his inability to relate emotionally with other women indicates that painful incident with Mary subjects him to PTSD. Apparently, his PTSD is revealed in the fact that when he turns his attention to establishing heterosexual affairs with other women, Mary haunts several of his heterosexual relationships to the point that he cannot see a woman without also thinking about her like returning to the scene of the trauma:

Without much ado Santigie turned off the light and took the girl to bed. Like an undefended child astray, she submitted without fuss. Soon Santigie was asleep and snoring. Joe thought he might have a go. Not that it would mean anything to him, but just for the fun of it. she felt him reaching out to her. She did not move or complain; just like Mary. Free for all. Like Bola, hungry and quiet and attractive, and perhaps lonely. Joe Behgoh jumped out of the bed. Switched on the light. The girl sat up and watched him. He was breathing heavily. Suddenly he burst into a loud cry of pain followed by curses. Filth... dirt... liars, ingrate... women, you women. He was pointing his finger at the girl's face. You dirty little slut, I have known your kind, you killers of love and life... you... you. 'Are you alright?' the girl said, rather frightened. She was out of the bed and was putting on her dress hurriedly. Santigie was awakened by the noise and sleepily asked. 'what? What?' by this time Joe Bengoh seemed to have come to his senses... 'Sorry I frightened you. I didn't mean to. I was dreaming about something which happened to me some time ago.' (Amadu, 1973:98).

The unnamed woman, accepting his offer of sex without any hesitation, shocks him as it immediately awakens his sexual traumatic event with Mary. And his violent bodily reaction – he literally flings himself out of bed is a sign of

his PTSD. His traumatic experiences of the past encroach into his present condition that leads him to end up in intense rage and somatic emotions. And his intense rage and somatic emotions are usually accompanied by heartbreaking insult and curse of women as killers of manhood and life.

From this, we can infer that Joe is unable to deal with his trauma which is displayed in the symptoms of PTSD. Such complicity compels him into hatred of all women yet not every woman threatens him to annihilate him in his mental perception of heterosexual encounter. It is quite clear that Joe has been exposed to PTSD, and his traumatic experiences “*annihilates the scene of continuity in his life and self-narrative, bringing to the fore the contingency of his life*” (Hwango, 2004:1).

Joe, charged with the inner struggle which emanates from his negative heterosexual encounters that have recently affected him very badly, seems to consent Father Odon’s homosexual move as an escaping mechanism by picking out the positive to emphasize in his image in his mind. He, therefore, primarily accepts Padre’s homosexual abuse to console himself with the idea that his negative heterosexual experience will come to an end precisely with his lodging for homosexuality.

Living in homophobic society, the fact that Joe has to live accepting homosexual relationships has become the contributing factor to his mental breakdown and emotional turmoil since it invites other characters’ homophobic slurs against him. Even after he, Ade and Santigie immigrate to London for better education, the homophobic abuse from his friend, Ade continues to break him emotionally. Ade harshly scolds Joe’s sexuality and persistently hurts him with homophobic remarks:

After you came to the mission, we, Santigie and myself, discovered that we had made a great mistake in not warning Padre about you. You brought your perverse character to the mission. You came there asking for love, craving affection and attention...you suffering orphan...insufferable little you, I watched you when you went to the storeroom with Padre. I watched what you were doing. You and Padre. You were both corrupt, you were both sick. I told Santigie. Ask him. Go on Santigie, tell him he is sick, sick bastard. Were you not naked on the sofa with Padre’s hands all over your body? Did you not have your bottom oiled, you screw scum, you dirty depraved dog? (Amadu, 1973:138).

Mentally undone by his friend’s abuse, academic failures, and severe apprehension about his sexuality, Joe attempts to commit suicide by taking too much dose of sleeping tablets, marijuana, and alcohol. And Michael, his white boyfriend, discovers Joe and takes him to a hospital where he fully recovers. Following this accident, his boyfriend’s kindness, and self-less act at the worst of times helps him to find more homage to continue to live in homosexuality. Though we can learn that Ade’s sexual assault on Mary has left a lasting scar upon his psyche, and it deprived him of his manhood and his right to possess what he wanted as a man, we can also see that his homosexual affair, having a powerful influence on him to come at peace with his present condition and forge some humanistic future.

1.3.2. The Traumatic Impacts of Rape in ZakesMda’s “The Madonna of Excelsior”

Mda, in his novel, insights into how sexual assault takes socio-historical form. His glittering literary brilliance coupled with his vigilance highly attune to degraded humanity virtually concretizes the consequences of sexual assault through the plights of the major character, Niki.

Being the victim of the apartheid system as a black woman, Niki is under-educated girl whose shoulder bends by the heavy burden of poverty. Having Lost her mother at tender age, she is destined to live with her alcoholic father who spends his money on alcohol giving the least trace of concern to the livelihood of his family. As a result, she grew up with the companionship of poverty without proper education, adequate food, shelter, and clothing. In other words, she is the other end of the spectrum of wealth.

As the narrative unveils, Niki, along with her two friends, goes out to the field to collect cow dung to prepare food. While the three girls are collecting dung, the white Afrikaner, Johannes Smit who thinks that he can buy every black female’s body with his money approaches them, blowing his whip to instill terror in them. In effect,

Niki gets terrified. Reading Niki's terrified face, Smit starts giving each one rand note. Though she hesitates to take it first, her friends' lack of interest to refuse the gift makes her to receive hers too. He adds her two additional rand notes, by which he assumes his ownership of Niki's body is assured in. Her two friends contend that Niki must obey his words because he has chosen her by giving her more money than them.

The fact that the money differs shows that Niki's body is valued differently like a commodity on sale in Smit's view. In the end, the bargain slowly begins to feel like an ordinary transaction- like an item is being valued and sold. Because he considers black women in general as easily manipulated for money, he mistakes Niki's acceptance of the money he gave her as an indication of her desire to have sex with him. When she stands in a gesture of refusal, he drags her into the sunflower field and rapes her:

Johannes Smit grabbed Niki by the arm and dragged her into the sunflower field... Deep in the sunflower field, Johannes Smit pulled off Niki's Terylene skirt. She tried to hold on to it, but he had the strength of ten demons. He threw her on the damp ground. Then he pulled down her panties and took them off. He sniffed them, which seemed to raise more demons in his quivering body. He stuffed the panties into his pocket. Yellowness ran amok. Yellowness dripped down with her screams. He slapped her and ordered her to shut up. Her screams were now muffled with his hand on her mouth. His pants were at his ankles. He lay on top of her and pleaded, "I am sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you. But if you make noise, people will come and spoil our fun". Niki wept softly as his hardness touched her thighs. Intense heat sucked out his slimy seed before he could penetrate her. He cursed his pipe as it leaked all over her. He damned its sudden limpness. He just lay there like a plastic bag full of decaying tripe on top of her. She heaved him off her body and jumped up. She grabbed her skirt and ran like a tornado, destroying a swathe of sunflowers in her wake (Mda, 2002:16-17).

There is certainly no concern with her consent involved in the encounter. She is in the position of helplessness and an inability to decline what is inflicted on her. As such, he assaults her with his physical power and raids all over her body though the impotence of his manhood expresses itself way before he takes her virginity. Finally, she manages to push him away and runs home broken hearted. The truth about the sexualizing force of racism which sought to construct the black women as adultery and sexual objects comes to light in the context of Niki's unbearable circumstance. Though Smit never knew Niki before, he was too quick to misconceive her with the Afrikaner men prejudice which doesn't seem to perceive the black women other than a mere sexual object available for sale. Following this incident, Niki considers her home as a place where there is a possibility of easing of the sexual abuse she has currently encountered, but what awaits her at home is her drunk father's physical abuse for she failed to hold the responsibility of feeding him that society has assigned her for:

At home she got under the blankets and cried for a long time, until she fell asleep. She woke up when her father arrived in the evening, drunk as usual. He was fuming because she had not cooked any food. She tried to explain that she was not feeling well. And in any case, there was no food to cook because he had not left her any money. But he was not prepared to listen to any lame excuses. He was going to beat the laziness out of her. He was going to lash her buttocks with a belt until they were sour. (Mda, 2002:16-17).

Freud suggests that one of the distinguishing features of trauma is that the accident causes fright against the individual who experiences it since the accident occurs suddenly when the individual is being unprepared for the danger. Similarly, Niki experiences a range of emotional reactions such as fear, shame and helplessness since the rape she has endured occurred happened unexpectedly without her consent. As a result, she determines to nurse her wounded soul at the solitude of her pillow, but her effort is attacked by her father since she didn't cook him food. To calm her father from his rage, she uses the money which she has gained from Smit in exchange for the sexual abuse she had to endure: "*to placate him, she ran to the tuck shop and used Johannes Smit's money to buy her father a loaf of bread and a big can of pilchards in tomato sauce*" (Mda, 2002:16-17). The irony of this situation points to the

fact that her domestic responsibility denies her the time to dwell on her painful condition. Hence, her circumstance communicates the account of the body as a site of loss and trauma which finds expression in an excluding and excruciating socioeconomic system and very repressive patriarchal society. She fails to have the space of her own where she can have a solace for her wounded soul and make her recognition of equal humanity possible, and that there is no more traumatic experience than being in spaces that are constantly abusive and marginalizing.

Worryingly, Smit's sexual abuse of Niki does not end on their first sexual encounter. Knowing that Niki's Achilles heel is her unfortunate material reality, he takes the advantage of his material wealth and privilege to lure Niki: "*Johannes smit was a persistent man. His offers of cash mounted with her stubbornness, until her good friends prevailed on her.*" (Mda, 2002:19). In addition, her friends also constantly advise her to concede Smit's abuse as only a means of making money regardless of the trauma it would eventually cause: "*Don't be stupid, Niki. You can make a lot of money from this foolish white man. Just give him what he wants and eat the money. For sure he'll be back, added Maria, laughing. Just take the money and let the man water your thighs... After all, it would not enter, they assured her.*" (Mda, 2002:18).

The peer-pressure coupled with her rather poor economic condition has finally deprived her the chance to remain guard of her redemptive and zealous character. She eventually becomes willing to suffer from sexual degradation for money. Accordingly, she lets him masturbate on her thighs to receive more cash from him to support her poverty-stricken family: "*On every occasion in the yellow fields, she just lay there and became a masturbation gadget. Along the way, her body is pathologized to the level of sexual object which constitutes no possibility of her having human feelings more complex than sex and no possibility of a connection as human equals than the function of a body. This consequently leaves, beyond the wound inflicted on her body, a huge scar on her psyche: "Then she went home and secretly wept while she bathed him off her body. But he was an obstinate stain."* (Mda, 2002:19).

Although Smit does not enter her on many occasions due to his persistent impotence, he once manages to enter her and this penal penetration destroys her virginity. The impact of this rape is excruciating to her because "*for many days she tries to vomit him out but cannot because only the last meal and the bitter bile comes out*" (Mda, 2002:19). The fact that the loss of her virginity risks leading to the utter ruin of her psychic wellbeing reveals how the loss of her bodily schema and trauma intersect in various instances.

In fact, trauma is one of the fates to be human, and people inevitably get into traumatic experiences at some point in their life. The thing, therefore, is not the experience one gets into trauma, but the coping mechanism he/she uses to overcome the trauma. While there are people who effectively deal with their trauma and lead their lives normally, there are also other people who fail to overcome their traumatic experiences, and thus continually tainting their everyday lives. Niki relentlessly tries to make an outward adjustment to harness her trauma through various ways. The act of repression and denial was among the major solutions that she thinks would allow her to process her trauma. She focuses less on the assault and involves herself in normal daily activities. She pretends that she heals and integrates the parts of her past so that she feels more solid and whole. She, for instance, commits to marriage, seeking to be seen that her marriage helps her to nurture herself to move forward:

Johannes Smit always tried to catch Niki's eye and would then furtively wave some bank notes at her. Niki would ignore him. She continued to ignore him when he followed her... Niki, on the other hand, found this attention irritating. Inside her another life was ticking. She wanted to think only of its expected kicks in a few months' time, and not of things that reminded her of her humiliation. (Mda, 2002:22).

However, her husband's constant misconduct leaves her no viable path other than flying with symptoms of her PTSD. Her husband, like the many black men of apartheid South Africa, feeds his family with the wage he earns from the work in the white's gold-mine found very far away from his family. This, making the time he spends with family very scant, limits his possibility of getting to know his wife. As a result, he starts to assign some motives that she might cheat on him and sleep with the white men: "*she had come home late from work. Stephanus Cronje's unpaid overtime. Pule decided there and then that she was late because she had been sleeping with white men.*

“Stories are told of black maids who sleep with their white masters,” he said. “You must be one of them.” (Mda, 2002:32).

She tries to plead him that she would never cheat on him. However, his jealousy exceeds his patience and leads him to beat and insult her: *“She pleaded her innocence. She tried to hold him in her arms to assure him that she would never do such a thing. But he violently pushed her away and slapped her, shouting, “Get away from me! You smell of white men!”* (Mda, 2002:32). The verbal abuse sends shivers down her spine and awakens her traumatic experience long ago:

She was Johannes Smit in Pule’s eyes. She saw the uncontrollable yellowness of the sunflower fields. There was the overwhelming smell of Johannes Smit in the shack. Tears swelled in her eyes as she packed her clothes and Viliki’s into a plastic bag (Mda, 2002:32).

The husband’s misbehavior, increasingly depleting her emotional reservoir, causes her to time travel to her traumatic experience and gets choked by the odor she experienced in her original trauma like she is experiencing it all over again. She experiences a return of the repressed memory and aches in pain about the sexual abuse by Smit, which she has not talked about since it took place a long time ago.

In addition, the severity of her PTSD becomes more palpable especially when we see that the trauma of her past continually ruining her sexual life:

In the middle of it all, Niki suddenly felt the weight of a chilling ball of iron somewhere between her stomach and her lungs. It was not Stephanus Cronje’s heavy body on hers. It was the weight of a memory that was determined to come between her and ecstasy. She had filed the fact that she had missed her times in some dark compartment of her mind. Now it was forcing itself back in the cacophony.

We can see how she is struggling with the recurrence of the distressing memories of her traumatic event because she is engaging in sex that reminds her of the rape that she experienced long time ago (Mda, 2002:50). Furthermore, her traumatic experience leads her to develop negative changes in her thinking and mood. This is more evident in the symptom of her post-traumatic stress disorder which causes her significant problem since it constantly interferes with her ability to raise her child. As a mother who is the survivor of sexual rape, she finds that the trauma affected how she parented. It made her to be overprotective mother in a society that she perceived unsafe. She becomes particularly prone to have trust issue towards men in general and white men in particular: *“If you sleep with a boy, you will get pregnant,” said Niki. “Don’t play with boys. Don’t even touch a boy. As for white men, stay away from them. Don’t even talk to them unless you are buying something at the store.”* The memory of the traumatic sexual experience that she went through as a young woman caused her to be suspicious of everything and to think of her world as abhorrent and scary. Consequently, she becomes overprotective of her daughter because of the fact that the fear and anxiety she has developed looms as subconscious behind her raring behaviour.

Gradually, she enters in altered state of alienation. Her state of alienation is evident in her friends’ testimony of the fact:

When we came to see her, she hid herself behind the door and instructed her children to say she was not home. She was always away in Lesotho or in ThabaNchu, even though we saw her early in the mornings gathering cow-dung in the veld. Her close friends Mmampe and Maria gave up on her. And carried on with their boisterous lives.

Her alienated position shows that she needs counseling to help her integrate herself, but she couldn’t confide in anyone because she regards counseling as a luxury she cannot afford. This lack of treatment at the end leads her to break from reality and begin to feel like she is protected from any dangers of human being by a herd of honeybees:

“You don’t have to sit here looking after bees all day long,” Adam de Vries said. “Bees can look after themselves. That’s the beauty of beekeeping. You let them be and they create honey for you.” “I do not look after the bees,” Niki replied. “They look after me.”

Generally, going on in Niki's dehumanized position vein for pages, reader is able to understand that Niki initially had meaning of her own bodily schema before she finds herself in the position where her body has become one thing—sexual body over and over again in white Afrikaners' eyes and that is who she has become at the end, consequently robbing her psychic wellbeing and leading her into the point of impossibility of closure regarding the trauma she faced.

Summary and Conclusions

Amadu and Mda, in their respective novels have fashioned their characters in such a way that they are true to life with thoughts, feelings, emotions, and dreams, allowing the reader to understand the psychic state of the characters as well as their resultant behaviors and actions.

Amadu highlights the plight of trauma through the character, Joe. He is a character that does not adequately cope with traumatic events. Unequivocally negative heterosexual encounters have conquered Joe's life, causing an increase in various deviations in his individual functioning and an eventual posttraumatic stress disorder. The fact that he must witness the woman whom he considered his first sex mentor being raped by his close friend seem to have wounded his psyche. Following this accident, he became increasingly tormented by an overriding post-traumatic stress disorder which propels him to go into a difficulty on having trust and a positive view towards a heterosexual relationship. Finally, Joe harbored to homosexuality where he found a panacea to cure his trauma caused by negative heterosexual experiences.

On the other hand, Mda, in his magnum opus "The Madonna of Excelsior", portrays how the experiences of sexual assault and rape are intertwined with sexualized racism, peer-pressure and poverty that serve to elucidate the horror experienced by the South African black women during the apartheid era. Niki is one of the central characters whose adult age is invaded by the traumatic effects of rape which is deeply rooted to sexualized racism and poverty. The fact that she has to lead a life engulfed with the symptoms of PTSD such as the traumatic memories which usually intrude in the form of intense emotions and interpersonal reenactments, alienation, and a break from reality can be seen as the factors of her failed present accompanied by alienation and a break from reality. Because of these symptoms, the victim continues to live with the trauma instead of properly grappling the original event in the close rational mind and stripping it of its solution.

In conclusion, literary depiction of sexual assault and rape can serve an important avenue for triggering socially desirable responses such as empathy to victims, dispelling rape myths, offering a realistic account of the psychological experiences of victims, and promoting adequate detention and prevention. Therefore, turning to research on the role of literary works whose themes revolve around sexual assault and rape is vital to create a more trauma informed society and legal system in order to reduce the rate of sexual assault and to develop more effective criminal justice system responses to sexual assault cases.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my gratitude goes to Addis Ababa and Arba Minch Universities for financially sponsoring my study and granting me scholarship. I would also like to thank my friend and colleague Dr. Yihenew, without whose comments and technical support this study wouldn't have been completed. I thank then Dr. Endalkachew Hailu and Dr. Tsegabirhan Wodaj for editing and proofreading this article. I am also indebted to Temesgen Kassie who shared insightful ideas with me and helped me find materials which have been valuable inputs for this study. Finally, my gratefulness goes to those whose names are not mentioned but morally and spiritually supported me to yield the fruit of this study.

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