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## **Narrating Gendered Violence, the Absent Mother and (Dis)location in *Secrets No More* by Goretti Kyomuhendo**

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper focuses on the analysis of one of Uganda's women writers, Goretti Kyomuhendo's novel, Secrets No More, with a view to bring out the issues of gender identity as thematically depicted in the work. In this work the author draws on her personal and national biographies to illustrate the inter-connected and interplaying relationships of historical and cultural backgrounds and how these have systematically impacted on the female character. My method is close reading and descriptive analysis of a purposively sampled novel by a post Idi Amin era Ugandan female writer. The argument is anchored on both postcolonial and feminist literary theories.*

### **1. Introduction**

In Kyomuhendo's *Secrets No More*, (1999) the omniscient narrator narrates the effects of cultural injustice, ethnic violence sponsored by the postcolonial Rwandan extremists, and the social turbulence that ensues, spilling over into neighbouring Uganda. The novel dramatises and thematises various perspectives in interpreting female oppression and submission within the oppressive masculinistic spaces in post-colonial Africa. This paper examines gender spaces in the context of extreme violence from the points of view of displaced female protagonists. The violence against women is state-organised and takes the form of planned mass slaughter, with foetuses ripped out of the wombs of pregnant women, husbands made to kill their own wives, and parents, their children.

The story is about a young Rwandan Hutu girl, Marina, who suffers exile, sexual abuse, rejection and degradation because her father, Bizimana, is a moderate Hutu and has married a Tutsi woman. Marina and her family experience the horror of civil strife in which both her parents and siblings are murdered by the extremist Hutu government agents. The protagonist narrowly escapes and finds her way into neighbouring Uganda where she is cared for in an orphanage run by an Italian priest who fails to guard her against sexual abuse. The girl is, however, determined to run away from the orphanage and start a new life elsewhere.

### **2. Narrating the Rwandan Gendered "Holocaust"**

Violence against women bodies within an oppressive patriarchal order and the trauma that etches on the memory of the victims and their attempts at recovery is a recurring motif in the story. The female body is "abject" and "marked" (Armstrong, 2009). The narrative demands justice for women through their struggle against oppressive political and cultural structures to create a just society. Simatei (2001) posits that "feminist agency is in fact a facet of the overall struggle" for more acceptable cultural order in postcolonial African nation-states which have always suffered female under-representations. The female protagonist in this narrative is not a passive victim of the various oppressions meted out on her. She is an active victim who struggles to establish safe solutions. She does not give up; she perseveres and remains focused.

At the beginning of the story, the narrator through flashback hints at ill-fate to the family as history is replete with tales of tension and war between the two ethnic groups. The Tutsi are despised and called derogatory names such as *Inyenzikazi* (Kyomuhendo, 1999: 1). Prunier (1994) explains that *inyenzi* was a spiteful term given to Tutsi guerrillas of the 1960s who, like cockroaches, unleashed their operations at night. The narrating voice then says that Mukundane, the protagonist's mother, had grown up as an adopted child in a Hutu family from the age of nine after her parents were murdered in the 1959 tribal fights. The mention of the 1959 uprisings and massacre so early in the narrative foreshadows a major historical event in Rwandan history: the 1994 genocide. Genette (1982) regards this recurrence as communication function where two important socio-cultural points are made. The story is an exploration of multiple narratives that interlock to generate an effective impact aimed at showing the "unspeakable" acts of violence of the Rwanda genocide. Prunier (1994) satirizes the causes of ethnic conflicts as senseless. The stories provide a backdrop to a real social context of violence and social (dis)location of a little girl in Rwanda and Uganda. Her mother is absent as she has been murdered. Her absence forebodes lack of parental counsel and upbringing challenges of the protagonist.

The survivors of the genocide have the scars written on their bodies to look at through the narrative memory they recount. They must struggle to reconstruct their self-identities during and after the mass killings and the subsequent displacement to Uganda that changes their lives. Marina is not alone. Lisa and her brother Dee are other victims. Armstrong (2009) calls the displacement faced by survivors "social amputation", and the emerging theme of the choices women face in these situations. The violence unleashed on to Marina's human and social body impacts heavily on her identity (re)construction. She tries to live normally in these crises-filled situations. Telling the story of this horror from neighbouring Uganda and not within the borders of Rwanda itself is significant. Apart from enhancing the new narratives of survival by Marina which the context allows, the author explores the interconnectedness and possibilities of trans-border ties that exist among countries in Africa, thereby, subverting the national that is depicted as ethnic and dangerous. Diawara (1998) argues that the international networks contribute to the nation "an inter-regional imaginary" which promotes intergovernmental linkages in Africa and globally. By placing her narrator in Uganda—away from the site of violence in Rwanda—Kyomuhendo explores flashback as a narrative strategy to re-enact the genocide and its aftermath.

The narrative attempts to provide the reliability and independence of language to represent these fictional experiences and give an identifiable account of the trauma of human suffering and the interpenetrating misery in the form of a story. The novel reconstructs its female protagonist, Marina, as an "amputee" who has had her family and her sense of belonging brutally cut off. Her only recourse, as a result of this amputation, now is to tell a story—a kind of a "re-memory" (Morrison, 1987). She argues that this "re-memory" takes place through the act or art of remembering through the work of writing. In this case, the art of writing and its outcome, which is literature, is a testimony to a "lost presence". This lost presence is textualised in the narrative. The narrative begins when Marina is a baby and ends with her second marriage. Her story constructs her as an African female under siege who moves between nations in search of an ideal space for herself. She is "amputated" from the Rwanda social body and has left it "amputated" too. Hers is the story of an exploration of the possibilities for full human potentiality in the face of adversity as a displaced female in a society dominated by patriarchal values.

When Bizimana notices that his wife is lonely he hires a house-maid, Chantal, who is also expected to ease Mukundane's loneliness. The revelation that Chantal has formerly been jailed for refusing to participate in *omuganda* depicts and foreshadows a character that is unreliable and, therefore, dangerous to the family. It is also ironic that it is Chantal—a fellow female—that later betrays Mukundane and her family to the Hutu extremists. Three years into their marriage, Mukundane has not yet conceived. This disturbs her because of her upbringing in a society dominated by patriarchal values that detest childless women. Juxtaposed with this personal tension is the larger national tension between the Hutu who control the government, and the Tutsi. It matters less that Bizimana has married a Tutsi as any Hutu who marries a Tutsi is equally unreliable. The history of this conflict is traced to 1959 when the Hutu decimated the Tutsi in a civil war that traumatises Mukundane into adulthood. She remembers the horror of the war in which her parents were killed, handing her a troubled childhood. The narrator engages in the process of retrieval and reconstruction of history against the woman body through narrative memory, for instance, "Mukundane never tired of telling this story. She would tell it again and again" (Kyomuhendo, 1999:2).

As the women stories unfold in the narrative, the author resists the capacious engagement of cultural memory against the women. Women in African literary circles have long been uncelebrated partially because of their unfavourable cultural background and also because of the colonial experience, with its patriarchal background. Fonchingong (2006) attributes the poor women representation in creative works to early postcolonial African male writers such as Achebe, Amadi, Soyinka, Ngugi and Ekwensi for "condoning patriarchy". Kyomuhendo negotiates this cultural barrier by giving each of her leading female characters the creative space in which to assert herself. The female character finds fulfilment and complete self-expression and at the end of each of her stories, there is remarkable strength in her character. The memory of horror, the absent mother and displacement recurs when Mukundane's own child, Marina, relives her mother's life.

There are two levels of violence against the girl-child and women in general in the novel. They have to contend with inter-ethnic wars between the Hutu and Tutsi in which the latter are mercilessly persecuted, tortured, and killed. At this level no one—both men and women—is safe. Secondly, the female character has also to bear with patriarchy which frames her as a subordinate partner to men in their socio-cultural lives. At the national level, the Tutsi woman and her male counterpart are referred to as *abanzi*, which means enemies. A Tutsi woman is derogatively referred to as *inyenzikazi*, which means a female cockroach that must be killed to rid society of the despicable pest. The names are meant to degrade them and impute a diminutive and worthless identity upon them, thereby, amputating them from society.

But the female character suffers multiple levels of injustice, more than her male counterpart even when they both must die. The scene in Bizimana's house where state sponsored soldiers invade and kill the family attests to the bizarre treatment that bestalks the female character. The soldiers decide to rape Bizimana's wife in front of him to force a confession of possessing guns out of him.

### 3. Narrating Rape and the Quest for Hybridity

Rape becomes an instrument of torture but not just for satisfying lust as it happens to Marina later in the narrative. The colonel, who is leading the onslaught, declares that they should invoke another "approach" (Kyomuhendo, 1999:17)—euphemism for rape—to force a confession from Bizimana. The narrative identifies men as agents of violence against

humanity. But the narrative does not necessarily cast women as without blame entirely. It emerges that Chantal is the one who betrays the family to the soldiers. After the family has been killed, she later returns to the house escorted by a soldier and packs everything which they load onto a waiting lorry. When Marina returns to find her in the house, the young girl momentarily gets relieved that Chantal is there for her. However, Chantal snubs her to her surprise by saying: "What I'm talking about is that this country is fed up with the likes of you. And that we shall cleanse it of all Inyenzi" (Kyomuhendo, 1999:26).

With her parents dead, Marina is picked up by a Catholic priest, Father Marcel, who brings her up in an orphanage he has established. The narrative creates more space for interrogating both male and female subjectivities in the changing context. Father Marcel is portrayed as provident, loving and responsible but not necessarily sensitive to women's subtle issues. He is a hostage of patriarchy and misses an opportunity to protect Marina against the sexual predatorship of Matayo, a young married man, living in the orphanage to learn Christianity. Religion, like patriarchy, appears to conspire against the female character. Instead of punishing and reprimanding Matayo, the priest merely asks him to seek forgiveness from God. Later, Matayo rapes Marina, impregnating her hence compounding her trauma.

The girl is disturbed and hates the baby she gives birth to. When Fr. Marcel discusses the matter with Sister Bernadette who assists him in running the orphanage, she is outraged and blames the girl, arguing that she would spoil other girls (Kyomuhendo, 1999:37). The perpetrator of rape, a male predator, gets away with it unblemished as the victim is condemned. Both Sister Bernadette and Fr. Marcel agree that the girl must take responsibility for tempting Matayo into fornication. They do not give her a chance to defend herself or offer an apology in the same way Matayo has been handled.

Both Sister Bernadette and Chantal help patriarchy to oppress their own women kind. Chantal betrays the confidence of Marina's mother by spying on her and eventually betraying the whole family to the government agents of terror and death. Bernadette, on the other hand, betrays the womenfolk by siding with the priest in the rape incident. The Colonel who rapes Marina's mother and kills her family has been sneaking into their house to have an affair with Chantal. Both the Colonel and Chantal are Hutu. Together, they conspire to kill Marina's family.

The narrative also presents a symbiotic relationship between Christianity and the African culture. It is not one that entirely though some African writers have depicted the two as antagonistic (Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffins, H., 1989). *Secrets No More* is a refreshing engagement of the two as sides of same coin which, in Bhabhian terms, approximates to cultural hybridity. When Matayo falls ill and Father Marcel's Western treatment fails, he obliges to Matayo's biological father's wish that the "boy does not need any hospital" (Kyomuhendo, 1999:30) and that he should be taken home for traditional treatment. Father Marcel witnesses traditional rituals performed on Matayo's ailing body and, to the priest's surprise, the sick boy immediately springs to life and begins coughing and sneezing. Father Marcel accepts back Matayo in the orphanage after the rituals. In proposing that the 'psychic survival' of culture has yet to be realized, Bhabha (1994) fits the concept of hybridity as an in-between third space, amalgamating cultural differences within the postcolonial condition. Bhabha's concept of hybridisation is predicated upon the ever-changing location of culture in which the repositioning and empowering the marginal cultural within the main disclose is admitted.

In the orphanage which is defined by a hegemonic Western cultural construct, Sister Bernadette borrows heavily from the African traditional superstition to counsel the girls in their puberty. The orphanage becomes a metaphor of cultural hybridity between Christianity and African traditions. As a Christian outfit, the orphanage embodies Christian love and care. The orphans receive both spiritual and physiological nourishment. As an outfit of the African culture, the orphanage represents the "psychic survival" of African values evident in superstition and patriarchal undertones. Sister Bernadette is a blend of both Christianity and African values. If she sends any girl, for instance, she spits on the ground and begins timing her. The girl has to come back before the spittle dries. She also tells the girls that if they share their belts, they would contract menstrual pains from those who suffer it during their monthly periods. Sister Bernadette also takes Marina's blood-soaked pads and rubs them on another girl's back and breasts in the belief that it is a cure for ringworms. She also subjects Marina to washing her private parts with a special juice extracted from a climbing plant, *orwihura*, in the belief that it protects her hymen and keeps it intact until she is ready to be married. As an African nun, Sister Bernadette is not alien to African values. She represents the balancing act between the Western and African values hinting at the possibility of the two cultures co-existing and enriching each other. The narrative appears to suggest that intolerance and violence in society is as a result of disharmony and failure to appreciate one another's value systems.

The horror of Rwandan genocide represents intolerance between two cultural value systems. The result of this disharmony is the genocide that takes toll on families. Whereas the government instigates and sustains such murders against its people, the Church intervenes in time to reduce the trauma of the survivors by setting up parishes and orphanages in neighbouring Uganda. It is significant that the time the first civil war in Rwanda breaks out in 1959 is the same time Fr. Marcel who, too, represents healing arrives in Uganda and builds a church, an orphanage and a medical facility. The author appears to intimate that cultural hybridity could be relied on for mitigatory intervention for all human problems in an ever-changing socio-cultural space. The choice of a white priest and a black nun to intervene in this issue is also significant. It alludes to pooling of international effort in intervention services to humanity. It also suggests that the issues involved are not unique to Africa but can bedevil any society in the world.

The narrative appears to be tied to some cyclic fate of the main female characters. Marina relives her mother's life. Her new born baby, Rosaria, is likely to repeat the life her mother, Marina, led. A woman's fate is vicious and predetermined.

This awareness in Marina sets the stage to break this cycle. Marina's early sad and insecure life appears to recur after a short stint of happiness and healing she gets at the orphanage. She now plunges into the unknown, into despair. She decides that she will not return to the orphanage where her baby has been taken. Faced with identity crisis, Marina sees disappearing from the parish as the solution to her present predicament. She wants to go away to a place where nobody knows her to begin a new lease of life. Her personal crisis represents the crisis of the society generally and women in particular. But she is resolutely determined to live life to the full. The narrative weaves a world for its female characters where the cultural and historical barriers are challenged as the women relentlessly forge themselves a new identity in the face of these dual barriers. Robson (2004) states that it is only when the seemingly unspeakable traumatic experience is transformed into a narrative that the traumatic event can be put in the past and the survivor can begin to recreate an identity shattered by trauma. This means that the violence—both physical and psychological suffered in the past—need a medium of expression. That medium is narration. Healing can only commence when the story is told.

Sister Bernadette's father is a symbol of patriarchy and a villain of the story. Her grandmother and mother represent the effect of patriarchy and the hardships that women have to endure in society. The two women have internalised it and have gradually become its submissive agents. The two aging women epitomise the domesticated, obedient and conservative type. Because she has brought dishonour into her family—and on which basis her identity is constructed—Bernadette's only option is to establish a space that is more conducive to herself. But she meets more challenges which she again has to endure.

Susan Willis (1987) interrogates idyllic depiction of community—feminists see community as gendered while post-colonialists see it as cultural—and “genuine sisterhood” in narratives, and excludes the violent and oppressive ways in which such women can work against the protagonist. Mothers can be oppressive, cruel and devastating to the construction of their daughters' gender identities. Whereas the narrative explores the positive qualities that female characters can bring to the female protagonist's identity quest, Kyomuhendo depicts some female characters—Bernadette's mother and grandmother—as women who are obstacles to each other's development and fulfilment of their selfhood. The narrative points to a realistic situation in which the women may hold the key to freeing one another from the entrapment of oppression and related socio-economic injustices, yet, they are also capable of serving as renegades who betray their own sisterhood.

Despite its occasional blind-spots when it comes to treatment of men over women, religion is portrayed as a reliever of these cultural injustices. It just comes in handy to give the girl-child and women a new lease of life. The woman is accepted, loved and encouraged on in church more than elsewhere. Marina's response to this betrayal is related to Bernadette's. Both construct self-narratives which structure their identities and their interaction with the challenging lives they confront. Their actions become mutually defining and this becomes critical in Kyomuhendo's post-modern feminist's rejection of an essentialist nature of women.

The multiple sets of these narratives of the woman-self create a pluralism that allows the critic to re-read the underlying assumption of patriarchy. These women appear to transcend the patriarchal confines of an African woman to foster a more just society for all. Sister Bernadette does not take her betrayal lying down as expected in her male-dominated society: “I was mad,” Sister Bernadette continued regaining her composure. “I wanted to murder him”, she says, in an apparent reference to a man who marries her but refuses to marry her. Although the man she hits is the wrong one, her effort to hit back constitutes a protest against the cultural injustice in which she is born and brought up. Her protest is a statement over the need for women to fight for their space and new identity.

The impotence and infidelity secrets that surrounds Mr Magezi's family, Marina's account of the violence in Rwanda to Matayo, Sister Bernadette's account of her rejection by her family, Dee's account of the horror in Rwanda, are some of the main scenes that justify the title of the narrative: *Secrets No More*. Although Mr. Magezi has been betrayed by his wife, he is mature, understanding and tolerant of his wife's infidelity. He represents a small segment of men who are supportive of the female cause in a patriarchy. He accepts his situation of sexual impotence and he does not reprimand his wife when she conceives a baby by another man. His love for his wife overwhelms the anger that can destroy his family due to his wife's betrayal. The narrative is not an attempt to rewrite images of women encoded in some male literary productions on the continent. Instead, *Secrets* engages in dialogue with male authors, offering a new perspective on most of the male-authored creative works. It recognises that patriarchy manipulates various aspects of culture as embodied in religion and tradition to annihilate, subjugate and intimidate women.

#### 4. (Re)Imaging the Female Character in Volatile Situations

By approaching gender subjectivities from a different standpoint, the author confronts such prejudices by addressing the needful concerns about the girl-child and women in general. By constructing a cast of women characters and their experiences, she uses their stories to negotiate new space for them in society. The portrayal of the female character that emerges in *Secrets No More* does not represent a linear, passive and submissive female character, but rather, it is one that re-defines the female as an individual who is complex and shifting. The author begins by widening the cast of her female characters, marking the heterogeneity of women, a clear shift from the homogenous woman figure that has hitherto been portrayed in creative works by most male authors. Newell (1977) notes that instead of openly subverting masculinistic narratives, or writing from marginal or socially outcast perspectives, women authors are placed within, assuming commonly accepted critical perspectives and exploring the shortcomings of male-authored creative works.

Yet, Kyomuhendo assigns a realistic picture of fallibility to her female characters. Her portrayal of Lucy and Lisa, both female, appears to underscore the point that women have their foul sides and that they are not necessarily perfect. They, too, have weaknesses which should be understood in context. Lisa who is an interior designer, for instance, is a spendthrift and immoral. She likes expensive things, depends on rich men whom she fleeces.

The narrative's portrayal of its female characters illustrates the various complexities, anxieties, contradictions and tensions that young women have to confront in their daily lives in varying contexts. The critical articulation of this work emanates from postcolonial conditions that define African women's life today. Postcolonial, in this context, embraces the historical, economic, psychological and political complexities that result from the colonial past experience. Ashcroft *et al* (1989) have described the historical sense of this experience as "all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present". The complexity of tensions and conflicts that have remained in the memory of the colonised, which continue to manifest themselves due to colonial experiences, underscore the psychological state which Lisa, Lucy and other characters go through. The economies of unequal relations which give advantage to the imperial centre to use all their might to exploit the resources of their hosts are significant in this context.

But the author's textualising of the subjectifying of the African woman in a postcolonial condition attracts critical attention. Economically—and even politically—African women are not traditionally visible. However, Kyomuhendo appears to admit change and textualises this through some of her women characters: Lisa, Marina, Lucy and even Sister Bernadette. Through these characters the author takes to create authentic identities of the African woman. Modupe (1998) posits that the search for self-recreation is anchored in self-identity which starts with self-renaming. On the other hand, Wilson-Tagoe (1997) has called for a "feminist framework" that enables the critic to see representations in texts as mediated by "sexual difference" and the imaginative and ideological conceptions that surround gender. Raising awareness on the challenges, burdens and social injustices facing women and the very act of creatively documenting them become a covert revolution of distaste against the objectification of women in society.

*Secrets No More* takes the unspeakable acts of state-sponsored violence of the Rwanda genocide and weaves them into the conceivable mode of a story to recount the events. To remember and talk about such horror as the killings witnessed by Dee—himself a refugee from Rwanda—is the writer's narrative technique to put some distance between the ghastly act and its narration. The fictionalisation of the events of the genocide parallels what Ricoeur (1991) calls fiction's capacity for provoking a chimera of existence, but one directed by analytical distance for creative work gives vision to the horrified narrator. By moving her narrative of the genocide away from Rwanda to nearby Uganda, Kyomuhendo distances the act of witness from its source through Dee's post-diction of the stories of genocide horror he witnessed back in Rwanda. This illustrates what Ato Quayson (2007) has termed the traumatic moment leaking into history.

The killing of female characters is a manifestation of a gendered intention that targets the female subject in this social turbulence of civil strife. They are subjected to multiple body and psychological violence before they are killed like their male counterparts. To punish, threaten or even kill the male characters, the perpetrators must begin with their wives as an illustration of what has to come. She endures systematic torture, rape and killing. Whereas men and children have to be killed because they are Tutsis, the women die more times for being women and Tutsis too. Although, comparatively, more men than women are killed, there appears to be a gleeful gender motive targeting the female subjectivities. They are sites of rehearsal as the killers who target husbands must begin with the torture of their wives. A woman's death in this context is not the climax of the planned destruction of lives but a mere process of killing their men. Rape is portrayed as a violent attack and humiliation of the female body, as graphically detailed in the rape of Marina's mother. This particular rape is part of the gendered strategy of humiliating her husband before he is killed. He is forced to watch helplessly, the sexual attack visited upon his wife before he is killed. But the attackers are not yet through with Mukundane as they kill her after the rape. The violence of the language of rape is captured when the Colonel is shown to be "pounding" at Mukundane, and "tearing at her insides" during the rape incident. The terms evoke punitive, humiliating and barbaric motivations as opposed to the need for sexual gratification. Rape is seen as an effective way of aiding and sustaining the genocide. Armstrong (2009) sees this rape as a way of *objectifying* victims. This form of creating the abject, as Diken and Laustsen (2005) argue, is made possible by use of rape as the "mark of sovereignty stamped directly on the body" (112). Again, the genocide epitomises organised rape as an integral aspect of warfare against the Tutsi ethnic group. Ethnic cleansing—it appears—is not just situations in which one group engages the perceived opponent in a battle to annihilate. Rape takes a new meaning as a bio-marked strategy in genocide as it is used to inflict trauma and through this—to destroy family base and social solidarity within the marked enemy group.

Through rape, an illicit abject is shoved into the woman's body and the victim even contemplates suicide. Perhaps, this is what Marina hints at when she says she wants to relocate to a place which is far from the people who already know her. Apparently, the sexual infiltration of the woman's body within the meaning of this context—rape—works as a metaphor for the penetration of enemy space. Again, the bio-political strategy operates through the creation of an 'inclusive exclusion'. The woman and the community targeted are inscribed within the enemy realm of power as those excluded.

Armstrong (2009) argues that the rape of Marina's mother is enjoined to this form of attack as bio-political strategy. She is also 'marked' as enemy at two levels—ethnicity and gender. The rape of Marina, on the other hand, is more of an 'intimate' betrayal by a person she trusts and looks up to for support. In addition, Marina's rape is not only theatrically re-enacted as her mother's, but also heightens her awareness of that rape and re-opens the wound of a past she has so far

attempted to consign to the past. In this instance, she suffers a double wound. These rapes further underscore the hostile situations in which women live.

In *Secrets No More*, pain becomes the theme that writes the narratives of death that emerge from the events of the murders. Dee's testimony triggers Marina's own experience. He provides to her what Aquayson (2007:47) refers to as the "moment of leakage" which comes when Marina listens to Dee's account of the horror of murders he witnessed in Rwanda. His account of the experienced past triggers Marina's own recollection of what she has kept to herself, the secret of the murders she herself witnessed. Marina's reluctance to share her secret may be partly because she is waiting for a moment to process the experiences, or the experiences are too harrowing to be narrated to anyone until she heals slowly over the years and through a number of triggering stimuli.

Marina has no authority over her own body; she cannot decide whether or not to have sex. Someone else, a man, decides and violently gets it. Kiyimba (2008) has argued that unlike the rape of Mukundane by Colonel Renzaho, which can be seen as the use of rape as a device of planned and systematic persecution and humiliation, Marina's rape by Matayo is a response to an unconditional sexual desire under the pretext of intoxication. He suggests that the latter rape, examined in a wider perspective of patriarchy as a dominant influence, is a symbolic manifestation of general female vulnerability. Whereas Kiyimba attributes the rapes to the general context of patriarchy, he appears to consent one rape over the other, yet—non-consensual sex despite the circumstances—remains rape. Kiyimba's excusal of Matayo attributed to alcohol and "spontaneous" sexual desire is unacceptable since the spontaneity is not experienced by both parties, that is why the raping act haunts and dislocates the victim in the same way the Colonel's rape of her mother does. Moreover, Matayo has been scheming for this to happen and it is this calculated act which makes it brutal and inexcusable. Matayo's act is similar to the colonel's, save for contexts.

## 5. Conclusion

*Secrets No More* highlights a woman's place in a masculinistic context of extreme violence and in creating resultant female covert forms of protest to state their position. Accordingly, there is no perception that the characters are hapless victims unaware of their oppressive situations. Instead, they are aware and each victim responds in a manner that finally restores her identity. The writer uses her characters to problematise womanhood in Rwanda and Uganda. In a strategic reference to and documentation of ethnic histories and realities, the author interrogates the space of a woman in a society that looks down upon her as a subordinate. She draws from the local language which is one of the tools used to mark the woman body. In this regard, narrativisation is part of the self-recovery process which the narrative accomplishes, finally. Committing these experiences to writing in this context offers a transgressive act and constitutes an attempt to represent the unrepresentable. Since the female characters are full aware of their predicament in the novel, the narrative appears to demand social changes through concerted efforts to redress the situation.

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