



THE ESCALATING ANOMIE OF RAPE: LUCY JONAH'S *SHROUDED SECRETS*
TO THE RESCUE

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Abstract

Lucy Jonah's *Shrouded Secrets*, a novel published in 2016, recounts the causes, circumstances and socio-psychological effects of the scourge of rape. The narrative vividly and realistically portrays how innocent women fall prey to sexual predators who vilely rape them. The paper examines the scourge of rape which permeates the novel, identifies the different schemes rapists employ to carry out their wicked acts, shows how such deviant acts hurt victims socially, physically and psychologically and relates the novelist's narrative devices to the pervading theme of rape. Insights are drawn from Freud's psychoanalytic theory to show the psychological underlay of rapists' behaviours and how victims are affected by their actions and inactions. The researchers read the novels several times to identify all the instances, settings and characters of rape and then present them consecutively, showing the causes and effects of rape. The essay establishes that poverty, a quest for greener pastures, ignorance, peer influence, and family ties are some of the causes of rape, as illustrated in the novel. Luci Jonah proposes self-help, counselling and advocacy, organised formal intervention, rugged dressing for ladies, engaging in pleasurable activities or reflecting on nostalgic experiences as some of the panaceas.

Keywords: rape, victims, panaceas, psychoanalysis

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Introduction

Literature mirrors and reforms society as a primary function. This fundamental task of literature is reflected in Lucy Jonah's *Shrouded Secrets*. The novel captures some social defects that mar social decorum, beaming its critical light on the evil of rape, a contemporary issue that seems to have eluded all proffered solutions since the outset of civilisation. In Nigeria, in recent times, for example, the anomie of rape has bedeviled heterosexual relationships and its rising incidence jolts individual and corporate concerns and sensibilities. The news media are awash with the rapes of minors, innocent girls and virgins as well as adults. Who bells the cat of rape on the prowl? Lucy Jonah has assayed the hard task in her novel *Shrouded Secrets*.

This essay discusses how rape is portrayed in *Shrouded Secrets* and the solutions which the novelist proffers for rape. It also critically examines the socio-psychological causes and effects of rape on characters and applies insight from Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory, which lays bare the psychological make-up of characters and their personalities. *Shrouded Secrets* was published in 2016 by Lucy Jonah and its preoccupation and subject matter is rape.

The narrative draws upon strong family ties, domestic conflicts, and grinding poverty, which constrain Omosigho, the heroine, to relocate from Benin City to Abuja to live with a supposed uncle of hers who rapes her. However, she overcomes the hurting experience, concentrates on her medical studies and graduates successfully, relocating to America for further studies in Psychotherapy. In America, she meets Nicole by fate, a product of rape, who later becomes her husband. Together, they resolve to confront the scourge of rape.

Life and Works of the Author

Lucy Jonah, who hails from Ekuku-Agbor in Delta State, was born in 1946 in Benin City. She grew up mainly under the custody of relatives from whom she learnt a lot about life. In the mid-1970s, she did a sandwich course at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State. She took other correspondent courses and private tutorials in printing and publishing. Jonah once worked with the then Examination Success Correspondence College in Lagos. She is an accomplished writer, business-woman and renowned publisher. She has the following publications (novels) to her credit: *The Choice* (2000), *Ehianuka: An Autobiography* (2006), *When Men Were Gods* (2016), *The Trial of Sin* (2016), *Shrouded Secrets* (2016), and *The Pot and the Tripod* (2016). Some of Jonah's personal and vicarious experiences reflect in her writings, as her autobiography shows. This essay is limited to *Shrouded Secrets* because the novel is detailed enough to capture the objectives of the essay. The novel documents the narrated rape experiences of different characters in different settings and stories, thus making the novel a collection of interconnected short stories in episodic style of narration. The main story and rape ordeals of Omosigho, the heroine, and Nicole, the hero, and their reactions to their ordeals create the enabling circumstances for other rape victims to open up and share their rape experiences with fellow victims and counsellors in a series of flashback and simple narratives.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we examine the concept and types of rape, the theoretical and conceptual clarification of the paper and a brief review of relevant studies.

The Concept and Types of Rape

Rape is forceful and unlawful sexual intercourse against a victim, male or female, mostly female, usually any of anal, oral, and vaginal sex or all of them, with or without the use of objects. Once the consent of a victim is not obtained before a sexual intercourse is carried out, rape has taken place. There are different forms of rape, such as acquaintance rape, gang rape, war rape, prison rape, custodial rape, aggravated or statutory rape, among others (Ellen, Harrison, and Paige).

Acquaintance rape is committed by people who are familiar or identifiable by the victim such as co-workers, school mates, friends and family members in whom the victims repose trust. Gang Rape occurs when two or more perpetrators rape a victim or victims, often inflicting physical and psychological injuries in/on them. In prison rape, inmates with pent-up libido sexually violate other inmates who are vulnerable. Custodial rape is one of the commonest types in which people who are in official or institutional custody get raped by those who should protect them; those who have the authority and the official awe to intimidate them. For example, some prison warders rape prisoners, as some army and other military personnel do to their junior officers. During war, women become toy objects of rape in the hands of soldiers who deploy their weapons of death and violence to sexually assault helpless victims of war (Eze 65-70; RAINN; Health Place.com).

Theft rape occurs when armed robbers dispossess their victims of their possessions and also rape them; and there are ceremonial and ritual rapists, such as in cult initiation and other forms of rituals in dangerous conditions. Statutory or aggravated rape is the one clearly defined in statutory documents and therefore actionable. Statutory rape includes juvenile rape (raping an underage child), paedophilia (defiling a child), using drugs and injection to overpower the victim (drug facilitated sexual assault), applying force and weapons, and so forth. Some of these rape types are perpetrated in *Shrouded Secret*. They are, therefore, examined against the backdrop of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis.

Theoretical Orientation

There are many theories of rape from social, biological, psychological, and biosocial perspectives. However, the paper concentrates on the psychological perspective. Some scholars argue that instinct, libido, and the desire to dominate others motivate the acts of rape (psychological theory). It has also been argued that evolution and the processes of natural selection has enabled males to learn the physical tactics of forcing themselves on females (evolutionary theory). Third, some say that rape is a function of inordinate individual libido encouraged by female folk's vulnerability and the fact that rapists often go unpunished, biosocial theory (Ellis 630). It has equally been postulated that the propensity to commit rape may be the result of genetics, evolving basically from the Y chromosome influencing neurohormones to 'alter the strength of the sex drive and sensitivity to aversive stimuli and thereby affecting individual probabilities of committing rape' (Ellis 631). Some sociologists

have argued that 'rape is a conditional strategy that may potentially be deployed by any man' (Mckibbin, Shakefauld, and Starrat 86). However, this paper is hinged on an understanding and analysis based on the psychological theory of rape, specifically on Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis.

Freud's Psychoanalysis

In Psychoanalysis, the concepts of *instinct*, *Eros* and *Thanatos*, *libido*, *id*, *ego*, *superego*, among others, are insightful. Freud used them to explain the human psychological system, propounding five stages of human sexual development, which are the *oral stage* (0- 18 months), *anal stage* (18 months to two years), *the phallic stage* (2- 5 years), *the latency stage* (5- 11 years), and *the genital stage* (11 years and above).

Freud argues that loopholes in any of the stages of human development listed above may affect or influence later development in adulthood. For instance, at the phallic stage (2- 5 years), the child develops parental attachment which may result in *Oedipus* and *Electra* complex. Freud used Oedipus Complex to denote the sexual feelings which a male child develops for his mother, thereby viewing his father as a rival; and Electra Complex was later applied as its opposite: the sexual feelings which female children develop for their father at the phallic stage, which may persist in adulthood. Oedipus and Electra Complexes are also used to denote incestuous relationships and sexual feelings which may develop at the phallic stage and later become *fixated* to produce a phallic character who is care free, stubborn, proud, self-assured and hurting. Rapists are described in this essay as having a phallic character and inordinate id and libido. The essay assumes that sexual abnormalities such as sadism, masochism, voyeurism, masturbation, incest, forced sex or rape, develop from such latent feelings in childhood and adolescent stages and may manifest later in adulthood.

The human psychic system, according to Freud in the German language, contains *des Es*, *des ich*, and *des uber-ich*, ("the it", the "I", and "the above I"), which is interpreted in English as the *id*, *ego* and the *superego*. Freud refers to the id as a "chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations: the store of psychic energy". Ann Dobie says that "the id can be a social destructive force unrestrained", which "seeks to gratify its desires without any concern for law, customs, or values" (51). *Trieb*, the German word for *instinct*, controls the psychic system. *Trieb* and *libido* (selfish, impulsive, rational and irrational instincts, sexual energies, psychic motivations and biological drives) control human beings. At times, *libido*, the sexual energy, builds up in the psyche, seeking outlets, and at that juncture, the id becomes restless and reckless, its main interest being to get released or satisfied for the psyche to have a balance. This process of the psychic id seeking unbridled release for *libido* is the *pleasure principle* (Freud 111). The part of humans which craves for unlimited pleasure is the id, a reckless part of the mind that pushes a man to rape a defenseless girl and vice versa.

The ego, on the other hand, obeys the reality principle, satisfying the id in an ideal way. It thinks, reflects and accepts social realities while the id does not. Using Plato's analogy, Freud says that the ego is a 'charioteer trying to control two strong horses, each running to the opposite direction' (Egbochukwu 124). Dobie maintains that the psychological criticism is employed, "to probe the workings of the human

psyche in order to understand why people act as they do" (48); and this is the preoccupation of the essay.

Within the human mind is a psychological apparatus which restrains the destructive drive of the id. The apparatus is the ego with the superego (*the I and the above I*). Sometimes, the need for unlimited pleasure forces one to go against social order. If the tendency to violate social order is not checked, it will degenerate into anomy. The superego ensures that society is kept in perfect order and moderates one's actions such that no matter how cruel a human being may be, there are still restraining elements controlling his actions. This is an aspect of psychoanalysis that deals with society. Everyone has a way of reacting to social constructs like laws, customs and traditions. While some people strive to be conformists, others become deviants. The superego balances the forces which lie between the ego and the id.

Accordingly, we applied Freud's psychological principles to analyse rape in *Shrouded Secrets*. One of them is 'the Pleasure Principle,' which focuses on one's desires to get immediate satisfaction without regard for morals and laws. Other concepts applied are the 'Reality Principle,' which moderates the actions of man in line with societal laws and morals, and the concepts of *instinct, libido, id, ego, superego, Oedipus Complex*, among others.

Literature Review

Jonah's *Shrouded Secrets* has not attracted substantial critical comment because it is a recent entrant into the Nigerian literary cosmos. Monica Udoette and Joy Nwiyi note that "unacceptable sexual activities and relationship(s) within and outside African society are being interrogated by African writers in recent times" (245). Similarly, Ogaga Obaro says that individual deviant behaviour involves "a person acting alone contrary to established customs, mores and laws of the group or society. Thus, the armed robber, the thief, the burglar, the murderer, the rapist, the drug addict, the prostitute and so forth who acts as a single individual is an individual deviant" (26-27).

Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* has a similar theme of rape and sexual molestation bordering on incest. Ibekwe Ezeakolam on *Woman at Point Zero* notes that most men derive pleasure in exploiting women sexually. Freud's pleasure principle is reechoed here. In *Woman at Point Zero*, Firdaus' "uncle repeatedly molests her sexually and forces her into an early marriage with more-than -sixty-year old sheikh Mahmoud" (Ezeakolam 76). This bitter experience is echoed in Jonah's *Shrouded Secrets*. It is similar to the story of Omoshigo the heroine and Salamatu, her clinical client.

Canon Gilbert Madubuike asserts that risky sexual behaviour such as rape and pornography affect society and individuals (21), as Jone-Frances Agbu affirms that "child sexual exploitation involves a breach of trust," which deals a great "blow to their construction of the world as a safe enough environment and their developing sense of others as trustworthy" (74). Blessing Obasele has examined the theme of female oppression and overbearing patriarchy in *The Trials of Sin*, another of Lucy Jonah's novels, against the theoretical background of Feminism. Obasele's work shows that women are presented as victims of male oppression in marriage, education, politics, culture, and the work place. Indeed, the many incidents of rape in *Shrouded Secrets* further buttress Obasele's findings in *The Trials of Sin*.

Critical works on *Shrouded Secrets* are yet to be carried out because it is a new African novel, which justifies the critical attention given to it in this essay. In the Nigerian society today, the high incidence of rape is alarming; yet little or nothing is done to discourage, stop or curb it. In *Shrouded Secrets*, Jonah explores rape and deplores sexual assault on the sensibilities of women. The novel condemns rape and practically demonstrates that it can be curbed and managed in society.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is an interpretive and in-depth thematic analysis of *Shrouded Secrets* to identify the incidents, circumstances and consequences of rape. The novel was read critically several times and all the incidents of rape, their causes and consequences, and the narrative literary devices with which they are conveyed were identified and explained. Relevant materials like journal articles, text-books and the Internet were used. Analysis and interpretation of the texts extracted from the novel were based on the researchers' understanding and insights of scholars who have written on the problem of rape. The psychological approach to literature is the critical theory applied in the essay, as it deals with the human mind and actions in relation to society. Specifically, Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory underpins the analysis of the endemic incidents of rape in the novel.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The various incidents of rape identified are presented sequentially and subsequently followed by a discussion of the panaceas to rape that the novelist demonstrates in the work.

The Incidents of Rape in *Shrouded Secrets*

The novel presents fourteen pathetic instances of rape. Eight of them are major and narrated by the character victims themselves and six cases are reported by some other characters. In Lucy Jonah's *Shrouded Secrets*, many incidents of rape occur in compromising social settings and psychological circumstances, causing victims untold socio-psychological traumas and losses, and to which Lucy Jonah provides panaceas through the proactive activities of Omosigho and Nicole the heroine and hero of the novel.

Omosigho, the Heroine

The first victim of rape is Omosigho, the heroine, raped by Joseph, her uncle of a sort. This type of rape is acquaintance or custodial rape which borders on incest. The remote social circumstance is poverty and a broken home. There is no peace in Omosigho's home in Benin and the poverty there is so biting that they neither even feed nor fund Omosigho's education, despite the fact that she has a bright future. Consequently, her mother is forced to ask for her brother's assistance. The immediate psychological circumstance is that of trust, familiarity and consanguinity, which disarm Omosigho the victim. Omosigho trusts her uncle, believing in his integrity and his love for humanity. However, her uncle becomes overwhelmed by his id and libido. So, he rapes Omosigho in a socio-psychological circumstance that is beyond her control, as Omosigho luridly narrates in pages 82-83 of the novel.

Freud's psychoanalytical theory says that erotic feelings flow even among people from the same family. Societies emphasise sexual boundaries to prevent incest, yet Uncle Joseph's id recklessly violates the sexual code that forbids incest and rape. He acts below the scale of morality, deflowering Omosigho violently, shattering her physically and psychologically. Later, Uncle Joseph's Superego returns him to his senses and he begins to feel remorseful for his reckless betrayal of Omosigho: "Omosigho, my dear," he called in tears "I am very sorry for what has just happened" (83). Omosigho, whose ego and superego are more vibrant, forgives him and continues to live with him, concentrating on her medical studies.

Having suffered the avuncular rape, Omosigho becomes a misanthrope: "Nobody in the family was able to understand why I did not have a fiancé while I was still a student particularly after all my sisters had got married" (147). Because she handles the experience well, she overcomes the hurting socio-psychological effects, graduating successfully in Medicine and going back to Benin with Uncle Joseph to see her parents. During the visit, Ogiugo narrates how he raped Imade and was forced to marry her. This is done in a flash back and simple language, and so are all the other narratives of the incidents of rape in the novel. Flashback and chronological narration in plain language are the outstanding narrative devices in the novel.

The Story of Imade and Ogiugo

Ogiugo, a repented rapist, explains why he raped a victim, Imade, who eventually became his wife:

I did not plan to marry Imade or any other woman at the time I did. I only did what other young men of my age did and I got stuck. I raped her when I was a teacher living in her father's house. She was a vibrant beautiful virgin of fourteen years of age when some of my friends and I boasted about who would be the first to have sex with her. To prove my prowess, I lured her into my room and raped her. Unfortunately for me, her father caught me red-handed and forced me to marry her. (143)

This confession testifies to the fact that rapists go after girls who are weak. Besides, Imade is raped because she is naïve and because Ogiugo, the narrator, wanted to satisfy his social id, ego and libido. The evil called rape is not limited to Africa. It is a universal thorn in the flesh of humanity regardless of race. While Omosigho is in the United States of America for higher studies in Psychotherapy, a course she chooses as a result of her resolve to fight the scourge of rape and offer succour to its victims, destiny and events bring Omosigho to Nicole's alienated world.

Nicole, the Estranged Product of Rape

Omosigho meets Nicole in a Catholic church, a handsome, tall, black American, a product of rape, and their contact sparks off a mutual affection that grows intense daily. Realising the wonderful personality in Omosigho, Nicole confides in her:

I don't have a father...I am a product of rape! My mother was only fourteen years when she was violently raped by a masked man who got her pregnant as well as inflicting serious injury on her right wrist. That injury was so bad that the wrist had to be amputated. For ten years after my birth, my mother slaved, struggling with one hand to give me a worthwhile life... She died at twenty-five while I was eleven years old, and since then, the Catholic Church has been my all in all...My grandparents rejected me because I was fathered by a rapist. They were afraid that I could end up

like the criminal who fathered me. The circumstances of my birth is the reason why I am studying psychotherapy... (153-154)

By a streak of destiny and as a result of their socio-psychological experiences, they are now in the same postgraduate school pursuing the same body of knowledge for the same purpose. Omosigho so overwhelms Nicole with her more powerful ego and superego that Nicole reconciles with his aged grandparents and together, they relocate to Nigeria to celebrate a huge wedding ceremony. Thereafter, they settle down and open a psychotherapeutic clinic for rape victims to consult for counselling and to narrate their individual experiences of rape. The first narrator is Gloria who was repeatedly raped by her cousins until a point that she was forced to react violently.

Gloria's Ordeals

Gloria's cousins sexually abuse her in a circumstance of poverty, ravaging Gloria's nuclear family. She lost her father at eleven years, leaving her mother with six children to cater for. One of his uncles shows pity and takes Gloria away to live with him in Port Harcourt. Gloria's mother is mendicant, having lost her husband at a young age. So, she is constrained, as in Omosigho's case, to send Gloria to her uncle. The socio-psychological setting is that of naivety and fear on Gloria's part. Unfortunately, her uncle's two sons named Greg and Anselm are experienced rapists who had once successfully raped their house help (*Shrouded Secrets* 219), as Gloria reveals in her narration. Greg and Anselm, who are largely controlled by their id and inordinate libido, use threat and brashness to browbeat Gloria to submission. Gloria recalls how Greg and Anselm, her own cousins, often rape her:

Both of them sneaked out of their room and came stark naked to...rape me... As Greg pounced on me, I shouted with all the force I could muster. He held my mouth but I struggled hard and fought him off while screaming louder. The two young men were surprised at my defiance because before then I had accepted their regular rape as the price I had to pay for being poor and for the help their father was rendering my family. As I struggled and shouted, Anselm threatened that he would go to the kitchen and fetch a knife to cut my throat, but I shouted louder while holding on to Greg. (212-213)

Gloria's uncle rescues her in the end, but nothing punitive is done to her assailants who live on in peace. Anselm and Greg's rape of Gloria bears the imprints of Freud's psychoanalytic Oedipus sexual feelings that relations share and sometimes express amorous passion for one another. Gloria's cousins with reckless id shun their ego and super-ego to rape Gloria, thereby impregnating her, and her aunt in a panic procures an illegal abortion for her, which later results in serious complications of infertility. The psychological effects on her are telling and agonizing: "From the day I was first raped, I had become a living dead. As far as I was concerned, my dignity as a person had been forcefully taken off me" (212).

When Greg returns home from campus, after the bitter experience of abortion and its humiliation, he attempts to rape Gloria again for the umpteenth time. Infuriated, Gloria stabs him on the back of his neck and he slumps. Thinking that he will die, Gloria flees to no place in particular. Somehow in panic, she boards a vehicle which takes her to Abuja, a foreign city to her. She strikes an acquaintance with a total

stranger called Ray who later becomes her husband, but she experiences difficulties in getting pregnant:

I have been married to Ray now for four years without being pregnant. I have been diagnosed of PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease), which I was told was caused by infection. At the time my uncle procured abortion for me, I was only fifteen years old. The medication given to me after the abortion were to prevent infection. But I was too ignorant; so, I did not take the medicines, and nobody told me the implications, it is only now that I am having difficulties in getting pregnant that the facts are getting to light. (234)

After Gloria, Salamatu also recounts her painful rape encounter.

The Fate of Salamatu, a Minor

Salamatu is a product of a broken home, a young girl abandoned by her mother to the mercies of her step-mother and father. Salamatu is forced to hawk groundnuts for her stepmother, a daily menial routine that exposes her to rape. The remote push factor here is poverty and a broken home. Salamatu is from a polygamous home in which her father maintains four wives and eighteen children of which ten are girls. Salamatu's mother had three girls and a boy by her father who divorced her mother when Salamatu was ten years old. She later remarried and had more children for her second husband, abandoning her first set of children to their malicious stepmother who exploits them economically. While Salamatu hawks groundnuts on the street, Alhaji Dauda, a sexual beast with wild libido, violates her. Salamatu recounts her ordeal:

He picked me up like a baby with his big hands and pulled up his kaftan, threw me roughly on the sofa and lumped his bulky frame on me. I was not only lost under his bulk but was almost choked and his weight on me muffled my cry. He had the problem of pushing his big organ into me, but he went ahead and raped me. I felt as if he wanted to kill me.

When he was through, he left me panting and bleeding. He went to the table by the sofa, picked up a five hundred naira note and threw it on me. I was twelve years old when this happened. (237)

Salamatu's stepmother blames the rape on Salamatu. Rather than bringing the culprit to book, Salamatu's father forces her at a premature age on Alhaji Dauda, who unremorsefully adds her to his harem of wives. Salamatu becomes pregnant and has a girl child out of the rape, a child having a child. Eventually, the premature marriage collapses and Salamatu runs way to a good Samaritan. Apart from domestic settings, rape also occurs in public institutions, as in the experience of Rosa and her roommate.

The Fates of Rosa, Her Roommate and Mrs Salami

Rosa is a student with a responsible roommate and two wayward ones. The social setting is a university campus of diverse people with different orientations. Reckless events of rape do occur in higher institutions as a result of high levels of freedom and insecurity. She and her decent roommate live under heavy pressure to join other students who glorify prostitution, but she fights very hard to resist all temptations to lure her into a promiscuous lifestyle. However, four masked rapists gang-rape her and her decent roommate. Rosa herself narrates her ordeal:

I was dragged roughly down from my chair, flung onto the floor with one of them wielding a gun. As they were dealing with me, my room-mate stirred and woke up. Seeing the men round me with a gun on my head she tried to scream, and *wham*, a heavy blow landed on her face...she was dragged down to the floor and pinned down with heavy hands grasping her mouth. While two of the men were on me, the other two were on my roommate. One of them ripped off my night wear and lay on me while his colleague held a gun over my head. He thrust his manhood roughly into me... They practically turned me to pieces, leaving me with trails of blood and bruises. They did same to my roommate and rushed out without any of us being able to identify whom they are. (246-247)

Thus brutalised and stigmatised, they cannot concentrate on their studies; so, they leave school temporarily to heal physically and psychologically. Rosa's parents try all they can to rehabilitate her, including relocating her to another area of the university community. She manages to return to school only to discover to her chagrin, five months later, that she is pregnant with twins, a boy and a girl.

Now, Mrs Salami, her landlady, advises her against abortion, revealing that she was also a victim of rape: "I was also a victim of rape, though not by a gang. I was raped by my teacher who later became my husband. You are aware that I have two daughters who are twins. They are the product of that rape..." (279). Desperate, Rosa still goes to a fake medical centre to procure abortion in the hands of some medical quacks, which nearly takes her life. She develops serious complications, culminating in a hysterectomy, and finally she drops out of school. As she says, "I have been hurt physically and emotionally, and right now, I am suffering from excruciating pains. My self-esteem and dignity have been destroyed" (249). Elsewhere. She says "I have been stripped of everything that makes me a human being, and I feel it is better to die than to live" (265). The last experience shared is that of Maria, a naïve young girl.

Maria's Experience

Maria narrates how her cousin sells her out to a so-called wealthy business man who has businesses in Nigeria and the UK and assists jobless people to get employment: "When we got there, the man sent him away on an errand, so he left me with him. The moment he stepped out of the room, the man grabbed me and raped me. My cousin spent close to two hours before he came back to the room. He met me crying but did not bother to ask me why" (285).

Again, poverty is the remote cause of this rape, like most of the other instances. Maria is fatherless and her desire or ambition to get a job turns her a cheap win for Patrick, her mindless cousin. The psychological background is that of naivety, secrecy, and ignorance on the part of Maria, and Patrick's reckless expression of id, the pleasure principle and libido. Maria subsequently gets pregnant and she confides helplessly in Patrick. In the pretense of taking her to a doctor for an abortion, Patrick hands her over to another man who rapes Maria in a secured compound. Even Patrick himself stylishly rapes Maria in the guise of using her private organ to push an abortion drug into her inner privates. Later, she develops complications from the drug and becomes infertile for a long time. She loses her admission to the university because of the crisis and suffers several other unpalatable consequences.

There are other reported cases of rape such as that of Modupe raped by her stepfather, after which she attempted to kill him and so was sent to jail for attempted murder. Nicole and Omosigho release her from prison. Gladys' husband threw her out because armed robbers gang-raped her (a case of proud ego). Mandy who was raped by her father (a perfect instance of Oedipus complex); and Charlotte whose Director raped and impregnated her (306-307). So, it is rape, rape and rape all the way. The narrations of all the events of rape, apart from Omosigho's and Nicole's cases, take place in Omosigho's therapy clinic, where she and her husband Nicole counsel and heal rape victims; a practical panacea that the author demonstrates in the novel, among other solutions explicated below.

Panaceas to the Scourge of Rape

The novel clearly proffers practical solutions to the scourge of rape. Self-liberation, right attitude and reaction to rape, psychological balance, establishment of therapy clinics, humanitarian centres and education are some of the panaceas demonstrated in the novel.

Most times, crippling psychological depression and social stigma prevent rape victims from bouncing back to life. Omosigho's case offers readers some of the best ways to handle the consequences of rape. She courageously refuses to let the pain overcome her. Unlike some rape victims who resign to fate and bask in self-pity and remorse, Omosigho resists the stigma that goes with rape. She goes to the bathroom to have a thorough symbolic bath similar to a ritual bath which cleanses not just the outward body but also the inner soul. Omosigho washes away her sorrow, weakness and broken spirit and this dignified act repositions her physical and inner person. She also resolves to not inform her parents because doing so will scandalise her and ruin the relationship between her mother and her uncle while at the same time jeopardising her education and future. Rather, she rises above her ordeal and concentrates on her medical studies. Her action is didactic because it reveals that rape victims must never give up. They must pick up and start afresh. The lesson in Omosigho's approach is that rape victims must consciously make an effort to overcome the event of rape. Reporting and scandalising oneself in a backward society that cannot properly rationalise the incidence of rape and combat it courageously is useless, especially when those to whom the report is made will only aggravate its effects without ensuring that the victim gets justice and, above all, socio-psychological healing and de-stigmatisation. Rape victims must understand that once raped, the act becomes irreversible. Therefore, a self-regenerative reaction, as Omosigho shows, is more effective.

Humanitarian agency or non-governmental organisation (NGO) is an alternative government which can assist people to heal and emerge from the stigma of rape. Omosigho and Nicole pull resources together to start an NGO where rape victims are nursed back to full life. As Omosigho says: "God willing, we would have children, make some money and work for battered and voiceless women who are victims of rape and other abuses. We would work to bring their plight to the notice of government; we would also use our medical and psychotherapeutic knowledge to repair their brutalised body and battered psyche" (203).

Masculine mode of dressing is further suggested for women to prevent quick access to their private parts. For example, it is easier and quicker to rape a woman wearing a skirt but a little difficult to rape one wearing trousers with belt, zip and buttons:

Men should wear skirts and gowns and women should wear trousers... She explained that on the day she was accosted, the trousers she wore prevented the rapist from quickly raping her. "If men should wear skirts or gowns, women or girls would be able to repel rapists' attacks by having a quick pull at their male organs until the rapist suffer enough pain to force them to release their victims." She argued. Although we all laughed at the suggestion, it made some sense to me, and some day look into this suggestion. Her new idea was termed, "Trousers for women and skirt for men." (308-309)

In addition, it is important for women to dress decently if their cultural or religious sentiments do not permit them to wear trousers. Rapists usually select their victims from people who dress seductively hence it is imperative to wear elegant but decent clothes.

One other important solution which the novelist suggests for victims to overcome the effects of rape is spiritual healing and the intervention of religious bodies. The intervention of religious bodies can go a long way in assuaging the negative consequences of rape. Omoshigo goes to church to purge her burdened mind after she has been raped and Nicole finds succour in the humanitarian arms of the Catholic Church in his area in America, where he and Omoshigo meet and synergise to confront the scourge of rape in society. Sometimes, a visit to a religious house may bring relief from psychological pain. Omoshigo confesses to a priest who prays for her and counsels her to have solace in God, who is a powerful source of love and peace. In this experience, her id and ego are going through a disturbing conflict which she believes only God can resolve for her. The priest represents the physical manifestation of Omoshigo's superego. According to Freud, the superego embodies social institutions and religion is one of them. Religion occupies the centre of society to which many people turn either as 'the opium of the masses,' as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels say. Marx and Engel also say positively that religion is the comforter and 'the soul of a soulless state' (Marx and Engels). Omoshigo experiences inner peace after she empties her burden at the feet of God through the counsel of the priest. It is therefore noteworthy that religion is suggested as a reconstructive tool which raped victims can use to revamp their broken hearts.

Culinary art and nutrition can improve a broken heart and this is well illustrated in the novel. Omoshigo cooks a meal and the aroma invokes healing nostalgia in her. In a way, the nice aroma she perceives relieves her mental burden. Having gone through medical and spiritual healing, she turns to the power of culinary art. To this end, she decides to cook fresh corn and peas which she has not eaten for four years and this really refreshes her system, bringing back sweet memories of childhood. The powerful aroma of the fresh corns lifts her spirit from the realm of sorrow and she becomes lively again. This proves that cooking a favourite meal or eating a familiar meal or doing something pleasurable and nostalgic has the ability to uplift a worried or downcast mind, therefore one can say food and nostalgia are powerful healers of a battered heart. Omoshigo and her loathed uncle eat the cooked fresh corn together, which renews their strained relationship (*Shrouded Secrets* 104-

106). It is ironic that food should reunite Omoshigo and her estranged uncle but then it does. Jonah's *Shrouded Secrets* reveals that eating a favourite meal or sharing meals with people can wipe away or reduce psychological burdens and practically resolve misunderstanding.

CONCLUSION

Rape is portrayed as a dangerous social problem in Jonah's *Shrouded Secrets*, which this paper examined. Eleven instances of rape are explored in the novel, seven major cases and four minor ones. The most common type of rape in this novel is acquaintance rape, which is rape by people whom the victims can identify: relations, friends and acquaintances. This is followed by rape by strangers such as armed robbers and burglars who just ram in on innocent girls in their unsafe residences and rape them.

We also found that rape victims are often simple-minded girls who are mostly deceived by people close to them. However, helpless girls are also attacked by unknown rapists. The use of force and violence is central to the scourge of rape and many instances of rape in the novel occur in settings of poverty, broken homes and general insecurity.

In addition, we establish that rape leaves behind negative and everlasting effects which ruin victims' personalities. Mistrust for humanity, misanthropy, reclusion, premature and sudden loss of virginity, infertility, stigma, broken dreams and truncated careers are some of the negative consequences of rape for its victims. But what about the rapist? They often go free, or suffer from the biting pangs of remorse, or go to jail, if convicted. However, convicting and sending rapists to jail hardly occurs.

The novel's style and language distinguish it. For example, it uses the cause-and-effect method as well as flashback to present rape incidents and their diverse effects on victims. Besides, its use of the first person narrative point of view affords each victim of rape an opportunity to personally recount his or her ordeal. A remarkable feature of the novel is plain use of language, which is accessible to anyone who can read and write in English. Rape is a crime that ought to be condemned in its entirety because it makes life unbearable for its victims, and rapists ought to receive punishments that should stifle their wild libido.

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