



Gendered Spaces and Ruptured Identities

Representation of Women in African Literature



Editors

Hem Raj Bansal
Roshan Lal Sharma

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CHAPTER 12

Violent Times, Vexed Lives: Surfacing of the Innate African 'Female' in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *The First Woman*

Khem Raj Sharma

Since the earliest days of European expansionism, Africa has been predicted as a space of futurelessness projecting it as an uncivilized society. But, the root cause may be otherwise, wherein the white futurities were dependent on its exploitation. Following the years after the independence of Uganda from the British Empire, the country was regarded as the literary pride of Africa. This certainly was due to the reliance of its writers on their culture, traditions, history and mythology; and with a view to make Ugandan audience "feel like this is their world and they have a stake in it and they have something to say about it" (Kyomuhendo 41). Drawing on the historical, mythological and literary texts, the researcher in this treatise seeks to demonstrate the surfacing of the innate African 'female' self in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *The First Woman*, (2020) even during the times when Uganda was reeling under the dictatorial regime of Idi Amin.

Through oral story-telling, mythologies and folklore, Makumbi's latest novel is a powerful feminist narrative of a young African girl, who, attempts to discover who she is in an African patriarchal society, throughout varied chronicles of time. Further, she comes to know how being a woman can take different forms; and who women are and can be for each other. Such a discourse in the text then follows the last stage of feminism by Elaine Showalter wherein the reader focuses on the women's texts about women thereby uncovering everything that concerns a 'female.' It would propagate Showalter's