

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND TRAUMA WITHIN AMADU MADDY'S *NO PAST NO PRESENT NO FUTURE* (1973) AND ZAKES MDA'S *THE MADONNA OF EXCELSIOR* (2002)

Kekerasan Seksual dan Trauma dalam Novel Amadu Maddy *No Past, No Present No Future* dan Zakes Mda *The Madonna of Excelsior*

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the causes of sexual violence and conduct a critical examination of the traumatic impact of sexual violence as portrayed in Amadu's novel "No Past No Present No Future" and Mda's novel "The Madonna of Excelsior" by incorporating the theories of trauma by Freud, Van der Kolk, and Greenberg as the basis for the analysis. The results of this study reveal that betrayal and negative heterosexual encounters are the causes of trauma and, ultimately, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Amadu's novel. Based on these findings, using literary texts that specifically focus on the consequences of sexual violence to educate the public about victims' reactions to rape is highly recommended. This research also suggests that psychology researchers are expected to be able to use the implications of this study to explore further the role of literature in reducing violence, including rape, and creating healthy community life.*

Keywords: *Sexual Assault, Trauma, African Literature, Amadu, Mda*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penyebab kekerasan seksual dan melakukan kajian kritis terhadap dampak traumatis dari kekerasan seksual yang tercermin dalam novel Amadu "No Past No Present No Future" dan Novel Mda "The Madonna of Excelsior" dengan menghubungkan teori-teori trauma dari Freud, Van der Kolk, dan Greenberg sebagai landasan analisis. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa pengkhianatan dan pertemuan heteroseksual negatif sebagai penyebab trauma dan, pada akhirnya, gangguan stres pascatrauma (PTSD) dalam novel Amadu. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, penggunaan teks sastra yang secara khusus berfokus pada konsekuensi kekerasan seksual untuk mengedukasi masyarakat tentang reaksi korban terhadap perkosaan sangat disarankan. Penelitian ini juga menyarankan agar peneliti psikologi diharapkan dapat menggunakan implikasi penelitian ini untuk mengeksplorasi lebih jauh peran sastra dalam mengurangi kekerasan. termasuk perkosaan dan menciptakan kehidupan masyarakat yang sehat.*

Kata Kunci: *Serangan Seksual, Trauma, Sastra Afrika, Amadu, Mda.*

INTRODUCTION

The following condition is commonly found in African society: a white woman who was raped while touring a small village in Africa stands on trial. The judge, after listening to the victim's plea, turns to the defendant and asks, "What do you think the court will charge you for the crime you committed?" The person accused of the crime responds with a joke, saying, "I will marry her since it has always been the final verdict of the court." While 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 signifies a culture that views women as properties of men, denying them a voice in important decision that impact their future, including marriage (Miller, 2008).

This joke thus can be understood as an ironic reflection of the suffering, frustration, and complexity faced by African women, where the inadequate legal system response, patriarchal attitudes, and rape myths intertwine. Attesting this, plethora of studies has shown that sexual assault and rape against children and adults are serious problems in Africa, with severe social and psychological consequences for survivors (Crawford, 2012; Smith, 2004). Worryingly, rape myths, patriarchal attitudes promoting predatory sexual behavior, poverty, and inequality, and a disregard legal processes or lenient punishments for perpetrators, as well as historical factors like slavery, apartheid, and colonialism, contribute to the prevalence and frequency of this crime (Arva, 2011). For instance, South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape prevalence, with historical factors playing a significant role. During the apartheid regime, rape was intertwined with racial injustice and became a pervasive part of the lives of black women. They were victimized by both black and white men due to their economic, political, and cultural marginalization, which made them more vulnerable to sexual assault. Sadly, the end of apartheid did not halt the escalation of rape statistics. Olubanjo (2012) highlights the alarming rate of rape in South Africa, stating, "South Africa has the highest rape per capita rate with 1.2 rapes per 1,000 people." (Olubanjo, 2012, pp. 24).

To gain a deeper understanding of the prevalence of sexual violence in Africa, several Anglophone African writers utilize fiction to explore the negative impact of rape and sexual exploitation on the mental health of victims. Supporting this notion, Kurtz (2014) asserts 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 – originate in the context of a massive, continent-wide experience of deep social trauma (Kurtz, 2014 as cited in Akcesme, 2018, pp. 62). In novels such as Amadu Maddy's "No Past No Present No Future" (1973) and Zakes Mda's "The Madonna of Excelsior" (2002), the authors highlight the short-term and long-term effects of traumatic sexual events on the psychological well-being of their characters.

However, the most ignored and understudied phenomenon is how these sexual trauma narratives alter the psychological experience of individuals who have undergone traumatic sexual incidents. Existing studies in this area have primarily focused on surveying the response of rape survivors, disregarding the potential of literary texts to serve as a lens through which the negative effects of sexual abuse on the social, physical, and psychological well-being of victims can be examined. Therefore, this article identifies a character who has been raped, discusses the causes of her sexual abuse, and explores the immense challenges of living with sexual trauma. The article delves into how the impact of sexual trauma permeates every facet of life, leaving behind physical, emotional, and psychological scars. The analysis is informed predominantly by trauma theory, drawing from the works of Freud, and Van der Kolk, and Greenberg.

According to the World Health Organization (2011), rape is defined as a sexual assault committed against a person without their consent, often involving coercive means, physical force, or abuse of power. A wide range of sexually violent acts can occur in different circumstances and settings. These include rape within marriages or dating relationships, rape by strangers, systematic rape during armed conflicts, unwanted sexual advances or harassment, sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled individuals, sexual abuse of children, forced marriages or cohabitation, including child marriage (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 psychological injury caused by a catastrophic and painful event such as sexual abuse, domestic violence, war,

or betrayal (Colin and Hanna, 2020; Conroy and Cotter, 2017; Dunmore, Clark, and Ehlers, 2001; Koss, 1993).

Freud develops several ideas regarding traumatic neurosis. In his seminal essay, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," he describes soldiers who returned from the battlefield unable to continue fighting due to the overwhelming symptoms they experience. These soldiers were traumatized by the incessant gunfire and exploding shells surrounding them. The traumatic experiences become lodged within them, leading to recurring nightmares and flashbacks (Freud, 1995). These nightmares and flashbacks can be seen as a repetition compulsion, where the unprocessed memories of chaos, loss, and bloodshed persist instead of dissipating. Freud refers to this phenomenon as shellshock (Freud, 1955, pp. 19).

Freud also highlights the fundamental features of trauma. One distinguishing feature is that the traumatic events instill fear in the individual who experiences it, as it occurs suddenly and unexpectedly, catching the individual unprepared for the danger. The other feature that distinguishes trauma from hysteria is that trauma often occurs without leaving physical wounds or injuries on the victim. Furthermore, there is a period of time between the occurrence of the accident and the emergence of its symptoms, which Freud refers to as the 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, pp. 67–8).

Similarly, the trauma of being assaulted can lead to fear, anger, anxiety, nightmares, emotional turmoil, feelings of betrayal, hypervigilance, and irritability (Wilson, 2006; Dunmore, Clark, and Ehlers, 2001; Littleton, Axsom, Bretkopf, and Berenson, 2006). While some people escape with no long-term effects, others are unable to move forward because this experience continues to interfere with their everyday lives. They become incapable of protecting themselves from constant intrusions of the memories of the traumatic event. Over time, integrating this awful experience becomes increasingly difficult, causing heightened anxiety and impacting their psychological well-being (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998).

Although the saying goes "time heals every wound," the trauma of sexual assault and rape, being deeper and more intense, renders time inadequate to heal it. When individuals fail to learn from the experience and are unable to take restorative actions, they may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), leading to escalating distress. PTSD is a psychological reaction that occurs after experiencing highly stressful events such as sexual violence, wartime combat, or physical violence. It is a mental condition that can affect individuals who have had a profoundly shocking or traumatic experience. PTSD is common among survivors of sexual assault or rape, with studies showing that roughly 70% of them experience significant levels of trauma, and 45% report symptoms of PTSD (Elklit & Christiansen, 2013).

What's particularly dangerous about PTSD is that it often doesn't treat the traumatic event as something that happened in the past but as something that 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 PTSD to integrate traumatic experiences with their present conditions, they continue to live with the trauma instead of fully processing the original event in a rational manner and stripping it of its mystery. As a result, "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, pp. 6).

The experience of post-traumatic stress disorder has a profound impact on the way traumatized individuals process information. They are constantly haunted by intrusive memories of the traumatic experience, as they often struggle to integrate these events with other life experiences (Laub and Auerhahn, 1993 as cited in Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998, pp. 9). Additionally, victims often become either victimizers or victims in future experiences similar to the original traumatic event. A person who has been sexually abused is more likely to be abused again or to continue experiencing abuse (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998, pp. 11-12). Furthermore, trauma engulfs victims with fear, emotional turmoil, and mental breakdown. Consequently, they develop various mechanisms to avoid the intrusions of traumatic memories that evoke these feelings, such as avoiding anything that reminds them of their traumatic past, resorting to drugs 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, pp. 12). Lastly, people with post-traumatic stress disorder may attempt to cope with their environment through emotional constriction, but their bodies continue to react to certain physical and emotional stimuli as if there were an ongoing threat of annihilation. Consequently, they suffer from hypervigilance, an exaggerated startle response, restlessness, and an immediate shift from stimulus to response without often realizing what makes them so upset, and they tend to experience intense negative emotions (such as fear, anxiety, anger, and panic) even in response to minor stimuli (Van der Kolk and McFarlane, 1998, pp. 13).

In response to the societal context described above, this study aims to analyze the manifestation of sexual assault and trauma within Amadu Maddy’s “No Past, No Present, No Future” and Zakes Mda’s “The Madonna of Excelsior”. Both novels were chosen due to their interconnection with the specificity of African socio-cultural contexts and the significant problems related to sexual assault. Sigmund Freud’s concepts, as elaborated above, are utilized as the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study.

METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative research method to analyze the selected novels entitled “No Past, No Present, No Future” and “The Madonna Excelsior”. A close-reading approach was utilized to gather data for this study. Additionally, a comparative outlook was emphasized (De Zepetnek, 1998). These methods were complemented by multiple primary references from Freud. The data consisted of the novels’ dialogues, which depict events of and events leading to sexual assault and trauma as experienced by the characters in each novel. The selected data were analyzed using Freud’s fundamental concepts of sexual assault and trauma experienced by individuals.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

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

Amadu, from the beginning, engages the reader to comprehend and empathize with the various factors that contribute to sexual trauma. He places significant emphasis on negative sexual encounters as the primary causes of Joe’s psychological disturbances, which are laid bare through symptoms of trauma and post-traumatic disorder. Joe’s first encounter with the opposite sex occurs when he spends Christmas with Ade’s family and meets a woman named Mary. As the narrative unfolds, Joe witnesses Mary being surrounded and attacked by a crowd, accused of engaging in sexual scandal with different men.

Both Joe and his friend, Ade, witness this unjust treatment of Mary with deep pity. 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." (Maddy, 1973, pp. 13).

Ade's mother's words greatly influence Ade and Joe, causing them to view Mary solely as a sexual object. Later that day, Joe and Ade encounter Mary washing her clothes by a nearby river. It doesn't take long for both friends to recognize Mary's beauty. Joe approaches Mary and engages in conversation with her, eventually leading them to walk into the bushes together. Joe tries few things to seduce Mary:

"he laid his right hand on Mary's bare bosom and squeezed and squeezed" (Maddy, 1973, pp. 16). "The temptation subsequently compels Mary to *"gave herself quietly."* (Maddy, 1973, pp. 17).

In the middle of Joe and Mary making love, Ade, who had been observing from a distance, appears and blackmails Mary into having sex with him under the threat of revealing her sexual imprudence to her aunt. Despite Joe's 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." (Maddy, 1973, pp. 17).

The incident exposed Joe to the bitter taste of betrayal by a close friend, leaving him questioning his own sense of manhood as he found himself unable to protect the woman who served as 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?" (Maddy, 1973, pp. 17).

Immediately following 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). Likewise, Joe finds himself overwhelmed by the event, leading to the recurrence of intrusive thought about what transpired. 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 (Maddy, 1973, pp. 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" (Maddy, 1973, pp. 23).

In addition, sexual rape poses significant dangers to the victim, leaving her susceptible to both physical and psychological repercussions. When such an act is committed in the presence of a witness, that individual is left grappling with the aftermath. 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 an inherent aspect of the human condition, and it is almost inevitable for individuals to encounter traumatic experiences at some point in their lives. What truly matters, however, is not the mere occurrence of trauma, but rather the coping mechanisms one employs to navigated and transcend its effects. While some individuals effectively address their trauma and are able to resume their lives in a healthy manner, others struggle to overcome their traumatic experiences, resulting in a perpetual stain on their daily existence. Joe, in particular, exhibits a resolute determination to confront his traumatic encounter with Mary by attempting various approaches. 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 Marry, 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, pp. 28).

Despite Joe's attempt to establish another heterosexual relationship in hopes of moving past his profoundly negative encounter with Mary, his ongoing feelings of frustration and fear of betrayal serve as clear indications of the devastating extent of his trauma. These emotions continue to haunt him and significantly impact his behavior and functioning as an individual.

Adding to Joe's trauma is the challenging economics situation of his new partner, Bola. Bola sustains herself through prostitution, relying on the income she earns from it. However, Joe's limited financial resources make it impossible for him to adequately meet even a fraction of Bola's Basic survival needs. His lack of economic means leaves him unable to provide the support she requires, which further exacerbates the distressing circumstances they both face. 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.' (Maddy, 1973, pp. 38).

Her abrupt rejection has left a devastating impact on Ade's psyche, as he was not prepared for such an incident. Consequently, we witness him being overwhelmed by intense fear, helplessness, and hopelessness. Van der Kolk noted that the way a victim perceives and attributes meaning to an accident determines its traumatic nature. Similarly, it is evident that Joe didn't initially develop PTSD until he encountered similar sexual trauma again with Bola. Based on his negative sexual experiences, he reached an oversimplified conclusion that any heterosexual relationship is a form of dreadful betrayal and that women symbolize evil.

Survivors of sexual trauma are at a high risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to the American Psychiatric Association (1994), the diagnostic criteria for PTSD include exposure to a range of symptoms, such as recurring memories or nightmares of the event, persistent avoidance of trauma-related triggers, emotional numbness, and increase vigilance to perceived threats. The case of Joe illustrates this scenario. His trauma stems from his negative sexual experiences. Understanding the intensity and magnitude of the pain caused by his sexual encounter with Mary, he attempted to adjust and integrate the event as part of his past experiences by entering into another heterosexual relationship with Bola. Unfortunately, the second affair also turned out to be unsuccessful, exposing him to another trauma that triggered

his previous traumatic experience with Mary, thereby leading to the development of PTSD.

Indeed, his inability to emotionally connect with other women indicates that the painful incident with Mary has subjected him to PTSD. Evidently, his PTSD manifested in the fact that when he engages in heterosexual relationships with other women, Mary's memory haunts him to the extent that he cannot encounter a woman without being reminded of her, as if 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.' (Maddy, 1973, pp. 98).

Joe expresses, as he recounts his encounter with an unnamed woman. The immediate acceptance of his offer for sex without hesitation shocks him, triggering memories of his traumatic event with Mary. His violent physical reaction, flinging himself out of bed, is a clear manifestation of his PTSD. The past traumatic experiences infiltrate his present state, leading to intense rage and somatic emotions. In this state, he often resorts to insulting and cursing women, blaming them for the destruction of his manhood and life.

From this, it is evident that Joe is struggling to cope with his trauma, as evidenced by the symptoms of PTSD. This complicity fuels his hatred towards all women, although not every woman poses a threat that would mentally annihilate him in his perception of heterosexual encounters. Joe's exposure to PTSD is apparent, as 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, pp. 1).

Charged with inner turmoil resulting from his negative heterosexual encounters, which have profoundly affected him, Joe seems to find solace in Father Odon's homosexual advances. He accepts the idea that his negative experiences with women will come to an end by embracing homosexuality. However, living in a homophobic society, this acceptance of homosexual relationships becomes a contributing factor to his mental breakdown and emotional turmoil. It invites homophobic slurs from other characters and perpetuates the cycle of abuse. Even after immigrating to London with Ade and Santigie for better education, Jo continues to face emotional distress due to homophobic abuse from his friend, Ade. 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, 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?' (Maddy, 1973, pp. 138).

Mentally shattered by his friend's abuse, academic failures, and deep anxieties about his sexuality, Joe reaches a breaking point and attempts suicide by overdosing on sleeping tablets, marijuana, and alcohol. Fortunately, his white boyfriend, Michael discovers Joe and rushes him to the hospital, where he eventually 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. While it is evident that Ade's sexual assault on Mary has inflicted lasting psychological wounds on Joe, stripping him of his sense of masculinity and his perceived entitlement as a man, his homosexual relationship, having a powerful influence on him to come at peace with his present condition and a more compassionate future.

The Traumatic Impacts of Rape in Zakes Mda's "The Madonna of Excelsior"

Mda, in his novel, explores the socio-historical dimensions of sexual assault, shedding light on its profound consequences. 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. As a black woman victimized by the apartheid system, Niki represents the underprivileged and undereducated, burned by the weight of poverty. Orphaned at a young age, she is forced to live with her alcoholic father whose disregard for his family's well-being is evident as he squanders his money on alcohol. As a result, Niki grows up in abject poverty, deprived of proper education, adequate food, shelter, and clothing—a stark contrast to a life of privilege.

As the narrative unveils, Niki, accompanied by her two friends, ventures into the fields to collect cow dung for cooking. While the three girls are collecting dung, a white Afrikaner, Johannes Smit, who wields his power and privilege, using his whip to instill fear in them. In effect, Niki is deeply 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 friends assert that Niki must comply with his demands since he has chosen her by offering her more money than them.

The fact that the money differs shows that Niki's body is perceived as a commodity, its value determined by Smit's perspective. In the end, the bargain slowly begins to feel like an ordinary transaction—as if 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 his money as a sign of her willingness 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, pp. 16-17).

There is a complete disregard for her consent in this encounter. Niki finds herself in a position of helplessness, unable to decline what is being inflicted upon her. Consequently, he uses his physical power to assault her, violating her body in every way, even before taking her virginity. Finally, she manages to push him away and runs home, her heart shattered. 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. Despite Smit's lack of prior knowledge about Niki, he quickly 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. However, what awaits her at home is her drunken father's physical abuse, as she has 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, pp. 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 undergoes a multitude of emotional responses such as fear, shame, and helplessness, as the rape she endured transpired unexpectedly and 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, pp. 16-17).

The irony of this situation highlights the fact that Niki’s domestic responsibilities leave her with little time to dwell on her painful condition. Hence, her circumstance reflect the notion of the body as a site of loss and trauma, shaped by an oppressive socioeconomic system and a repressive patriarchal society. She is denied the space to find solace for her wounded soul and to assert her recognition of equal humanity. There are few experiences more traumatic than being trapped in spaces that are consistently 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, pp. 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, pp. 18).

The combination of peer-pressure and Niki’s dire economic circumstances ultimately robs her of the opportunity to protect her redemptive and spirited character. She reaches a point where she is willing to endure sexual degradation for money. Consequently, she allows him to masturbate on her thighs in exchange for additional cash 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 dehumanized 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, pp. 19).

Although Smit’s persistent impotence prevents him from fully penetrating her on many occasions, there is one instance where he succeeds in entering her, thereby destroying her virginity. The impact of this rape is excruciating for Niki, as she tries desperately to rid herself of the memory of the violation: *“for many days she tries to vomit him out but cannot because only the last meal and the bitter bile comes out” (Mda, 2002, pp. 19).*

The loss of her virginity not only as a profound effects on her psychical well-being but also intersects with the trauma she experiences on a psychological level. Trauma is an inevitable part of being human, and individual may encounter traumatic experiences at some point in their lives. What matters, however, is not the experience itself but the coping mechanism used to overcome the trauma. While some people who effectively deal with their trauma and resume normal lives, others struggle to overcome their traumatic

experiences, which continue to impact their daily existence. 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, pp. 22).

However, her husband's continuous misconduct leaves her with no escape from the symptoms of her PTSD. Like many black men in apartheid-era South Africa, he supports his family through work in a distant white-owned gold mine, leaving very little time for 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, pp. 32).

She tries to plead him that she would never cheat on him. However, his jealousy overpowers his patience, leading him physically assault 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, pp. 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, pp. 32).

The husband's misbehavior, increasingly depletes her emotional resilience, triggering her to time travel back to her traumatic experience and gets choked by the odor she experienced in her original trauma, as if reliving the experience all over again. The repressed memory resurfaces, causing her immense pain and anguish over the sexual abuse inflicted by Smit, a topic she has not discussed since it occurred long 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 as she engages in sexual encounters that remind her of the rape she experienced long ago (Mda, 2002, pp. 50). Furthermore, her traumatic experience has led to negative changes in her thinking and mood. This is particularly evident in the symptoms of her post-traumatic stress disorder, which significantly impairs her ability to raise her child. As a survivor of sexual assault and a mother, she finds that the trauma has affected her parenting style, causing her to become overprotective in a society she perceives as unsafe. She becomes particularly prone to have trust issues 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 she endured as a young woman has left her suspicious of everything and viewing her world as abhorrent and frightening. Consequently, she becomes overprotective of her daughter, driven by the fear and anxiety that have taken hold of her subconscious mind. Gradually, she finds herself in a state of alienation, feeling disconnected from her surroundings. 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 Thaba Nchu, 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.

CONCLUSION

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. This allows 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 eventually leading to post-traumatic stress disorder. The fact that he must witness the woman whom he considered his first sex mentor being raped by his close friend seems to have wounded his psyche. Following this accident, he became increasingly tormented by overriding post-traumatic stress disorder which propels him into difficulties in trusting and maintaining a positive view towards 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 experiences of sexual assault and rape are intertwined with sexualized racism, peer pressure, and poverty. These factors serve to elucidate the horror experienced by 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 in sexualized racism and poverty. The fact that she has to lead a life engulfed with the symptoms of PTSD, such as 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 with the original event in a close rational mind and stripping it of its solution.

In conclusion, the literary depiction of sexual assault and rape can serve as an important avenue for triggering socially desirable responses, such as empathy towards 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 develop more effective responses to sexual assault cases within the criminal justice system.

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