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The role of style and technique in feminist dramaturgies

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of style in feminist dramaturgies. The study stemmed from the need to interrogate how Kenyan playwrights use style to 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). This study 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 because the three playwrights are Kenyan, their plays are current, and they address topical issues particularly on representation of female characters in Kenyan drama. 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. The study leaned on feminist literary theories, particularly gynocriticism and Gayatri Spivak's views on subalternity for analysis. 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. Given that drama in particular and literature in general reflects the society that produces them, this study finds that women face a lot of issues that burden them in their search for identity. The study therefore shows that the dramatist's artistic strategies (dramaturgies) are critical in shaping and redefining female representation in Kenya today.

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