

Suffering and Survival in Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*

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Abstract

This paper sheds light on the deep and harsh suffering of the women of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It focuses on the Congolese women's struggles and triumphs. It analyzes Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*; a play that pictures realistically the severe suffering of the Congolese women during the Civil War in the DRC. This research highlights those women's sufferings, exemplified in sexual violence, rape, refusal, exile and trauma. Moreover, it also focuses on those women's reaction towards their traumas and reflects their insistence on survival, self-dependence and self-empowerment.

Keywords: *Ruined, Sexual Violence, Rape, Victim-blaming, Survival, Trauma-recovery, self-empowerment.*

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"One of them took me by force, strangled me, and [they] raped me one after another. He had strangled me so much that I no longer had the strength to scream. Then they left. I was afraid and ashamed to tell this story to the couple who had welcomed me into their home - they were friends of my parents, and even when I arrived at my mother's [I couldn't say anything]."

Florence¹; one of rape survivors in the DRC.

Lynn Nottage (1964-) is an African American playwright and screenwriter. She has received many prizes and awards for her plays, "including the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for *Ruined*; OBIE awards for *Ruined* and *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine*; a National Black Theatre Festival August Wilson Playwriting Award, and two AUDELCO awards. She is also a 2007 recipient of the prestigious MacArthur "Genius Grant" fellowship." Her plays "cover a range of issues, some serious and tragic, others very comical, but behind her prolific writing is the spirit of the activist... Nottage describes herself as a storyteller; she researches, collects, and then produces the stories of women whose voices need to be heard" (Adell 201). Lynn Nottage is "one of the most respected and most produced African American female playwrights of the twenty-first century" (Shannon 191).

¹ Save the Children has worked in the DRC since 1994 to meet humanitarian needs linked to the arrival of refugees and rape survivors. It ensures access to healthcare through mobile clinics. It provides those survivors with information about support and medical attention to prevent HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and to cope with distress. See Kinshasa. "Children as Young as Nine Face Mass Sexual Violence and Mutilation in the DRC – Save the Children". <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/children-young-nine-face-mass-sexual-violence-and-mutilation-drc-save-children>

Nottage is a unique African American woman playwright who uses a distinguished, creative and new dramatic techniques. She asserts herself as both an African American woman and a creative Black playwright. Shannon notes that “like other playwrights, Nottage has carved a niche for herself in theatre, and the influence and reach of her works continue to ripple effects across theatre and literary fields... The beautifully textured and layered meaning in her work place her right alongside the best, brightest and most promising writers of her time” (191). Moreover, Shayla M. Atkins mentions that Nottage has been “writing, producing, and publishing plays for 29 years”; she “has left and is leaving an indelible mark on theatre” through her creative dramatic techniques (6). Nottage is best known for her distinguished drama, unique language, creative techniques and skillful style.

Through her plays, Nottage tries to empower her characters and to shed light on the marginalized women. She searches for and focuses on the unknown, the forgotten, the weak, the ‘other’. Shannon states that Nottage’s plays are about “rescuing voices from history, discovering silencing between the lines; black women defining themselves; race; multiculturalism, and diversity; and escaping reality” (187). Hence, Nottage is a distinctive African American woman playwright who makes a great effort in reflecting realistically and creatively the life and the various struggles that her characters feel. Through her plays, she attempts to empower her characters, especially the weak, the forgotten, the marginalized, the unheard African woman.

In *Ruined*, Lynn Nottage attempts to portray the sufferings of and the violence against Black women in wartime. It pictures the civil war (1998-2003) that was to control the Democratic Republic of Congo’s (DRC) natural minerals and fortunes, in addition to highlighting its devastating influence on the Black women of the DRC. Through the interviews that Nottage has had with the

Congolese women in the refugee camp in Uganda, Nottage can depict realistically those women who have experienced sexual violence and rape. *Ruined* depicts those survivors' sufferings, struggles and triumphs.

Ruined is based on the real stories of the Congolese women who have been survivors of rape. Those women who are met by Nottage, have inspired her play. Nottage states in *Almedia Projects*:

Six years ago, I traveled to East Africa to interview Congolese women fleeing the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I was fueled by my desire to tell the story of war, but through the eyes of women... I was interested in giving voice and audience to African women living in the shadows of war... In 2004, I went to East Africa to collect the narratives of Congolese women, because I knew their stories weren't being heard. I had no idea what play I would find in that war-torn landscape, but I traveled to the region because I wanted to paint a three-dimensional portrait of the women caught in the middle of armed conflicts; I wanted to understand who they were beyond their status as victims. (26)

Nottage wants to convey and to depict realistically the suffering, the unique and the unseen violence that the Black women have experienced in the DRC. She gives those survivors the chance to express their muted suffering and to tell their harsh struggles. In *Ruined*, Nottage makes a good use of her exceptional dramatic talents and her unique skills in reflecting the woman's suffering and the sexual violence that she experiences. Nottage is the voice of the voiceless women in the DRC. Nottage argues:

I am a storyteller by trade. I remain committed to telling the stories of women of the African diaspora,

particularly those stories that don't often find their way into the mainstream media. Sexual violence against the women of Congo is one of the great human rights crises in the world today, and I am using the tools that I have at my disposal to raise awareness and draw attention to the situation; those tools are my imagination and my storytelling skills. . . I cannot bear to live in a world where such horrific things are happening to my African sisters without doing whatever I can to help them... we were expecting horror stories, but we weren't prepared for this extent of brutality. (Enough Team)

Ruined pictures a specific type of women's suffering; it pictures the war against women. It highlights women's sexual violence and rape as Nottage claims that "the situation in the Congo is so complicated and chaotic that...I decided to focus on one war: the war against women. There are many wars being fought, but this seems the most inexplicable—and the one most easily stopped—and yet it continues". (Fred Mazelis). Moreover, Sharon Friedman mentions that *Ruined* strives to "bring attention to sexual abuse, rape, survival, sex, and psychological violence toward women in countries ravaged by conquest and conflict between government and insurgent forces" (594). Nottage aspires to draw the world's attention to a severe problem that faces the Congolese women. It can be argued that in the DRC, the war happens on the bodies of those women where their wombs become the battlefield. Nottage adds:

The war that I examine in my play *Ruined*, which is the war being waged against women... The word rape was a painful refrain, repeated so often it made me physically sick. By the end of the interviews, I realized that a war was being fought over the bodies of women. In listening to their narratives, I came to

terms with the extent to which their bodies had become battlefields. (Almeida Theatre Company)

Nottage attempts to help the Congolese women who focus on their special struggles at wartime; a specific type of war-; the severe war over their body. In the DRC, the Congolese women have suffered from sexual violence as they have been raped by the government soldiers and the militias. Gurwinder Kaur and Anshu Raina mention that “The Democratic Republic of Congo war rages as civilians, soldiers, and police of the country fight for control over its governance, its people and its valuable minerals. During this war, the Congolese women have been victimized and brutally raped and tortured by the militias, rebel soldiers, police and criminals”. (16). Although the civil war has ended officially in 2002, the Congolese women still suffer from sexual violence and rape. The continued violence and rape, had been largely connected to issues of ethnic violence and disputes over the control of Congo’s mineral resources like, coltan, gold and diamonds. (Victoor 6). Rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo is known for its brutality. As “many of the women who survive find themselves pregnant or infected with STIs/HIV with no access to treatment”. (Longombe et al 132).

In her play, Nottage sheds light on violence against women. Violence against women is defined by the United Nations in the “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women” as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, [...] whether occurring in public or in private life.” One form of violence against women is sexual assault and rape.

Rape is a criminal act that involves forcing someone to engage in sexual activity without his or her consent. Ann J. Cahil defines rape as “the imposition of a sexually penetrating act on an unwilling person” (11). She adds that rape “is a sexually specific act that destroys (if only temporarily) the intersubjective, embodied agency

and therefore personhood of a woman,” which is an attack on “the integrity of her person” (13-14). Moreover, Susan Brownmiller believes that rape is “both a blow to the body and a blow to the mind” (377). A rapist’s intention is to violate a woman sexually, and “humiliate and degrade,” her (378). For Brownmiller, rape is “an invasion of bodily integrity and a violation of freedom and self-determination” (381). In addition, Cahil defines rape as “a traumatic, violent, embodied experience” that assaults “the victim’s sexuality,” “her sense of safety,” and “her physical being,” (133). Rape is a crime through which woman is violated, victimized and totally objectified.

Moreover, Patricia Hill Collins believes that rape and other forms of sexual violence “act to strip victims of their will to resist and make them passive and submissive to the will of the rapist” (135). Andrea Dworkin believes that rape is a “slow murder in which terror and assault are mixed” (171). The raped woman is metaphorically murdered whose integrity, freedom, dignity, physical privacy, self-respect and self-control are violated and her inner self is killed. The Black woman has always been subjected to sexual assault and rape. For her, rape has been a weapon through which she is damaged, humiliated and even killed every day.

Thus, rape can not only be analyzed from a feminist perspective; however, it can also be regarded as a weapon of war. In the DRC, rape represents both; male patriarchy and war weapon as well. *Ruined* reveals how the government soldiers and the militias fight each other, using women’s bodies. As for emasculating, dishonoring, humiliating and degrading a man, raping his woman is the best and the easiest weapon. In fact, the DRC’s real war was over the women’s bodies. Briefly, in the DRC, rape has been used as a weapon of war. According to “Secretary-General Calls Attention to Scourge of Sexual Violence in DRC”, rape “has been used as a weapon of war by all sides involved in the conflict, and an estimated

200,000 women and girls have been assaulted over the past 12 years.” (unfpa.org). In addition, Jonathan Gottschall clarifies in “Explaining Wartime Rape” that “rape can serve as a strategic and purposeful action, a tool and weapon, that has intended consequences such as demoralization, disintegration of social fabric, submission, ethnic cleansing, etc. (131). For him, “rape is like bombs and bullets” which is “a tactic executed by soldiers in the service of larger strategic objectives... It is used systematically as a strategic weapon by soldiers to destroy, terrorize, demoralize, humiliate and emasculate...” (129-131). Thus, rape is used by the soldiers to violate not only the women’s bodies but to control over the land and its natural resources as well.

Moreover, referring to wartime rape, Gottschall adds that “The term ‘wartime rape’, as it is employed in the literature, never indicates isolated examples of rape by individual fighters. Rather, the term is used interchangeably with mass wartime rape to indicate distinct patterns of rape by soldiers at rates that are much increased over rates of rape that prevail in peacetime.” (129). At wars, women are more vulnerable to rape than peacetime. They are the goal of the brutal soldiers.

In addition, Ienas Talib Naseef argues that “In fact, rape is the first ghost that attacks every woman in wartime, it is considered the most painful power in wartime that cannot be indelible. In wars and armed conflicts in the whole world, manly power spin not only on land but also on the body of the woman.” (182). It can be argued that the one who suffers the most at wars is the woman who is the target of the soldiers and the easiest victim for them.

In *Ruined*, the Congolese women are the targets of both fronts; the government soldiers and the militias. In that way, rape can be recognized as a weapon of war. As Lisa M. Schroot notes that “The rapists in Nottage’s play are all soldiers and militia members. Rape, then, becomes a literal weapon of war, used to dominate a

population through physical and psychological violence.” (138). This severe war in which rape is used as a weapon of war is depicted skillfully by Lynn Nottage.

It is worth mentioning that the DRC is known as the capital of rape. Margot Wallstrom- the UN's special representative on sexual violence in conflict- believes that the Democratic Republic of Congo is “the rape Capital of the world” who states that:

Rape remained a dominant feature of the ongoing conflict in eastern DR Congo, with impunity being the rule rather than the exception... More than 8,000 women were raped during fighting in 2009... Eastern DR Congo is still plagued by army and militia violence despite the end of the country's five-year war in 2003. (*BBC News*).

In addition, Amber Peterman, Caryn Bredenkamp, and Tia Palermo note that "the number of women who have been the victims of rape in the DRC estimates of rape among women aged 15 to 49 years ... 1150 women raped every day, 48 women raped every hour, and 4 women raped every 5 minutes.” (1064-1065). The Democratic Republic of Congo is known internationally for women's rape and sexual assault as Jeffrey Gettleman mentions that “The sexual violence in Congo is the worst in the world. The sheer numbers, the wholesale brutality, the culture of impunity; it's appalling”. Thus, rape can be analyzed from two perspectives; from a feminist perspective and it can also be regarded as a weapon of war. All of the characters of the play are rape survivors who have experienced rape and are psychologically traumatized. They aspire to overcome this trauma and empower themselves.

Faithfully enough, Nottage's *Ruined* pictures the brutal treatment and the harsh reality that the Congolese women have had. Randy Gener argues that “Nottage has crafted a humanist exposé

about the brutalization of women's bodies during the decade long conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo" (21). In her play, Nottage points at the Congolese women's struggles and their psychological trauma during the civil war that has ended officially in 2003.

Nottage reflects to what extent those rape survivors are physically and psychologically destroyed and damaged. They are 'ruined' women. That is why the play is entitled *Ruined*, as significantly the word 'ruined' refers to the condition of the Black women of the DRC, who have experienced sexual violence and have become physically damaged and ruined bodies who are refused by their families and cannot be wives nor reproduce children. Thus, the title of the play; *Ruined*, refers to all of the female characters of the play. Beginning with the 'damaged goods' like Sophie and surprisingly, Mama Nadi; who is revealed at the end of the play that she is also a 'ruined' woman.

It is noteworthy that the names of the characters are real. They are the names of the women that Nottage has met in the refugee camp in Uganda. Phyllisa Derzoe mentions that "Mama Nadi, Salima, and Sophie are the names of real women" that "Nottage met in the Ugandan refugee camp" (187).

Ruined is set in a mining town in the (DRC), especially in Mama Nadi's brothel, the place where the 'ruined' women can work, protect and empower themselves. The play opens with Christian, "early forties, a perpetually cheerful travelling salesman", (5 Emphasis in original) who brings goods and sells girls to Mama Nadi, "early forties, an attractive woman with an arrogant stride and majestic air" (5 Emphasis in original) to work at her brothel. He brings two rape victims; namely; Sophie and Salima. The stage directions describe the condition of the two victims; "... A moment later two women in ragged clothing step tentatively into the bar: Sophie, a luminous beauty with an air of defiance, and Salima, a

sturdy peasant woman whose face betrays a world-weariness. They hold hands". (10 Emphasis in original). The two raped victims in their ragged clothes are pictured skillfully by Nottage. Nevertheless, she also depicts their inner fears as they hold their hands to support and protect each other. From the very beginning of the play Nottage reflects deeply the inner thoughts and the harsh suffering of rape victims who do not have a peaceful place to live in after they have been raped. The salesman, Christian attempts to convince Mama Nadi to take the two girls with a price of one. It is quite clear in the following dialogue:

MAMA: I said one. That one. (*Mama points to Sophie*).

CHRISTIAN: It's been a good week, and I'll tell you what, I'll give you two for the price of one. Why not?

MAMA: Are you deaf? No. Tst! I don't need two more mouths to feed and pester me. (*Mama continues to examine each woman*).

CHRISTIAN: Take both. Feed them as one. Please, Mama, I'll throw in the cigarettes for cost

MAMA: But, I'll only pay for one.

CHRISTIAN: Of course. (10).

In the previous lines, Christian succeeds in convincing Mama Nadi to take the two girls to be sheltered in her brothel and work there. Both of the girls have no place to live in. Christian tells Mama Nadi the story of the two girls.

CHRISTIAN: Salima is from a tiny village. No place really. She was, captured by rebel soldiers, *Mayi-mayi*, the poor thing spent nearly five months in the bush as their concubine. (12)

Christian tells Mama Nadi the harsh suffering that Salima has had. Salima has been captured and raped for several months by soldiers. Then, Christian tells Mama Nadi the tough story of Sophie. He says:

MAMA: And the other?

CHRISTIAN: Sophie. Sophie is ...

MAMA: Is what?

CHRISTIAN: ...is ... ruined.

MAMA: You brought me a girl that's ruined?

CHRISTIAN: She cost you nothing... Sophie is a good girl; she won't trouble you...she's a good girl. Hard worker.

MAMA: But damaged, am I right?

CHRISTIAN: Yes... look, militia did ungodly things to the child, took her with... a bayonet and then left her for dead... (12-13).

For the first time, the word 'ruined' is mentioned in the play by Christian, referring to Sophie. As a result of brutal rape and sexual violence that Sophie was exposed to, her genital has been damaged and has become a 'ruined' body. She cannot reproduce children. Sophie is the most damaged girl. Esther Terry argues that "to know ruined female bodies is to chart infertile or monstrous futures. No character embodies this more than Sophie" (163). Mama Nadi has refused Sophie because she cannot work as a prostitute in her brothel. It is noteworthy that those rape victims' only way of survival and financial security is working as prostitutes and working in Mama's bar. Mama Nadi agrees to take the two girls in her bar.

Ruined highlights the harsh suffering of the Congolese women who are rape survivors. She depicts all of her protagonists' struggles, challenges and triumphs. Salima, Sophie, Josephine and Mama Nadi

are rape survivors who have suffered psychologically and are damaged physically. Nevertheless, they empower themselves.

Salima is one of Nottage's protagonists. She has been raped brutally for five months by the government soldiers. She tells Sophie to what extent she has suffered and how she has been tortured:

SALIMA: But they still took me from my home. They took me through the bush-raiding thieves. . . "she is for everyone, soup to be had before dinner," that is what someone said. They tied me to a tree by my foot, and the men came whenever they wanted soup. I make fires, I cook food, I listen to their stupid songs, I carry bullets, I clean wounds, I wash blood from their clothing. . . I was raw. . . five months. Five months. Chained like a goat. (69).

In the previous lines, Salima tells Sophie how she was raped and how she was 'everyone's soup' in addition to being a servant for them as she cooks and cleans for her rapists. Nottage here wants to show how far rape is humiliating, brutal and destroying. The result of Salima's rape is being pregnant. She has a "child of a monster" (70).

Sophie is also a rape victim who has been raped by militias and has become 'ruined' as her genital has been damaged and needs a surgery. Sophie has been damaged severely as it is quite clear in the stage directions; "*Sophie shifts with discomfort. Her body aches, tears escape her eyes. Mama uses her skirt to wipe Sophie's eyes*". (16).

MAMA: Did they hurt you badly?

SOPHIE. (*Whispered*)... Yes.

MAMA: I bet they did. (Nottage, 16).

Sympathetically, Mama Nadi asks Sophie how far she was injured during her rape. Unfortunately, she was too damaged and needs a surgery. Thus, Salima and Sophie are affected greatly by their rape as Salima loses her family life and her baby, Beatrice was killed by the brutal soldiers.

Josephine is also a rape victim who is known throughout the play that she is the daughter of the village's chief; nevertheless, she is raped and chooses to live in Mama Nadi's bar and works as a prostitute. Skillfully, Nottage sketches the result of her rape through the stage directions; "*Josephine takes off her shirt, revealing an enormous disfiguring black scar circumventing her stomach*" (Nottage 34). For the first time we know that Josephine was raped through this picture that Nottage was sketched through the stage directions. Josephine, herself admits to Salima and Sophie that she was raped. She says:

JOSEPHINE: My father was chief! The most important man in my village, and when the soldiers raided us, who was kind to me? Huh? Not his second wife: "There! She is the chief's daughter!" or the cowards who pretended not to know me, did anyone move to help me? No! so you see, you ain't special!. (37).

Josephine tells Sophie and Salima that she is also a raped woman who despite being the chief's daughter and is known to the villagers, no one has helped or has protected her. She then tells them that they are not special which indicates the spread of rape and that all of the Congolese women are raped and are worthless.

Thus, the three previously mentioned characters are rape survivors who live in and work at Mama Nadi's bar. Mama Nadi protects and supports them. She, ironically enough, confesses at the end of the play that she is also a ruined woman. When Christian asks

Mama Nadi to marry him, Mama Nadi refuses at first and confesses that she is ruined and can't reproduce children.

CHRISTIAN: ...I love you. . . I'd like to sleep in the same bed every night. I need familiar company, food that is predictable, conversation that's too easy. . . Why not us?

MAMA: (*With surprising vulnerability*): I'm ruined. (*Louder*) I'm ruined. (99-100).

Hence, In *Ruined*, Nottage makes the issue of rape crystal clear. This reflects the harsh suffering of her different female protagonists in the play. As all of the female protagonists of the play are raped, fight and attempt to transcend all of the harsh obstacles that have faced them. They all have insisted on survival and empowerment.

It is noteworthy that the word 'ruined' is mentioned twice; at the beginning and at the end of the play. The play opens and ends with the word 'ruined' as if it is a confirmation on the harsh reality of rape and its deep consequences.

In her play, Nottage sheds light on the deep and the devastating consequences of rape as victim blaming and psychological trauma. Rape survivors suffer from blaming and rejection from their families and their relatives. Lisa M. Schroot notes that the rape "survivors experience extreme physical violence, which is exacerbated by the lack of access to medical care; the victim blaming and public shaming ... the rape survivors are ultimately deemed abject and are thus cast out of their communities" (100). Moreover, Bebbi Mutiara Emra and Desvalini Anwar argue that "society blames the victim of violence because they consider that women just let those things happened to her. They just keep rejecting the broken women in their place. It just adds more misery into the character when they are thrown out from their family". (16) Hence, rape survivors are doubly victimized; first; by being raped and second; by being refused by

their families that bear both pain and shame. According to Salih et al., “women have been stereotyped as ‘angels of the house’ in an endeavor to keep women in the confines of domesticity, but once she is raped, she will be driven away as an indication of shame and dishonor... Families and communities will be compelled to leave their lands, fearing shame and humiliation”. (117) In these communities, the victim is the guilty in the eyes of their relatives. The victim is seen as the responsible for her rape. Victim blaming is highlighted several times in the play from the very beginning of the play through the characters of Salima and Sophie.

From the very beginning of the play, victim blaming is highlighted when Christian brings Sophie and Salima who do not have a safe place to live in. He begs Mama Nadi to take the two girls. Because Sophie is a ruined girl, she is refused and rejected by her family. Christian admits that she is his niece and her family does not also accept her because she is a ‘ruined’ girl. It is quite clear in Christian’s words to Mama Nadi:

MAMA: And what makes you think I have any use of her?

CHRISTIAN: (Pleads): The girl cooks, cleans and she sings like an angel. And you ...you haven’t had nice music here since that one, that beauty Camille got the AIDS... And, Mama, she’s pretty pretty. She’ll keep the miners eyes happy. I promise.

MAMA: Why are you so damn concerned with this girl?

CHRISTIAN: C’mon, Mama, please... she’s my sister’s only daughter. Okay? I told my family I’d find a place for her...And here at least I know she’ll be safe. ..And as you know the village isn’t a place for

a girl who has been ...ruined. It brings shame, dishonor to the family.

MAMA:... I'm doing this for you, cuz you've been good to me. (Whispers to Christian) But this is the last time you bring me damaged goods... (15-16)

The above lines unearth many things, concerning the (DRC) communities. First, it reflects the prevalence of sexual diseases like AIDS as a result of multi rape and the mass sexual violence that the Congolese women suffer from. It also uncovers these communities' view of the raped woman who is seen as a guilty person and brings shame to her family, that is why all of the rape victims in the play are rejected by their families and have to go to Mama Nadi's bar. Skillfully, Nottage can depict the families' view of the rapped woman through the character of Christian who does not want at first to tell Mama Nadi the truth that Sophie is his niece. Christian represents the villagers of the play, nevertheless, he helps Sophie and finds her a safe place to live in.

Moreover, Salima is also a rape victim who is blamed and rejected by her husband and her family. Christian tells Mama why she needs her bar as a shelter in the following:

MAMA: And what of her people?

CHRISTIAN: She says her husband is a farmer. And from what I understand, her village won't have her back. Because... But she's a simple girl, she doesn't have much learning... (12)

When Christian asks Mama Nadi to take Salima in her bar, Mama asks him about her family and Christian's answer uncovers and ascertains the harsh reality that the raped woman lives in the DRC. Furthermore, Salima herself tells Sophie the disappointment that she has felt when she has returned to her village after being raped for five months.

SALIMA: I walked into the family compound expecting wide open arms. An embrace. Five months, suffering. I suffered every single second of it. And my family gave me the back of their heads. And he, the man I loved since I was fourteen, chased me away with a green switch. He beat my ankles raw. And I dishonored him?...He was too proud to bear my shame... (70).

Salima tells Sophie to what extent she is disappointed from her family. She has thought that after her long absence and the deep suffering that she has had, her family would have embraced and would have welcomed her but unfortunately, they did not. Nevertheless, they have felt ashamed of her and have rejected her. Like any other 'ruined' or raped woman, Salima is refused by her family.

Salima has become shame and dishonor to her husband, Fortune and her family despite the harsh suffering that she has had. Simon-Fortune's cousin-tells Fortune to be away from Salima who has become a damaged woman. He says:

SIMON: Look here, Fortune, the men are making a joke of you. They're saying, "Why won't the man just take another woman". "Why is he chasing a damaged girl?"... If you are angry, then be angry at the men who took her. Think about how they did you, they reached right into your pocket and stole from you. (73-74).

Simon tells Fortune that the men of his village 'make fun of' him. Fortune is emasculated and humiliated because of his wife's rape. When Fortune regrets his rejection of Salima, he wants to get her back to his home but the villagers do not accept that. Fortune goes to Mama Nadi's bar and asks if Salima is there or not. He still loves her

and wants to take her back. However, Mama Nadi tells him that Salima is not in her brothel to protect her:

FORTUNE: Please, I'm looking for a woman named Salima.

MAMA: I have to ask inside. (*Christian and Mama exchange a look*)

MAMA: A lot of women come and go. I'll ask around. And may I say who's looking for her?

FORTUNE: Fortune, her husband.

MAMA: (*Reemerging*): There is no Salima here.

FORTUNE: (*Shocked*): What? No! she is here!

MAMA: I'm sorry, you are mistaken. You got bad information. (60-61).

To protect Salima, Mama Nadi refuses to tell Fortune the truth. She tells him that she is not in her brothel. She believes that Salima has not had a place in her village. She will not be secured and protected there. The villagers will not welcome her once again for being a damaged woman. Mama tells Salima the following:

MAMA: (*To Salima*): He left her for dead. See. This is your home now. Mama takes care of you. (*Mama takes Salima in her arms.*) But if you want to go back out there, go. But they, your village, your people, they won't understand. Oh, they'll say, they will, but they won't. Because, you know, underneath everything, they'll be thinking she's damaged. She's been had by too many men. She let them, those dirty men, touch her. She's a whore. And Salima, are you strong enough to stomach their hate? It will be worse than anything you've felt yet. . . your simple life, the one

you remember, that . . . it's vapor, Cherie. It's gone. (66).

Mama's speech uncovers two significant things; first, it reveals and confirms the victim blaming which is one of the cruel consequences of rape. In the DRC, the rape victim is seen as guilty and is refused by her family. She is seen as shame to them. Sharon Friedman argues that those rape survivors are "doubly victimized-sexually assaulted and impregnated or left unable to reproduce. . . they must endure shaming by male members of their families and communities, who perceive the violation of their women as another form of defeat" (597). Second, Mama's speech discloses her honest love and deep concerns towards her girls. She takes care of, support and protect them. Here, Mama advises Salima not to go to her village to avoid being blamed by the villagers. Salima is safer at Mama Nadi's brother. When Salima tells Sophie that she wants to go to her home, Sophie faces her with the harsh reality that she lives and advises her not to go there:

SALIMA: I wanna go home!

SOPHIE: Now, Look here, if you leave, where will you go? Huh? Sleep in the bush? Scrounge for food in a stinking refugee camp.

SALIMA: But I wanna-!

SOPHIE: What? Be thrown back out there? Where will you go? Huh? Your husband? Your village? How much goodness did they show you? (32)

Once again, Sophie's words confirm the tragic fate that the rape survivor faces as she is not welcomed any more by her family. Like Mama Nadi, Sophie warns Salima of going to her village. The villagers consider her as a whore not a victim.

Moreover, what is worse than being blamed by her family of her rape, is blaming herself and feeling guilty and ashamed of her own rape as if she is responsible for her rape. She may see herself as both the criminal and the victim at the same time. Lisa M. Schroot states that “victim blaming rape survivors has become so pervasive that women have internalized the message to the point of feeling guilt for having been raped”. (19). Salima feels guilty of her own raping. She confesses to Sophie that “Oh God please give me back that morning. “Forget the pot, Fortune. Stay...” That’s what I would tell him. What did I do, Sophie? I must have done something. How did I get in the middle of their fight?” (69). Salima has the worst feeling ever, self-blaming and regretting. She blames herself for asking her husband to buy a pot the day of her rape and blames herself for being raped as if she were responsible for her rape. Salima suffers from both victim-blaming and self-blaming. Thus, Salima and Sophie and certainly before them Josephine have suffered from victim blaming since they are refused by their families. They bear the burden of pain and guilt. Victim blaming is a harsh consequence that the raped woman faces and suffers from in the DRC.

Not only does the rape survivor suffer from victim blaming but she also suffers from psychological trauma. Trauma is “described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (Caruth 94). As a traumatized person, Salima still sees her rape night when she says to Sophie; “Still I close my eyes and I see such terrible things. Things I cannot stand to have in my head.” (69). Also, Sophie says; “. . . Every step I take I feel them in me. Punishing me. And it will be that way for the rest of my life” (32). Both Salima and Sophie are traumatized women who suffer not only from violence and rape but from trauma and tough experience that would haunt them until they recover from their trauma.

Rape is a traumatic event and a devastating memory that haunts the victim throughout her life. Furthermore, Judith L. Herman argues that “traumatic events are Extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life... [which] confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe” (24). Trauma is a very harsh and terrifying feeling that the victim suffers from. Herman argues that “the impact of traumatic events also depends to some degree on the resilience of the affected person” (42). Thus, rape survivors struggle with psychological trauma that can either be transcended and recovered or cannot be healed, depending on the victim’s response and her will.

It is worth mentioning that trauma recovery passes through three phases; safety, mourning and reconnection. According to Herman, “[T]rauma recovery unfolds in three stages. The central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety. The central task of the second stage is remembrance and mourning. The central task of the third stage is reconnection with ordinary life” (110). Safety is the first stage of trauma recovery in which the rape survivor should be safe in her body and should raise her sense of self-worth. The survivor should live in a secure environment and build “basic trust” (Herman, 37). In this stage, the rape survivor should live in a safe place and be secured well.

Mama Nadi’s bar plays a very significant role. It is regarded as the only safe place and the best shelter for the rape survivors to live in and feel protected after being rejected by their families. Referring to the bar, Mama tells Christian:

MAMA: I open my doors, and tomorrow I’m refugee camp overrun with suffering. Everyone has their hand open since this damned war began...I keep food in the mouths of eight women when half the country’s starving... (14).

Nottage depicts the miserable condition that the DRC has been after the Civil war and what they have suffered from. In the previous lines, Mama Nadi tells Christian that she serves shelter and food for eight girls despite the lack of food and money in her country. Mama's bar is the place that offers safety, food and protection for the rape survivors. Mama tells Sophie that "I provide a bed, food and clothing" (17). Mama Nadi's brothel represents safety, protection, support and empowerment for all of the rape survivors. Mama Nadi tells Christian that "[m]y girls, Emilene, Mazima, Josephine, ask them, they'd rather be here, than back out there in their villages where they are taken without regard. They're safer with me than in their own homes. . ." (86). In the play, all of the 'ruined' women are lucky who have found a safe place to live in after being raped. It can be argued that Mama Nadi's bar is empowering for Mama herself and for the rest of the 'ruined' girls. On the one hand, for Mama Nadi, the bar represents her financial independency and power. On the other hand, for the girls, Mama's bar represents safety, protection and support. Under this brothel, those rape survivors are safe and powerful.

The first and the foremost important step in trauma recovery is safety. When a rape survivor feels safe, she can restore her self-control and strength. As Herman believes that "trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control; the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control" (159). Mama Nadi represents safety for the rape survivors for being the owner of the brothel. She is the source of support, protection and power for the rape survivors. From the very beginning of the play, the character of Mama Nadi is quite clear. Nottage sketches Mama Nadi as a strong-willed, wise, brave, supportive, cunning, self-dependent, self-confident and self-empowered woman. She is attached to her bar and to her self-dependency. She tells Christian that: "[a]nd look here, I have my own business, and I'm not leaving it . . ." (41). She declares that "I don't need a man to give me anything". (44). She also tells

Christian that “Do I look like I need protection?” (99) she is self-sufficient that does not need a man to support, protect or help her.

Furthermore, Mama Nadi is a powerful woman who does not fear the soldiers and their weapons. She puts the rules of her bar and the soldiers should respect and follow them. It is quite clear in her dialogue with Osembenga, “*a pompous peacock of a man in dark sunglasses, a gold chain and a jogging suit, struts into the bar. He wears a pistol in a harness. He is accompanied by a government soldier in uniform*” (41 Emphasis in original). He is a military leader for the current government:

MAMA: Monsieur, I must ask you to leave your bullets at the bar, otherwise you don’t come in.

OSEMBENGA: And If I choose not to.

MAMA: Then you don’t get reserved. I don’t want any mischief in here. Is that clear?

OSEMBENGA: Do you know who I am?

MAMA: I’m afraid you must edify me, and then forgive me, if it makes absolutely no difference. Once you step through my door, then you’re in my house. And I make the rules here.

OSEMBENGA: All right, Mama. Forgive me. (*Osembenga makes a show of removing the bullets from his gun and placing them on the table.*) (42).

Mama Nadi warns Osembenga- a tough military leader- off entering her bar with bullets as the most important rule for Mama Nadi is respecting her rules. One of her rules is that guns or bullets are not allowed in her bar. Also, when Simon-Fortune’s cousin- enters the bar with his bullets, Mama Nadi bans him and tells him that he is also not allowed to enter the bar with his bullets. It is quite clear:

MAMA: Hey. Hey. Hey. Empty your weapons.

SIMON: No, our wea-

MAMA: It's the rule. If you want to be fed. (*The men reluctantly remove their clips from their guns and hand them to Mama.*) (58).

Strictly and bravely, Mama Nadi treats the soldiers and obliges them to respect and follow her rules. These lines foreshadow the power and the courage of Mama Nadi who does not fear the soldiers.

It is noteworthy that Mama Nadi is very supportive and protective to her girls who helps Sophie in doing her surgery to 'repair the damage'. She gives Mr. Harari, a Lebanese diamond merchant, the diamond- that she saves as her insurance policy- to buy it and helps Sophie to travel and to do the needed surgery:

MAMA: Ah. . . One thing, Mr. Harari. Before you leave, can I ask you a favor? (*Mama opens the lockbox, and carefully lays out the diamond.*) This.

MR. HARARI: (*Mr. Harari's eyes light up*) Your insurance policy. . . you are ready to sell?

MAMA: Yes. Take this. (*Hands him Sophie's piece of paper*) It has the name of a man in Bunia, a doctor. (*with urgency*). . . Just listen. I want to take her to-... I'm talking about Sophie. This will raise enough money for an operation, and whatever she needs to get settled.

MJR. HARARI: This is more than-

MAMA: Enough for a life. I know. (90-91)

Mama Nadi plays a very significant role. She helps Sophie to recover from her psychological trauma. She is always here to help, to protect and to empower. As there is no good medical care in the

DRC, the 'damaged' girls cannot be cured nor do a surgery. They have to travel to get treated well. Sincerely enough, Mama Nadi helps Sophie-the 'ruined' girl- to travel and to do the surgery and gives her another chance to live freely and normally. She sacrifices her security policy to rescue a 'ruined' girl and to make her get rid of pain and shame.

In addition, when Mama Nadi was advised to get the money and to leave the bar to travel away with Mr. Harari, she refuses and insists on helping Sophie and being at her brothel, the shelter of all the 'ruined' women. She tells him:

MR.HARARI: Are you sure? This diamond will fetch a fairly decent price, you can settle over the border in Uganda. Start fresh.

MAMA: I have ten girls here. What will I do with them? Is there enough room for all of us in the car. No. I can't go. Since I was young, people have found reasons to push me out of my home, men have laid to my possessions, but I am not running now. This is my place. Mama Nadi's.

MR. HARARI: But I'm not-... I'm to call when I get there.

MAMA: Yes. And you give Sophie the money. The money for the stone. Understand. Promise me. It's important. All of it.

MR.HARARI: ... Yes. Are you sure?

MAMA: Yes. (90-91).

As a symbol of safety and power for the girls, Mama Nadi refuses to leave her home and to go anywhere. Mama Nadi's bar turns to be a refugee for all of the 'ruined' girls. Mama Nadi feels that those girls are her own responsibility. She is depicted by Nottage as a true

mother to her daughters who she worries about, protects and empowers. As a completely recovered person, Mama Nadi symbolizes safety for the rape survivors in the play. She is a self-empowered woman who supports and empowers the rape survivors. Thanks to Mama Nadi and her brothel, the rape survivors of the play have reached 'safety', the first stage of trauma recovery.

The second stage of trauma recovery is mourning and remembrance, in which the traumatized person goes to the past, remembers what has happened to her and mourns all of what she has suffered from. Referring to this stage, Herman notes:

The reconstruction of the trauma requires immersion in a past experience of frozen time; the descent into mourning feels like a surrender to tears that are endless... but it will not go on forever... the moment comes when the telling of the trauma story no longer arouses quite such intense feeling. It has become a part of the survivor's experience, but only one part of it (140).

Herman believes that one way of healing the trauma is facing and remembering the bad experiences that the victim has suffered from without being harshly affected by it while mourning the events. In *Ruined*, Salima mourns her harsh experience and remembers her suffering, aspiring to heal it.

Salima does not accept what has happened to her nor the present harsh reality that she lives. She mourns and remembers her past days with her family before being raped. She remembers her daughter, Beatrice who has been killed by the soldiers. She tells Sophie what has happened to her and how she was raped:

SALIMA: Do you know what I was doing on that morning? . . . I was working in our garden, picking the last of the sweet tomatoes. I put Beatrice down in the

shade of frangipani tree. . . It was such a clear and open sky. . . And I felt a shadow cut across my back, and when I stood four men were there over me, smiling, . . . And the tall soldier slammed the butt of his gun into my cheek...It was so quick; I didn't even know I'd fallen to the ground. . . One of the soldiers held me down with his foot. He was so heavy, thick like an ox . . . His boot was pressing my chest ...My baby was crying. She was a good baby. Beatrice... And right then. . . (*closes her eyes*) A soldier stomped on her head with his boot. And she was quiet... WHERE was everybody? WHERE WAS EVERYBODY?!. (68).

Salima tells Sophie the day of her rape and how she has been kidnapped and raped. She has lived a very harsh experience that has deprived her of her daughter, of her family and even of her body-control. Salima was left alone. She was not protected by anyone even her family. She was left alone to face her tragic fate.

It is noteworthy that Salima lives in the past that cannot be healed and be recovered completely. Despite being safe in Mama Nadi's bar and passing the first stage of trauma recovery, she clings in the second stage of trauma recovery, in mourning and remembrance stage. She all the time remembers what has happened to her before being raped, during her rape and after being raped. Salima has stopped there, in those past days that is why she cannot heal from her trauma completely. Hence, Salima- as a traumatized person who is not completely recovered- finds that her only way of survival is her death. As Herman believes that “. . . traumatized people feel that they belong more to the dead than to the living”(37).

When Mama Nadi refuses to tell Fortune that Salima is in the bar, Fortune tells the commander, Osembenga that Mama Nadi hosts the rebel leader and his enemy, Jerome Kitembe, believing that in

that way, he can find Salima. Thus, Osembenga's soldiers break into Mama's brothel and attempt to take Josephine by force. During the attack of Mama Nadi's bar, Salima appears and commits suicide. She was aborting her baby who (*enters. A pool of blood forms in the middle of her dress.*). It is quite clear in the following:

SALIMA: (*Screams.*) STOP! Stop it!

FORTUNE: Salima!

SALIMA: (*Screams.*) For the love of God, stop this! Haven't you done enough to us? Enough! Enough! (*The soldiers stop abruptly, shocked by Salima's defiant voice.*)

SALIMA: (*To soldiers and Osembenga*) You will not fight your battles on my body anymore. (*Salima collapses to the floor. Fortune cradles Salima in his arms. She dies*), (94).

In an attempt of self-defense, Salima decides to end her life. It can be read as a tragic end of her; however, her suicide can be regarded as a victory over the brutal soldiers. As for the first time, Salima has control over her body that has triumphed over the soldiers. The soldiers now are not allowed to take her body anymore. She is the one who chooses and decides what would happen in her life. Metaphorically, Salima triumphs over the brutal soldiers as her suicide is “. . . a sign of resistance and pride. . . it preserves an inner sense of control” (Herman 62-63). Salima can be considered as a powerful character too despite not being healed completely of her trauma. She chooses to end her life to live freely and not to be raped again. Furthermore, the previous lines shed light on rape as a weapon of war which is used against the bodies of the women. Through Salima's final words, it is confirmed that in the DRC, the real war happens on the bodies of women.

Salima is considered to be the most tragic character in the play; she cannot stand her miserable life. She has been raped, impregnated and is deprived of her daughter, of her husband and of her family. Salima cannot recover completely from her trauma. She is the one who cannot reach the third and the last stage of trauma recovery which is reconnection.

The third and the final stage of trauma recovery is called 'reconnection' in which the victim "develop[s] new relationships" (Herman 141). She creates a new community, reinvents herself and reconciles her bad experience which becomes just a memory. Nottage's characters-except Salima- in *Ruined* have passed through those three phases. They have recovered from their trauma and have empowered themselves. All of the Black women in the play refuse to be victims but survivors who face their traumatized selves, empowering and depending on themselves. They support and strengthen each other. They succeed in overcoming all of the obstacles that they have faced. Nottage herself claims that "My play is not about victims, but survivors" (*Almedia Projects* 27). Moreover, Lesile Atkins Durham argues that "Lynn Nottage harnessed the emotional power of the women's stories she heard in the Congo and reframed them publicly and dramatically— sooner rather than later. Even though the tales told recount the depths of human brutality, they also bear witness to an equally human capacity to survive". (149-150). In *Ruined*, all of the female characters severely suffer physically and psychologically; nevertheless, they face their struggles bravely and insist on their survival to reach their self-redefinition and self-empowerment.

Both of Sophie and Josephine are in the third stage of trauma recovery. They are in the 'reconnection' stage that creates new relations and new friendships. They cling to hope and draw a clear plan for themselves to restart their life through. Sophie is a "luminous beauty with an air of defiance" (10 Emphasis in original).

She is smart, a reading worm with a beautiful voice. She likes to read books and to sing. Her role in the brothel is singing and all of her songs are very significant and purposive by which she heals her pain and cures herself. She says to Salima that “While I’m singing, I’m praying the pain will be gone.” (32). Sophie sings:

You come here to forget,
You say drive away all regret
And dance like it’s the ending
The ending of the war.
But can the music be all forgiving
Purge the wear and tear of the living?
Will the sound drown out your sorrow,
So you’ll remember nothing tomorrow? (20).

Sophie’s song is very significant as she refers to herself and to all of the rape survivors who think that by their arrival to the brothel, they would forget what has happened to them and may forget their harsh suffering. She believes that it would not be easy for her to forget what has happened to her. In addition, she wishes the end of the war; the specific war that they suffer from, the war on their bodies. Through her songs, Sophie attempts to face her worries and to heal herself. Through Sophie’s songs, Nottage makes the rape victims’ suffering crystal clear in addition to reflecting her character’s feelings. Jennifer Scott Mobley argues that Nottage “offers a window into the character’s emotions” (37). Moreover, one more time, Sophie refers to her unheard suffering who sings:

A rare bird on a limb
Sings a song heard by a few,
A few patient and distant listeners

Hear, its sweet sweet call,
A sound that haunts the forest,
A cry that tells a story, harmonious,
But time forgotten.
To be seen, is to be doomed (38).

Throughout *Ruined*, Lynn Nottage has highlighted the unheard suffering of the Black women, especially that of the Congolese women who are not heard nor seen. Skillfully, Nottage confirms that the suffering of those women is heard by a few. Sophie's songs are significant through which she can heal her pain and reflect her deep unheard suffering.

Another sign of Sophie's reconnection to life, her love of life and her clinging to hope is her love of reading. Sophie is depicted in the play as a reading worm who reads books that Christian-her uncle- brings to her. It is made clear in Christian's words:

CHRISTIAN: Sophie, mon amour. I have something for you...

SOPHIE: Un livre?

CHRISTIAN: . . . Yes.

SOPHIE: Merci. (She rips open the brown paper. She pulls out a handful magazines and a book). (97)

Sophie likes to read romantic novels who used to read her novels to Salima and Josephine. The three girls discuss with Mama Nadi about the book that Sophie has read to them. It's quite clear in the following:

(Morning. The bar. Sophie reads from the pages of a romance novel. Josephine and Salima sit listening. . . Mama enters

with the lockbox. Sophie protectively slips the book behind her back. Mama grabs it)

MAMA: What's this?

SOPHIE: . . . A romance, Uncle Christian bought it.

MAMA: A romance?

SOPHIE: Yes.

JOSEPHINE: You don't care for romance, Mama?

MAMA: Me? No, the problem is I already know how it is going to end. There'll be kissing, fucking, a betrayal, and then the woman will foolishly surrender her heart to an undeserving man. Okay. . . (50-51).

The previous discussion between Mama Nadi and the three girls uncovers two things; first, it reveals Mama Nadi's consciousness and refusal to romance. She thinks that romance is a weakness for a woman. She is a self-sufficient person whose mind is the controller of her. Second, this conversation highlights how far Sophie is a delicate, romantic, reading-lovable girl. She loves romance and still clings to hope.

In addition, Sophie plans to save money secretly to travel somewhere and to do her surgery that's why she works at Mama Nadi's brothel as a singer. She attempts to reconstruct her life. Her secret plan to save money is revealed to Salima who says:

SOPHIE: Shh. Look, look. (Sophie pulls money from between the pages of the book and empties the bills onto the bed.)

SALIMA: Sophie?!

SOPHIE: Shhhh. This is for us. We won't be here forever. Okay.

SALIMA: Where'd you get. . . the money?

SOPHIE: Don't worry. Mama maybe many things, but she don't count so good. And when there's enough we'll get a bus to Bunia. I promise. But you can't say anything, not even to Josephine. Okay? (33).

To be able to survive, to repair the damage that has affected her as a result of her rape and to restart a new life, Sophie tells Salima that she saves money without the knowledge of Mama Nadi. However, Mama Nadi notices the taken money and asks her why she takes and attempts to save that money:

MAMA: What were you going to do?

SOPHIE: A man that come in here said he can help me. He said there is an operation for girls. . . they can repair the damage.

MAMA: An operation?

SOPHIE: Yes, he gives me this paper. Look, look.

MAMA: And it can make it better?

SOPHIE: Yes. (55)

As a rape victim, Sophie is severely damaged and needs to be cured and to do the surgery to repair the damage that has affected her genital. As a rape survivor in the third stage of trauma recovery, Sophie clings to hope and attempts to reconnect herself with the world. For her, travelling and doing the surgery is her first step in her new life that is full of power, self-confidence and self-redefinition. Thus, Sophie is in a journey of self-redefinition and self-empowerment as she seeks to empower herself. It can be argued that Sophie would be another 'Mama Nadi' who is basically a 'ruined' woman but after her trauma-recovery, she becomes a self-empowered woman.

In addition, Josephine is also another rape survivor who is in the third stage of trauma recovery; the 'reconnection' stage. She has befriended her customers at the brothel and has made new relations with them. She has reconnected herself with Mr. Harari and has decided to travel with him and to restart a new life with him. She tells Sophie:

JOSEPHINE: Hey. Hey. Guess what? Guess what?
I'm going to Kisangani next month.

SOPHIE: What?

JOSEPHINE: Mr. Harari is going to take me. Watch out, Chérie, he's promised to set me up in a high-rise apartment. Don't hate, all of this fineness belongs in the city. (35-36).

The previous lines uncover Josephine's attachment to a new start. She hopes to find a stable and peaceful life with Mr. Harari. She is now a recovered person who can face the community, create new relations and reconstruct her life. It is noteworthy that the traumatized persons who have reached the third stage of trauma recovery are hopeful and enthusiastic to restart their life with a new beginning, a new ambition, a new goal and a new self. Hence, In *Ruined*, Sophie and Josephine are the two rape survivors who have reached the third stage of trauma recovery and have been completely recovered. Now, they are ready to restart their lives bravely, hopefully and strongly. It can be argued that Sophie and Josephine are self-empowered women.

Thus, all of the female characters of the play are rape survivors who to what extent could transcend all of the obstacles that face them, could face their suffering bravely and could recover their trauma. Mama Nadi, Sophie and Josephine have completely been recovered from their trauma and have become self-empowered women, whereas Salima has not had the chance to reach the third

stage of trauma recovery and clings to her past memories. She still remembers her past days and her tragic fate whose suicide can be also read as a powerful action. Salima decides to triumph over the soldiers and not to be raped again. She decides to end her life to live- metaphorically- in peace forever.

Ruined ends with Christian's proposal to marry Mama Nadi who tells her that he is in love with her but Mama Nadi, shockingly, tells him that she is also 'ruined'. It is made clear in the following:

CHRISTIAN: ...I love you. . . I'd like to sleep in the same bed every night. I need familiar company, food that is predictable, conversation that's too easy. . . Why not us?

MAMA: (*With surprising vulnerability*): I'm ruined. (*Louder*) I'm ruined. (99-100).

This is the second and the last time, the word 'ruined' is mentioned. As the play starts with the word 'ruined', referring to Sophie and ends with the same word to refer to Mama Nadi. Mama Nadi thinks that because of being a 'ruined' woman, she cannot be accepted as a wife or as a family member. However, surprisingly, enough; Christian accepts Mama Nadi's condition and asks to marry her which gives the play a glimpse of hope. He says:

CHRISTIAN: God, I don't know what those men did to you, but I'm sorry for it. I may be an idiot for saying so, but I think we, and I speak as a man, can do better. (*He goes to comfort her. She pulls away until he's forced to hold her in a tight embrace. . . Christian holds his hand out to Mama. A moment. Finally, she takes his hand. He pulls her into his arms. They begin to dance*), (101-102).

Happily, and hopefully the play ends as if Nottage aspires to give a glimpse of hope to her characters. Despite the suffering and the

harsh reality that those women live, they can take another chance in life. They cannot only survive but can love and can restart their life again as well.

Conclusion

It can be summed up that Lynn Nottage's *Ruined* depicts realistically the distinct suffering of the Congolese women. The women of the DRC suffer from sexual violence, rape and severe psychological trauma, in addition to their tragic fate as victim blaming and suicide. Lynn Nottage highlights those women's rape, their refusal by their families and their psychological traumas through the characters of Mama Nadi, Josephine, Salima and Sophie. In addition, Nottage reflects each character's reaction towards her trauma and her rape. She depicts also the rape victims' attachment to hope and their insistence on survival, recovery, self-dependence and self-empowerment. Both of Sophie and Josephine cling to hope and transcend their traumas. They plan for their coming life and live safely in Mama Nadi's bar which symbolizes safety and security for them. In addition, Mama Nadi, reconciles her trauma and accepts her situation as a 'ruined' woman and begins a new, happy and lovely life who approves to marry Christian which reflects hope in the play. In *Ruined*, most of the characters of the play choose to cling to hope, recover their trauma, search for security and support each other. They decide to recover, support, protect and empower themselves.

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ملخص

يلقي هذا البحث الضوء على المعاناة الحادة والعميقة للنساء بدولة الكونجو، حيث يركز على صراعاتهن وانتصاراتهن. كما أنه يحلل مسرحية "المدمة" للكاتبة لين نوتاج والتي تصور معاناة النساء الشديدة اثناء الحرب الاهلية بدولة الكونجو بشكل واقعي. يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على معاناة النساء بدولة الكونجو و المتمثلة في العنف الجنسي، الاغتصاب، الرفض، النفي، و الصدمة، كما أنه يركز على ردود افعال تلك النساء نحو الصدمات ويعكس اصرارهن على البقاء، والاعتماد على الذات و تمكين الذات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: "المدمة"، العنف الجنسي، الاغتصاب، لوم الضحية، النجاة، التعافي من الصدمة، تمكين الذات.