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## DRAMATURGIES OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN SELECTED KENYAN DRAMAS

### ABSTRACT

This study examines the dramaturgies used in the representation of the female gender in Kenyan drama. The study stemmed from the need to interrogate how Kenyan playwrights represent women in drama as one way of demonstrating women's empowerment in society. Thus, the study examined Denis Kyalo's *The Hunter is Back* (2010), Francis Imbuga's *The Return of Mgofu* (2011) and *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013), and Njoki Gitumbi's *A New Dawn* (2012). The study sought to not only illustrate the representation of women in the selected plays, but also examine the ideological persuasions deployed by the playwrights in the selected plays. This thesis thus interrogated the artistic strategies deployed by the playwrights in the representation of female characters in the selected texts. In regards to methodology, the researcher adopted a qualitative research design. The four primary texts were purposively sampled. Since the study is textual in nature, a textual exegesis was conducted from a close-reading and content analysis as the methods of data collection and analysis, respectively. Primary texts were subjected to close reading to provide data for analysis, which was then done by discursive reference to secondary and critical sources. To aid in this analysis, the study leaned on feminist literary theories, particularly gynocriticism and Gayatri Spivak's views on subalternity. The study drew on Spivak's theorisation of how subaltern experiences diminish the position of women in society by muting them through patronizing representation, where women's individual views are essentialised and then re-presented in ways that presume their own inability to do so and thus extend their silencing in society. To augment these theoretical standpoints, the study also borrowed pertinent tenets of Postcolonial theories, particularly those articulated by Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha to explore issues and challenges of female re-presentation.

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