TRAUMA AND SELF-DISCOVERY IN SADE ADENIRAN'S *IMAGINE THIS*

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the multifaceted journey of the protagonist as she navigates through layers of psychological trauma and embarks on a transformative quest for self-understanding in Sade Adeniran's Imagine This. Existing studies have focused on inter-cultural conflicts, existentialism, psycho-pathology, racism, and victimization but have not adequately studied the causes of psychological trauma, self-discovery and emancipation from the trauma as portrayed in the text. This study, therefore, examines the effect of psychological trauma on the victim as a result of her inner mental process and gains insight into the unconscious intention of the character. This is an attempt to show how psychoanalysis can be used to understand the behaviour of characters and what inspires the action in them. Analytical research method is employed in this study. Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory and Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory is used in the course of the analysis. The paper reveals the psychological trauma and finds the strategies of self-discovery. Adeniran's Imagine This also examines the psychological effects of broken marriage, parental irresponsibility, hostility, alienation and defective 'personality' structure on a child at formative age. Lola, a teenage girl recounts the pains of harsh realities of cultural shock occasioned by her sudden change of environment which inflicts on her psyche deep sense of neglect, deprivation and abandonment. The study concludes by portraying the effect of trauma and the emancipation from such trauma. This paper discovers that characters have some psychological trauma; this arises from painful psychological experiences in their lives. Some were subjugated to oppression, inferiority complex and depression.

Introduction

Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This* (2007) is a compelling narrative that explores the intricacies of trauma, identity, and personal transformation through the eyes of its young protagonist, Lola. Set against the backdrop of both London and rural Nigeria, the novel charts a coming-of-age journey marked by displacement, emotional turmoil, and the struggle for self-definition. Written in the form of a diary, the narrative provides an intimate window into the psychological and emotional experiences of a young girl grappling with abandonment, cultural alienation, and the search for belonging.

This paper examines the dual themes of **trauma and self-discovery** in *Imagine This*, analyzing how Adeniran portrays the lasting effects of emotional and psychological wounds and how these become central to Lola's journey towards understanding herself. Trauma in the novel is multifaceted—ranging from parental neglect and cultural dislocation to physical and emotional abuse. However, the text also demonstrates the resilience of the human spirit, as Lola gradually begins to reclaim agency over her life and narrative, carving out a space for empowerment and self-awareness.

The study is grounded in psychoanalytical concepts from **Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan**, and more recent trauma theorists such as **Cathy Caruth** and **Dominick LaCapra**, the paper explores how Lola's early childhood abandonment, cultural dislocation, and exposure to abuse disrupt her psychic stability. It argues that Lola's diary functions as a therapeutic space—a symbolic returns of the repressed—where traumatic memories are gradually brought into language and processed. These psychological problems may be caused by alienation, displacement, unhealthy object-relation impulse during infancy stage of development and sense of expatriation. Through a close textual analysis of Lola's diary entries, this paper traces the stages of her transformation and the ways in which self-discovery emerges from suffering, silence, and resilience. Therefore, this study is an addition to scholarship in areas other than the library materials. It is useful to lovers of knowledge in humanity, psychology and on the medical profession. This work also contributes to literary psychoanalysis by emphasizing the role of **narrative as psychic reconstruction**, showing how Lola's fragmented identity begins to cohere through acts of writing, remembering, and re-narration.

Previous studies on Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This (*I. Modahunsi, 2012; M. Ayodele M. 2012; O. Jegede, 2012; K. Stephen, 2014) have focused on inter-cultural conflicts, existentialism, psycho-pathology, racism, and victimization without corresponding reflection on the causes of intra-psychic conflict, self-discovery and emancipation from the trauma as portrayed in the text.

i. Psychoanalysis and Trauma Theory in *Imagine This*

The study investigates trauma, utilizing Psychoanalysis and Trauma theories to explore how traumatic experiences shape behavior and mental health outcomes. The development of Trauma Theory cannot be attributed to a single founder, as it emerged from the contributions of several key figures across different disciplines. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis laid the groundwork for understanding trauma, particularly through the study of hysteria and his concept of 'trauma neurosis'. Pierre Janet's concept of dissociation highlights how trauma can fragment memory and consciousness. Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* outlines the stages of trauma recovery and Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory on Literature explores how traumatic experience are articulated and processed through narratives. Her insights are valuable for analyzing how trauma survivors communicate their experiences.

Trauma theory explores the psychological impact which includes experiences such as physical or sexual abuse, accidents, natural disasters, war, loss and other distressing events. It recognizes that trauma is not only physical but can also be psychological and emotional. It plays a crucial role in understanding and addressing the profound impact of traumatic events on individuals and societies, as well in fostering empathy and support for survivors.

The analysis probes into the interior psyches of the characters, exposing how ugly experiences are deposited and repressed in them, the

conclusion of personality structure of the id, ego and the superego which cumulate into eruption of the repressed experiences and its development into psychosis. Psycho-biological analysis of the author of the work is also brought into fore so as to account for how the writer purges her mind of neurotic circumstances, channelling or sublimating same into readable reading materials.

ii. *Research Methodology*

The study employs a qualitative approach to examine the effect of psychological trauma on the victim and the drive for self-identity. It is believed in psychoanalysis that certain human behaviour stems from early experience repressed into the unconscious which unconsciously reflects in our actions.

iii. *Theoretical Framework*

This paper adopts Psychoanalysis and Trauma theory, a form of therapy aims at curing mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious element in the mind. The unconscious is the realm of repressed memories and emotions, the preconscious is what, not being in consciousness, can be brought to consciousness by ordinary introspective method.

According to contemporary psychoanalytical terminology, trauma "is an event in an individual's life that is defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organisation". (Laplanche and Pontalis). **Psychoanalytic theory** is employed to delve into the *internal psychic mechanisms* that shape Lola's emotional development and identity formation. Drawing on the foundational concepts of **Sigmund Freud**, the structural unconscious is considered as a site where repressed desires and traumatic memories reside. Freud's notion of **repression** and the **return of the repressed** offers a framework for interpreting the unconscious traces of Lola's trauma that re-emerge throughout the text in subtle ways—through dreams, withdrawal, or obsessive recollection.

iv. *Trauma and its various types*

An insightful exploration of Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This* as a factual tale of self-awareness and/or discovery. Using the psychoanalytic literary theory as model for analysis, this work attempts to capture the thematic thrusts of the novel which revolve round serious issues of frustrated wants, gender identity, self-discovery and assertion. Also, this work attempts to logically explore the contending forces faced by teenage children growing up in the postcolonial African society (particularly Nigeria, as depicted in the novel). The novel delineates the psychological effect of broken marriage, parental irresponsibility, hostility, alienation and defective 'personality' structure on a child at formative age. To provide a background for understanding common disorders, this study gives a general description of various types of trauma.

According to Sigmund Freud in his "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming" is a venture embarked upon by a psychologically depressed writer who seeks "wish fulfilment" through his/her writing. Writing provides such a writer the opportunity to get compensated with fantasized feelings of achievements which have hitherto escaped him/her in real life. Several writers in this web may have suffered personal losses, marital failure, and sickness. For Sade Adeniran's protagonist in her debut novel, we are exploring in this study, the "wish fulfilment" is parental love, care, affection and acceptance. This form of personal writing or memoir/journal writing enables self-exploration and rediscovery and adequately defuses internal conflicts.

Little wonder Adeniran's protagonist, Lola, struggles to come to terms with the new reality (ies), the new life set ahead of her as her father sends her to live with a relative in the village. This provides her a strange and/or shocking handle of life and her desires seem to be mere wish-full thinking that melts at the dawn of reality.

Ultimately, the Desire subject in human experience is what Psychoanalysis, particularly the Lacanian theory, as championed by Jacques Lacan, has adequately captured. We have adopted this theory to evaluate Adeniran's Lola in *Imagine This* as a Lacanian subject who ignorantly and/or blindly pursue the desire to enjoy parental care and attention, and in the

course of event, how she earnestly seek divine intervention in the resurrection of her dead brother, Adebola.

In *Narcissistic Disorders,* Heinz Kohut (1971) believes narcissistic personality traumas are due to problems of not getting sufficient attention from a parent in early childhood or not having sufficient respect for the parents. The cause of narcissistic trauma is the failure to develop positive feelings about the self when the experience of parenting has been disruptive or inadequate. When a child has a perception (usually unconscious) that the parent has been absent, uninterested in the child, or faulty, the child may grow into an adult who sees herself at the center of relationships (Kohut, 1971). *Imagine This* delineates the psychological effect of broken marriage, parental irresponsibility, hostility, alienation and defective 'personality' structure on a child at formative age. It is a narrative of a young girl who is deserted by her mother when she was eighteen months old left to be raised by foster home, her father, relatives and well-wishers. Born in London by Nigerian couple, Lola, together with her brother, Adebola, grows up in a foster home after their mother abandons them. In a bid to prevent the duo from being lost, their father opts for moving them to Nigeria. Arriving Nigeria, the family settles in Lagos. Not sooner have they settled in Lagos that Lola's father decides to entrust his children to relatives for care and upbringing believing that 'it takes a village to raise a child' (95).

The narrator of the story, Omolola Olufunke Olufunmilayo Ogunwole, has managed to keep a daily diary of her experiences as early as the age of nine. She tells her story entirely in the form of a journal. Omolola Ogunwole, a motherless Nigerian girl raised in London, is left at the mercy of a series of resentful and superstitious relatives when her father suddenly whisks her and her brother back to Nigeria, and abandons her in his village in Idogun, without possessions, running water or electricity. The diary, which she named 'Jupiter', was a constant companion to her when she was uprooted from familiar surroundings to a place where no one understands her. With every strand of the narrative, she begins with a proverb, a date and then addresses it to Jupiter, her sole imaginary companion. It protests the agonies of different forms: the agony of growing up; the agony of the absence of motherly care; the agony of an innocent child trying to break into the complex social and cultural structures.

The date, 20th May 1977 turns out to be one of the most significant date in Lola's personal history. Against her pleas, cries, and prayers, Lola is taken to Idogun to live with her Auntie in the village. This inflicts on her psyche deep sense of neglect, deprivation and abandonment. As a result, Adebola lives with his father's brother Uncle Joseph in Ado Ekiti, and Omlolola in Idogun to live with the father's sister, Iya Rotimi. This move is traumatic for Omolola because Idogun is a village, and the place does not have any of the amenities she has been used to. Her struggle for survival begins. No one understands her English, and she does not understand them either. She laments this sudden change of fortune:

> *Why, why, why? I hate them all, I want to go home. I don't want to live with my Auntie. I don't want to live in Idogun. I want everything to go back to the way it was, with Daddy, Adebola and me living at number 4 Edgecombe House. (3)*

Central to Lola's happiness and self-fulfillment is the togetherness, love and unity in her family after the 'disappearance' of her mother. "Number 4 Edgecombe House", indeed her family is a symbol of happiness, perfectness, pride and self-fulfillment. Thus, it becomes obvious that Lola's antagonism to her father's 'rash' decision stems from her desire to keep her family together even without the mother. After her experience at her foster home, Lola wishes to ensure that the cord of the family is tightly tied, and love, unity and progress sustained against all odds of marital and economic upheavals. Lola's sudden change in fortune turns out to have a greater impact on her life as the village experience – a first time contact with an under-developed and parochial environment go a long way in the shaping and re-sharpening of her sense and identity.

One major talking-point presented in this novel is the construction of home, place and displacement. Lola's sudden transplant from London, a place she considers her actual origin throws her out of her psychological balance. She feels lost in her new 'home' which in its real sense is her ancestry. Her childhood and past is rooted in London. It becomes difficult for her to swiftly adjust to the uncultured and illiterate Idogun, motherland society which does not

present her any good to consider a place she can call home. The protagonist is thus faced with the problem of definition and search for her ideal home:

> *I supposed I have to get used to calling this place, "home".*
>
> *But I have to say right now - **my real home is in London**…I really hate it here, I really want to go back to London…no one understands a word am saying, there's no water, no electricity, no television, …(8)*

What the protagonist presents here is a grave sense dislocation from her real home. She is thus compelled to compulsory exile in Idogun, her actual ancestry. Exile, according to Jegede (2012), "…is therefore both a state of mind and geographical space from where physical and emotional traumas arise" (278). The protagonist's migration from London into a new world has eroded her sense of self-worth and identity.

Iya Rotimi turns out to be Lola's immediate threat to self-fulfilment. Lola's British/foreign background intimidates her Auntie and her cousins who feel so inferior and threatened by Lola's exposure. She feels alienated from her friend, home and social comfort. The relatives to whom her father entrusts her make life more miserable for her. Iya Rotimi and her children dislike her without cause. Iya Rotimi deals with her with passion of hatred, accusing fingers are always pointed at her whenever anything goes missing at home only to discover later that such missing items are stolen by Rotimi or carelessly misplaced. She is wrongly accused of stealing so many times, and sometimes suffers hunger. Before the fact is discovered sometimes, she would have been punished unjustly

She later stays with her grandmother, still in the same village, when her father found out about the way she is being mal-treated. Life with her grandmother was hell; she goes hungry more times because mama derives pleasure in starving her. She looks for a way to go back to stay with her father but all to no avail. When all her pleas fall on deaf ears, she involves in so many pranks in school just for her to be expelled but none of her ploys worked.

Lola has to craftily stop calling her father Daddy and first adopts the name father and later HE. She thinks "Daddy is someone you love, someone who kisses away your tears… someone who is there for you" whereas "Father is someone who had a part in your germination but didn't bother to water the seeds… A father doesn't care and that is what I have, a father' (86). Lola does not hesitate to state her reason: "I refer to him as father now because that is how I think of him" (86). What a disappointing father!

Lola's psychological state deteriorates shortly after Adebola's death. Her life shatters and psychological trauma envelops her psyche. The psycho-semiotic features identified by Duane (2007) start to manifest in her. First, she thinks she has acquired superpower to resurrect the dead through prayer and fasting. She resorts to anorexia in the name of fasting. She takes to forty days fasting and vigil. After thirty days she has starved, she begins to hallucinate and dream: "Ten more days to go… I will finish my fasting and God will bring Adebola back to life. I keep hearing his voice, his laughter. I see him in my dreams" (90). She develops auditory hallucinations. The hallmark of this schizophrenic symptom is that patient experiences voices of invisible person talking to or about them. Later her condition degenerates to visual hallucination – a situation in which the patient assumes he/she sees somebody who ordinarily is invisible. "After days of despair thinking my fasting and prayers had not worked, I woke up and Adebola was sitting on the end of my bed. It is truly a miracle" (93).

The school Lola attends at Idogun does not help matter, rather than alleviating her problem, it only compounds her suffering the more to the extent that she is determined to quit school at all costs. In school, Lola is taunted by everyone around her, especially her Maths teacher, Mr. Adesanya, as a result of her peculiar privileged background:

> *Come and show us how this is done in the white man's land", or "Just because you have been to the land of the white man does not mean you are better than anyone else. (15)*

The complex social structure, particularly the family system/circle presents Lola a puzzle she

needs to re-arrange before she settles in her new 'home'. What is central here, as Lola soon finds out is the sense of communalism with which the village conducts its activities and existence. Lola records in her diary:

> *Everything here is so confusing. I have too many relatives and I don't know how we're related. It seems like I'm related to the whole village. (4)*

It is a common knowledge that in Africa, every child is one's child; by extension, there is no such affair, business, happenings and events as personal. The society come together to share happiness and pains, and as such everyone turns out to be a sister or brother, and ever elderly man is a father and the elderly woman, a mother. However, the communal order is what Lola's father, being a product believes can help groom and tutor his children. Lola's father isn't able to cope with raising two kids after a failed marriage, which was also an arranged marriage that is the major reason he decides to send his children back to Nigeria so that they can be trained in African way. He further argues that:

> *HIS reason for sending me away was to gain an understanding of the Idogun culture and the ways in which it differs from the white man's. I, apparently, needed de-programming and needed to realize that life can be hard and it takes a whole village to raise a child. (189)*

His personal experiences – childhood and growth to maturity cement his firm belief in the communal system/lifestyle of the village:

> *HE didn't know who his father or mother was until he was in school, yet HE was never mistreated by the relatives he stayed with. HE became their son while he lived with them and that's how it should be. HE looked at Uncle N and Uncle J and asked if they gave him a precious package to look after, would they expect to receive it back in the same condition in which it was given or not? (190).*

This firm belief in his native culture turns out to be his greatest undoing. He is unaware of the fact that the forces of westernization and the harsh realities of the postcolonial age has punctured the heart of culture and eroded societal values. Contending issues of the economy, class stratification, political instability and gender are responsible for this cultural and family disorientation. Thus everyone strive for his/her comfort and happiness before anything else. Lola is denied of father's love and care for the happiness and comfort of Cook Woman, and to comfortably enjoy her matrimonial bliss, Iya Foluso, her uncle's wife will do anything to see her pack out of the house.

In the village, Idogun, Lola is offered a vintage position to explore the various levels of failures in the communal and family values that her father had so much believed in. This is evident in failed relationships among kinsmen and kinswomen, and also in intra-gender conflicts (particularly sister-in-law/mother-in-law versus wife – as we see in Iya Rotimi's relationship with Mama Tayo). *Schizophrenia* is severe disturbances of thoughts, emotions and behaviors. Individuals may think and speak in illogical fragments that are much disorganized. Hallucinations are prevalent among individuals with schizophrenia and refer to seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting or smelling things that are not there. Other symptoms include unusual motions or immobility, extreme lack of energy or emotional response, and inappropriate effect, such as laughing when hearing about the death of a friend. The term *psychosis* is a broader term including schizophrenia and other traumatic disorders in which individuals have lost contact with reality.

In *Studies of Hysteria* (1895), Freud asserts that symptoms of hysteria are the outcome of 'unresolved but forgotten' trauma from childhood. In 1900 Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams* in which he established the fundamental concept of psychoanalysis, a narrative-based treatment with the use of free association, slips of the tongue and dream. With this method, Freud was able to uncover the painful and threatening events that have been repressed in the unconscious making them inaccessible to the conscious mind. Shortly after Freud's discovery, critic started to apply this theory to the interpretation of literature and other disciplines.

Applying the tenets of psychoanalytic theory such as childhood experience, displacement (in this context, displacement is an act of directing one's feeling for a particular person to an object related to her), slip of the tongue and dream, we have seen how fitting this theory applies to Adeniran's *Imagine This.* The narrator avails herself of the scripto-therapeutic value of narrative, recounting the hitherto repressed ugly experiences she has from infancy to adolescent age and by so doing purging her mind of the disturbing effects of the experiences.

Having been separated from her brother, Adebola who could have filled her with confidence and vitality to face the world, Lola finds herself in a pitiable state of timidity, neglect and deprivation, thereby contributing to her loss of self-confidence, belief and strength. In school, she is a perpetual scapegoat and at home, she is at the centre of all wrongs.

To compound her woes, she discovers her body is not perfectly in shape as any other girl of her age in the village. This makes her an object of ridicule and shame, and denies her the courage to take on the hostile 'world' instead of engaging in wishful thinking like saving some money to travel back to London or waiting for 'a knight in shining armour' to rescue her. It is remarkable that Lola experiences her first menstrual discharge at age sixteen in Uncle Jacob's house. Definitely, the delay may be attributed to the malnutrition she has suffered years back in Idogun. Lola's physical and emotional growth is stunted by a lack of food, love and attention.

v. *Self-discovery: its concepts and application to author's experience through her characters*

Imagine This seeks to chart the course for self-discovery, assertion and fulfillment of the female gender. It does not only argue that culture, customs and tradition function in negative ways to obstruct proper and positive self-development, but also stresses that civilization/modernization, if not well checked, can also destroy personal sense of worth and value. Lola is very brave and very resourceful. She also enjoys peace of mind with Uncle Niyi. Lola who had wanted to quit school in Idogun now admits that 'school has been fun'. "For once, I'm actually enjoying going to school and I've made some new friends" (145). Through the love shown to her by her well-meaning Uncles and some philanthropist, she is able to write and pass GCE with "four A's…. three B's and Cs," have some dates and plan for higher degree in the University.

Sade Adeniran also exposes the prevalent issue of rape and sexual exploitation of the girl child in the society. Lola is sexually abused by Uncle J, the same man who she idealizes as her hero and deliverer. She loses her self-worth and value, and also the courage to trust anyone else around her. She discovers that:

> *Men never give a woman anything without expecting something back in return; it's the law of the land. If they offer to buy you a drink, it never occurs to them that you accept because you're thirsty and not because you're interested in becoming the second or third wife/mistress/girlfriend. (224)*

This shocking revelation about men further raises her psychological tension. Excessive worry and apprehension are associated with general anxiety disorders. Individuals may experience restlessness, irritability, problems in concentration, muscular tension and problems in sleeping. Excessive worry about a variety of aspects of life is common with anxiety being diffuse rather than related to a specific fear (phobia), rituals or obsessions or physical complaints. These disorders have been characterized as neuroses as they all are associated with anxiety of one type or another. Awaking from her frustrated hopes and dreams as life experiences have shown her, she wonders:

> *What happens to the dreams we have when we're young? …I ask myself what do I want to be when I grow up? And now Am almost grown up and I still don't know. What will I do if I don't get into Uni in September? Become a Molue driver's second wife? (231).*

From the above, the fear of becoming a Molue driver's second wife accentuates Lola's

lost of self-esteem/identity. While it is easy for the reader to condemn Lola's mother for abandoning her children, upon further investigation into the cause of her action, it is noteworthy to state that she takes the decision to walk away as a reaction – a reaction against certain unjust and inhumane acts towards her. Lola discovers this truth in her mother's 'formal' letter of disengagement from her marriage. From the letter, Lola discovers that her mother had been unfairly treated by her father. Her mother complains that:

> *You have destroyed my pride as a woman and you make me look Like an outcast and I feel ashamed to see or talk to anybody in the House. You have thrown me out against my wish – you have separated Me from my children (244)*

This is typical of some men who (out of sheer distrust towards women) separate, either physically or psychologically, the children from their mother because they hold the opinion that women are a bad influence on their children.

Also revealed through Lola's mother is the sub-theme of domestic violence against women in the society. This is a trend that has attracted the attention of Civil Societies and the United Nations who have come out to raise the alarm on the increasing rate, and also initiated actions to curb it. Lola's mother writes in her letter:

> *I have experienced enough of your cruelty and I can no longer go on like this. There are many defects in my body as the result of your beating me like an animal daily – these defects I have to repair. Your cruelty to me has gone beyond bounds and I do not want any more damage done to me. (244)*

The damages done to her (Lola's mother) are not only physical, but emotional and/or psychological. The several punches, kicks, blows and slaps have defaced her self-worth and dignity, first as a human being, then as a woman and a mother. As a result, the only realistic way to repair all the damages is to walk out of the marriage which has become more of a burden to her. Lola's mother does not hate childbirth or motherhood; in fact, to indicate her deep agony of leaving them, she stresses that the decision to walk out of her marriage is the most agonizing part of her plights.

Lola's agonizing experiences both in Idogun and in the city provides her the needed courage to bear her burden with smiles and defiant hope. At her own point of self-discovery, she asks herself the most appropriate question, "Who is Omolola Olunfunke Olufunmilayo Ogunwole?" (266). To answer this question, she has to embrace the opportunity offered by her deceased father to travel abroad for her university studies, and as such, learn more about life and what it has to offer her. While she is unable to provide instant answers to various questions bothering on her identity, one positive remark she finds worthy of note is that all her agonizing pains, miseries, and frustrations have made her wiser and mature as she is no longer "a lost little girl looking for salvation". The narrator avails herself of the scripto-therapeutic value of narrative, recounting the hitherto repressed ugly experiences she has from infancy to adolescent age and by so doing purging her mind of the disturbing effects of the experiences. Slip of the tongue and dreams afford the opportunity of making diagnostic assessment of the narrator's unconscious which make the diagnosis and classification of her psychosomatic disorder possible. Indeed, Lola's Jupiter – journal is a "depiction of her journey towards wisdom… a sensitive and perceptive account of a voyage through memory, imagination and a re-imagined past". (334)

vi. *Thrust of the Work*

This study investigates how trauma shapes the psychological and emotional development of the protagonist in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*, and how the process of self-discovery unfolds through narrative expression. Using trauma theory and psychoanalytic theory as analytical frameworks, the research explores the ways in which the protagonist, Lola, internalizes experiences of abandonment, abuse, and cultural dislocation, and how these traumatic events fracture her sense of identity.

This paper focuses on how Lola's diary entries serve not only as a record of events but also as a therapeutic space for emotional release, memory reconstruction, and identity negotiation. By applying trauma theory, the

research highlights how her fragmented narration mirrors the disorienting nature of traumatic memory. Psychoanalytic concepts such as repression, the return of the repressed, and Lacan's mirror stage are used to examine how Lola's unconscious responses and desire for wholeness shape her path toward self-awareness.

Ultimately, the thrust of the work lies in demonstrating that *Imagine This* is not just a story of suffering, but a powerful narrative of survival and psychic reconstruction. The study underscores how the intersection of trauma and self-writing offers a space for healing, making a significant contribution to African literary studies, trauma discourse, and psychoanalytic literary criticism.

Conclusion

This paper examines the psychological effect of trauma using Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*, It sets out to investigate the effect of psychological trauma of the characters. The narrator consoles herself of the scripto-therapeutic value of narrative, recounting the hitherto repressed ugly experiences she has from infancy to adolescent age and by so doing purging her mind of the disturbing effects of the experiences. It has been established that Adeniran's text is a journal account of a young girl's trials and travails in her journey to self-awareness and personal development though an obvious sample of a self-writing.

Lola's agonizing experiences both in Idogun and in the city provides her the needed courage to bear her burden with smiles and defiant hope. At her own point of self-discovery, she asks herself the most appropriate question, "Who is Omolola Olunfunke Olufunmilayo Ogunwole?" (266). To answer this question, she has to embrace the opportunity offered by her deceased father to travel abroad for her university studies, and as such, learn more about life and what it has to offer her. While she is unable to provide instant answers to various questions bothering on her identity, one positive remark she finds worthy of note is that all her agonizing pains, miseries, and frustrations have made her wiser and mature as she is no longer "a lost little girl looking for salvation".

Recommendations

Adeniran's use of the diary form reveals how **writing can serve both as therapy and resistance**—a way for marginalized voices to reclaim agency. This suggests the need for further literary and pedagogical attention to **autobiographical and confessional forms** in African women's writing. Such narratives should not be seen as merely personal but also as **sites of cultural, psychological, and political negotiation.** The study reveals that Lola's journey of self-discovery is deeply intertwined with her ability to confront repressed memories. Scholars should continue to explore the dynamics of remembering, forgetting, and re-narration in trauma texts. Psychoanalytic tools—such as Freud's theory of repression or Lacan's symbolic and imaginary orders—can aid in understanding how memory operates in character development.

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