

6. THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE AGENCY IN THE MARY KAROORO OKURUT NOVEL, *THE OFFICIAL WIFE*

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ABSTRACT

This article of the Portrayal of Female Agency in *The Official Wife* (2003) a novel by Mary Karooro Okurut. The article explores forms of female agency and the narrative techniques used to portray female agency in *The Official Wife* (2003). I classified the forms of female agency into three categories which include; bargaining and negotiation, subversion and resistance, deception and manipulation. I argue that it is these forms through which women show agency. Agency is a crucial matter of focus and I therefore employ a number of narrative styles implored to perfectly bring out the portrayals of female agency including; vivid descriptions, imagery, irony, alliteration, direct speech, dialogue, point of view, indirect speech and others. In the article, I argue that all females deserve to enjoy their freedom and rights like the males because they are both created in the image of God. Some of the female characters in *The Official Wife* are mistreated, tortured psychologically and treated as the weaker sex. In spite of the trauma, the main character identified as Liz in *The Official Wife* turns out to be resilient and outspoken due to the problems she encounters. In the article, I also bring out the fact that female characters develop agency as a result of trauma and crisis as according to Pointiere, Mathilinde (2021). Every female in the novel goes through a hardship before they show their abilities. And it is this much trauma that enables females to show off their agency. I further show that females in *The Official Wife* are resilient, spirited, elastic, irrepressible and outspoken because they do not use physical violence to obtain what they want. They rather use forms of female agency including; subversion and resistance, deception and manipulation through which they deceive and manipulate the people

around them in many ways to achieve what they want. Female agency is therefore a crucial matter of focus and it contains three forms which aid women in becoming resilient and successful. All this is discussed as I take a close look at the forms of female agency and the narrative techniques Karooro uses to depict female agency.

INTRODUCTION

Female agency is perceived as the ability of the women to make choices and act upon them without being interrupted by law or anyone. According to Catherine Lee & Anne Logan (2017), female agency is defined as the ability to make choices both in the household and in society. That it means a woman's belief in herself and awareness of her rights and her ability to affect her life by having power to make choices and to control acquired resources. Rens SE (2021) argues that women should be free to celebrate and more so choose whatever they want without question according to (Gill, 2007, Gill, 2008; Dosekun, 2015).

Also Mc Robbie, Storey (2018; 176) argues that the present culture completely overlooks the feminist gains of 1970's and 1980's. He suggests that such feminist gains are out of fashion and aged. That feminism is no longer needed in this era where women have the ability to figure out and profile their own progress in life. Female agency helps to focus on the specific ways in which women have challenged, resisted, overthrown or gained entrance into social structures and institutions that had tended to ignore, exclude, disadvantage or penalize them (Catherine Lee & Anne Logan, 2017). This comes about because women believe in themselves and are aware of their rights and their ability to affect their lives by having the power to make choices and to control their resources.

Female agency is a point of focus that has been tackled by a number of African writers. Some authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus*, Unity Dow in *The Screaming of the Innocent*, Mary Karooro Okurut in *The Switch* and *Child of a Delegate*, Elieshi Lema in *Parched Earth* and Kaleni Hiyalwa in *Meekulu's*

Children depict the theme of female agency in their novels. These scholars argue that female agency is still complicated for women to exercise due to the patriarchal settings and the male dominated institutions which make it challenging for them to make their contributions as they desire. It is shown that women characters in these novels are conscious of the oppression they undergo, but some allow it to advance due to economic reasons and fear of breaking cultural norms. A few of them are not discouraged by societal resolutions, but rather are strong challengers of patriarchy.

Female agency is a key theme in African novels. And Mary Karoro Okurut in *The Official wife* covers very many themes but among those many themes, there is a burning issue on female agency. Therefore, I discuss the novel paying attention to forms of female agency and the narrative techniques Karoro uses to depict agency.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study used Feminist Theory to collect and analyze data in *The Official Wife* by Karoro. Feminist theory encompasses work in a variety of disciplines, including; sociology, economics, female studies, literary criticism, skill, times past, psychiatry, literature and way of thinking. Feminist theory aims to increase equality, expand human choice, eliminate gender stratification, end sexual violence and promote sexual freedom.

Since female agency is part and parcel of and, or related to these themes, this theory becomes the most appropriate of all. With it, the researcher was in position to study female agency and its many faces as well as handle the style the writer uses to portray it in her literary works. According to Hooks (2000), feminism is a drive to terminate chauvinism, sexist abuse and cruelty. While providing a critique of these social and political relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests. Themes explored in feminist theory include discrimination, typecasting, sexual objectification, oppression, and patriarchy. In the field of literary criticism, Elaine Showalter describes the development of feminist

theory as having three phases. The first she calls "feminist critique", in which the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second Showalter calls gyno-criticism, in which the woman is producer of textual meaning. The last phase she calls gender theory, in which the ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex and gender system are explored.

For feminists, a woman's right to control her own sexuality is a key issue. Feminists such as Catharine MacKinnon argue that women have very slight control over their own bodies, with female sexuality being largely controlled and demarcated by men in patriarchal societies. That sexual violence committed by men is frequently entrenched in ideologies of male sexual power and that these schemes grant females very few genuine choices to refuse sexual advances. Feminists argue that all cultures are, in one way or another, dominated by ideologies that largely deny women the right to decide how to express their sexuality, because men under patriarchy feel entitled to define sex on their own terms.

This privilege can take different forms, depending on the culture. In some conservative and religious cultures marriage is regarded as an institution which requires a wife to be sexually available at all times, virtually without limit; thus, imposing sex on a wife is not measured as a crime or even an abusive behavior. In more liberal cultures, this entitlement takes the form of a general sexualization of the whole culture.

Feminist views on sexuality vary, and have differed by historical period and by cultural context. Feminist attitudes to female sexuality have taken a few different directions. Matters such as the sex industry, sexual representation in the media, and issues regarding consent to sex under conditions of male dominance have been particularly controversial among feminists. However, women today are denoted as enjoying their sexual liberty and unlimited sexuality in the up-to-date trending media forms than before according to (Gill, 2007; Gill, 2008; Genz, 2009; Cuklanz, 2016). Thus putting an end to the climaxing debate of the feminist sex wars of the late 1970s and the 1980s. Also Pro-feminism is the support of feminism without implying that the

supporter is a member of the feminist movement. The term is most often used in reference to men who are actively loyal to feminism activities. The activities of pro-feminist men's groups include anti-violence work with boys and young men in schools, offering sexual harassment workshops in workplaces, running community education campaigns, and counseling male perpetrators of violence. Pro-feminist males also are tangled in men's health, activism against nudes including anti-pornography law, men's studies, and the intensification of gender equity curricula in institutes. This work is from time to time in association with feminists and women's services, such as domestic violence and rape crisis hubs.

Feminist Theory focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests. Therefore, it helped the researcher to collect and analyze data since its aim is to increase equality, increase human choice, eliminate gender imbalance, terminate sexual violence and support sexual freedom where this study fits. This theory, being on women's rights and interests as already highlighted, becomes the most appropriate for this study. One should note that it is after the revelation and understanding of the challenges females are facing that one can try hard to change that reality. Therefore, prior to fighting for the promotion of female agency, one must be aware of the unfair social, political and economic challenges they are facing and of which Feminist Theory helps to do. And once one is aware of the above challenges, they are able to identify their desires and choices which enables them to promote female agency. Therefore, Feminist Theory helped to collect data by revealing the Political; economic and social challenges female characters are facing and also helped to analyze it by aiding in the discussion of how female characters in the novels try to change that reality thereby portraying female agency.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive study design of *The Official Wife* by Karooro to examine depictions of female agency and the narrative techniques. The study used a qualitative approach. This research

approach was used to collect data by looking for the selected literary text. Upon obtaining the primary text, the researcher took a close reading of both primary and secondary texts and other relevant reading materials such as; journal articles, research reports among others. The researcher carried out close reading while taking notes of the important events, narrative and techniques in the text selected for this study. Qualitative research approach was used to spell out the forms of female agency depicted in the novel. The same approach was employed to analyze the narrative techniques used to depict female agency. The collected data was coded using a checklist. The data was coded, studied and developed into notes after editing. The researcher edited the very data to ensure accuracy and uniformity as well as minimizing errors. All this was achieved through use of a textual checklist.

DISCUSSION OF THE FORMS OF FEMALE AGENCY PORTRAYED IN *THE OFFICIAL WIFE*

The official wife is a segmentation of the contemporary polygamous marriage in a Christian setting. The official wife is a story of a woman known as Liz who is devastated by the feeling that she has been assessed and found wanting by her husband who takes on a second wife. She is therefore locked in a meaningless, loveless marriage with a modern-day polygamous husband. The second wife in Karooro's novel, apparently an educated and independent woman, becomes her competitor and she becomes intimate with her husband. Liz's husband becomes impossible for her. The author tells the story in a laconic style and with sharp humor, making observations and criticisms about women's experiences of traditional and modern day marriage and polygamy in Africa as well as her culture has an uncritical reception of western ways.

That is why B. Musinguzi of "The East African Writer" wrote in November 17-23, 2003 that "Okurut's book tackles a subject that everyone avoids." In the novel, Mary broadly talks about portrayals of female agency, that is; their ability to negotiate, bargain and come up with decisions, resistance and subversion, deception and manipulation

as well as their awareness of their rights both in the communities and families they are married to. Below are the forms of female agency portrayed in "The official wife" written by Mary Karoro Okurut;

Resistance and subversion is portrayed when the woman vice president whose name is not disclosed calls on all her courage to face the ordeal she is going through in her marriage by disclosing the grief she is facing with strength. It is said that her husband's idea of having a good time was beating her senseless and then gloating her his accomplishments. The husband to the woman Vice president goes on to ridicule her by reasoning, how much better fun can get when one is walloping the VP. He even questions himself if other married men can ever have this kind of privilege. He pauses this question in amusement of himself (a 'nobody') to beat a full whole vice president of the nation? He feels it's a great deal since he set a record of being the first man in Africa to beat a vice president.

This man man does this with courage knowing that his wife cannot at all costs disclose the ordeal happening to her. He affirms to himself; "After all, "*ebyomunju tebitotolwa*" implying that what happens in the home should never be heard from outsiders. So through diction and Luganda proverb said above, that "*ebyomunju tebitotolwa*", the man of the house is able to persuade himself into walloping the woman Vice President, who is his wife, clearly knowing that nothing else she can do other than accepting to live with such a challenge. Such a Luganda proverb means that a woman is not supposed to be talkative. So even though the woman vice president is over beaten at home by the husband, it is her obligation to keep it secret to herself and the husband since "what happens in the home should since never be told to outsiders" (Karooro10).

However, the woman vice president through the author uses some other proverbs at a later stage which proves this patriarchal system wrong especially of this "*ebyomunju tebitotolwa*". It is usually wives who become victims to this proverb because if something happened to a man in doors, they're not expected to let it out to friends and strangers but the reverse is true. Women's secrets that happen indoors are usually

exposed. For instance Ishaka exposes his wife while with friends one evening, telling how sweet she is. Mary Karoro Okurut writes:

“Ishaka has no problem telling his friends what I look like down south and how pleasant or how deep my well is compared to his other exploits when he gathers with the boys for an evening sip around the *malwa* pot”

In a patriarchy system, it should be noted that a man commits no offense for telling his woman nakedness and how she performs in bed. But if the woman does the same, she is considered blasphemous and that’s why they say “*ebyomunju tebitotolwa*”. However the woman vice president takes courage and calls it quits after realizing that her marriage is not going places; thereby exposing everything. The writer has it;

“Wife had certainly never appreciated this particular sense of privacy and belted out the truth to the entire nation”(Karooro, 10)

By exposing the truth, the woman vice president shows resistance against the torture she facing and the fighting spirit in her. She also reflects the undermining of power of her grand-fathers’ traditional system because according to her for father’s wives are not expected to speak out secrets in their bedroom. By speaking out to the entire world, the woman vice president is showing the entire world that she is aware of her rights and automatically this marks a big step for women in oppressive marriages, "those women who regard themselves as progressive cheer her honestly with courage"Karooro¹⁰ since she is emancipating the female sex and has been able to break the yolk of patriarchy system of “*ebyomunju tebitotolwa*” and more other forms. Other married women learn of their right of freedom of speech. The author has it;

“..... If a whole VP could talk, the doors were now wide open for lesser women to speak out or even walk out”.Karooro¹⁰

This awareness of her rights help married women in torturing marriages to speak up and be helped or walk out to have peace. Therefore, what the woman VP does enables even lesser women who are commoners in the society to speak out their grievances and all that is hurting them. It is written that this empowers women of all categories

to speak up whenever need arises and prevents them from dying in silence and adhering to the ill domestic violence like the woman vice president has been going through or even worse .

The opening up of the woman VP frees a lot of married souls because it takes one with a lot of courage to utter such a thing to the entire nation. I say this because many women in the women's movement organizations are victims of domestic violence themselves whether physically or psychologically to the extent that they will be qualified to add a chapter each to the finest book on the matter. But they are silent and are not able to stand up and complain or utter their problems in public and all they can do is to advise their rural counterparts to walk out of abusive marriages while they themselves cling to theirs. It is said that the woman vice president is a strong character, she at least practiced whatever she preached and in fact should have been awarded a gift for encouraging and empowering fellow women facing the ordeal of domestic violence because she depicts female agency since she proves to the public that she is aware of her rights.

The Vice President's ability to speak out on her ordeal reflects female agency. However, she is blamed for this by the majority of men and more conservative women who jeer and argue saying that "amaka gamanywa embeba". Implying that it's only the rats which know whatever is happening in the home and nobody else. So to these patriarchal system believers know and believe that a man dominates both public and private spheres, implying that a woman has no say whatsoever especially in the low and middle income countries.

However, the woman vice president breaks the silence there by freeing countless women from the ties of the patriarchy system and they are also now able to fight for their rights by speaking up on matters of domestic violence that they are facing.

The VP goes on, she declares how the husband ill-treats her twice a week. It is written that;

"The woman vice president declared the man had slapped her twice."

The male chauvinists think the woman is reducing her husband which reflects subversion, a form of female agency. They claim that a man is not supposed to open for the wife even though she is a vice president. So when the man is interrogated why he beats the VP (woman vice president), he replies that:

“.....as far as he was concerned, he was not beating the VP, he was disciplining his wife!”

This is dramatic irony and mockery at the same time. Husband mocks the vice president while answering the people who interrogate him asking him why he had beaten the wife, because he responds that he is disciplining his wife forgetting her title as the vice president of the entire country. He mocks and ridicules his wife who holds a high position in the government by beating her and addressing her as a mere wife in public.

Then dramatic irony is also demonstrated whereby the husband to the woman vice president claims that he simply was disciplining and not beating her. But to be sincere how does one molest a partner and when interrogated they claim that they are simply disciplining. In actual sense, this is domestic violence but he disguises it to disciplining

This dramatic irony is meant to create suspense and tension in the audience. This act (that the man does) stimulates strong emotions in us the audience (reader) because the man (husband to the woman VP) acts against his action by saying something opposite to what he has done. That is; he says he was disciplining the wife yet in actual sense he was beating her which is domestic violence. However, at the end of it all, the VP shows her ability to speak up. She displays great resistance by opening up to the public about the domestic violence she was facing from her husband hence reflecting female agency.

Liz's ability to bargain and negotiate for a fair title for house girls is yet another form of female agency. Her ability to disregard the title "house girl" reflects an empowering character in her. The author writes against the sin of calling house helps - house girls. It is written on Karooro.⁶⁹ that she never wants to use the title house girl. To her, she thinks it is degrading and dehumanizing. According to house girls a decent title "house-help" helps house helps women to meet their mental,

emotional, social, spiritual confidence and support. It gives them the ability to believe in themselves. The author explains that not only the Asians suffer this sin of calling domestic workers house girls but also here in Uganda. It should be noted that calling domestic workers house girls demoralizes them emotionally and psychologically therefore by speaking up against the sin of calling domestic workers house girls, the author is helping change the domestic workers into active survivors rather than passive victims. Early and adequate psycho social support can prevent distress and suffering which would develop into something more severe and it activates female agency.

Therefore this negotiation for psychosocial support is regarded as a form of female agency because it helps women domestic workers cope better and become reconciled to everyday life.

Liz prepares to strike back against the thug who wants to kill her husband Ishaka. Her ability to decide to arm herself with a pounding stick and go for a mission to rescue her husband is another form of female agency reflected in "The official wife" because she displays resistance. As Liz prepares to go on a rescue mission, she gropes under the bed and gets out the stick she uses for pounding millet. She arms herself with this weapon, the pounding stick to go and rescue her only Ishaka. She even describes her fears;

"In this case, my fear of the unknown future without Ishaka is a million times greater than the fear of darkness or robbers."

This kind of description that Liz gives is enough to describe or draw a picture of the kind of fear she holds in her heart. We are also able to understand the trauma she is going through. The reason she is prepared to face the robber who wants to finish her Ishaka. However, despite the much fear she holds inside her heart, she still believes that she can manage to fight the thief and defeat him. This depicts female agency. Liz goes on to tell of her fears asking herself; "where the hell can the thief be? And if he has already injured my husband...."

The writer uses rhetorical questions to directly speak to the audience in a way of engaging us as well as giving the reader a moment to pause and think about the questions. She finally hears her poor husband clearly breathing his last, gasping for breath. She has not heard

from him in such a long time, the poor Ishaka. Not long, between the gasp he cries out for his mother in search for help saying;

“Oh you are killing me!”

Such words are often considered the last words of a dying man. Liz kick open the door as she raises the pounding stick high, ready to finish off the murderer of the piercing screech followed by the most urgent sounding fear filled alarm of all time.

“*Walalala, walalala!* Help! Thieves! My husband is being murdered! Heeeeeelp!”

Female agency sets in here, Liz's ability to make a loud alarm itself is a form of female agency. Because by making such a loud alarm, she is bargaining and calling for help from her neighbors. And indeed, her alarm helps because neighbors hear the alarm, they pick it up and within a minute, village eleven the name of their area is resounding with different degrees of alarm. This is psychosocial support being offered to Liz and it indeed enables her to know that she is not alone. The entire village responds to empower her in such a great time of need. This in turn also helps Liz to learn that there are people to support her in defending the husband from the robber. It shows her that she is not fighting the robber alone. There are people or the entire village behind her and this gives her courage to pursue the robbers without fear. The writer has it;

“It is amazing what one woman crying can do to an entire neighborhood. We may pretend to be ladies who can't speak beyond a whisper just because we are around men, or to be precise when they are all around us. But when faced with the possibility of disaster, our true selves come out and they are seldom as pretty as our faces”

This statement proves to us that women have the capacity to emancipate each other if they only have to shake away the shyness and bargain for help. A good example is this, where Liz had to only make a single alarm and the entire village gets up to help. Help by the gathering of the village is a great signature of empowering women socially and security wise. The author vividly describes how the village members collaborate in bid to offer help to Liz who makes an alarm in search for help.

“Some of the rescue team have whistles, which they used in the last presidential campaign and they blow them until their lungs almost burst. Others get their drums and bang away on them without any particular sense of rhythm (you can’t blame them; this is no time for celebrating). Yet others get tins of one type or another and clang them with such fury and urgency, this time the din is enough to send a pregnant ward, with immediate results.”

This signifies a collaborative spirit and that women matter to them in the society, a reason they all get up to help. In fact the author calls it “solidarity “. She explains that if there is an attribute their people have in an abundance, it is Solidarity. The vivid description given above by the author helps us to clearly understand the kind of help offered which enables Liz to believe that people are ready to help her.

Actually while reading this specific part of the novel, the description given makes one feel like they are standing right there next to our ears . And the blowing of the whistle also appeals to our senses, that is; the nose, ears and skin since it is said that; “... they blow until their lungs almost burst." and you well know that the lungs coordinate with the nose then sound does with ears and a combination of the two can cause fear or excitement which can later lead to appearance of small bumps on the skin surface called goosebumps. The act of solidarity is actually called “*munno mukabi*” in our local language. This means when your neighbor is in danger it becomes your business especially in rural areas.

They also have associations called “twezikye” implying that let’s bury one another. This empowers people especially women emotionally since they are regarded as the weaker sex. Thus switching us to female agency in terms of the community, both men and women's ability to negotiate and bargain for help through such associations since in such a case where one loses a partner, one is supported in terms of either money, food or even firewood. The writer has it;

“So when somebody dies, it is the obligation of everyone around to contribute either money, food, or fire wood. There is a book where everything is recorded.”

So basically, such equal treatment of both men and women as well in the society gives the female sex the ability to believe in themselves and also empowers them socially, economically and psychologically simply because the women also feel a sense of belonging and that they are also being considered to be a part of those associations; Associations like that is; Munno Mukabi, Tezikye and Twetambire implying that Lets treat ourselves.

Deception and manipulation is portrayed. The Female Agency is represented in chapter two of “The official wife” when Liz imagines a fire outbreak in her house in the middle of the night, she sniffs and sniffs and really she feels something must be burning. Being aware of her rights and the law, she calls out to the fire brigade team by phone for rescue and they are there in time to help. This portrays female agency for the team responds to a mere woman yet we all know that usually women occupy the lowest positions; they are marginalized. So to call in the fire brigade team and they respond with immediate effect is something not to take for granted. This is total encouragement to Liz especially psychologically. However, the fire brigade team commander realizes that there’s no fire, so the brigade team leader shouts to the team to halt and hold the water, as silence reigns he asks again in bid to affirm that there’s no fire but Liz insists that there is. In disgust also he insists saying;

“Very funny. Now cut out the theatricals, woman; there is no fire here! “

In short, the fire brigade team has been called for nothing since there is no fire to cease. Liz is supposed to pay the hiring fee and time but the commander of the fire brigade team lets her be just to keep peace as well as support her mentally and socially. The author has it on Karooro.54:

“Madam, under the circumstances, I should charge you for having brought us here on a false alarm. Ideally you should have paid for the fuel and time we have wasted. But because you obviously have a mental problem the fire department will not charge you”.

Female agency is portrayed because Liz manages to manipulate the entire fire brigade team and she indeed succeeds because they come

to her home to cease fire that is not there. Remember she didn't see the fire, she only imagines it.

Resistance and subversion is another form of female agency portrayed in the novel "The official wife" by Mary Karoro Okurut. While the three women sit on the cushioned stools busy pulling away at the poor girl's hair as they engage in endless gossip. The girl of about two and half feels tortured to the point of being told not to move her head for comfort even when she is feeling pain. In resistance, she breaks out into heart breaking sobs and screams saying;

"Mummy mmmmmmmmy! One of the tigresses puts her hand over the child's mouth".

What a torturous and heartless lady? Being aware of her rights, with all this pain that the young girl is feeling, she finally buries all her molars into the hand of the woman plaiting her. It is written that:

"The girl buries all her molars into the cruel hand of her tormentor who gives a yelp of pain" (Karooro. 74)

The author uses indirect speech to portray the girl's aggressive character; the way how the young girl manages to resist and fight for herself hence female agency is reflected. Subversion is portrayed because long ago children were meant to respect their elders even though an old person committed something which is unfair against the child, the child was not supposed to say or do anything like fighting or responding back. However, the girl disobeys the rules of her traditional society and undermines them because she forgets about her elders and she refuses to be ill-treated. The reason she bites the hand of the hand of her tormentor hence portraying resistance and subversion. Indirect speech is used certainly to create distance between the author and the reader's perception in such a way that it fosters intimacy between the reader and narrator. In this case, the little girl of two and a half years fights for her rights by biting the rude cruel woman who is inflicting pain on her head. She indeed shows the ability to emancipate herself, she surely does not deserve the kind of pain she is going through moreover at such a tender age.

Liz applauds the girl by giving a hilarious and breathtaking clap purposely to support and empower her psychologically with this kind

of empowerment, the young girl gets some relief psychologically, emotionally and finally she feels there is one in her full support amidst these three cruel women. Liz's applause indicates that her resistance has been successful. Again, the girl manages to manipulate the three old women torturing her because the moment she bites one, they all stop plaiting her.

It is written that Liz bargains within herself and agrees to visit the native doctor who gives her a concoction in five litre jerrycan. Later on, Liz gets results that she initially has been doubting. The author says:

“Truth be told, I don’t know whether it is the herbs or the potions or just mother luck or a combination of all those factors that does it. Obviously, I give birth, out pops a baby girl, a raving beauty. She is a queen, is my baby girl.”

Both Liz and Ishaka are excited and happy for the birth of the baby girl. All this is caused by the good advice from Fina who advises Liz to take herbs and look, the entire family is happy. And Liz's ability to make a decision to visit the native doctor and then drink the herbs without being forced also portrays female agency. Fina’s advice also represents female agency because she shows her ability to use her acquired knowledge about herbal interns to offer advice to her one friend Liz. Fina’s advice turns out to be the source of empowerment and cause of happiness to Liz and her husband Ishaka. Liz is therefore supported emotionally since she had been upset and stressed about the question of the kind of sex she would conceive next. Liz is supported psychologically because she is not sure of what the husband, Ishaka, would perceive in case she did not conceive a baby girl. Luckily she conceived the right sex and socially Liz and Ishaka experience A MOMENT OF HAPPINESS.

Ishaka is really excited upon having a baby girl as he holds her in his loving arms he names her after his mother “Evas“. According to us Africans when a kid is loved the most, they are named after the people loved most. Also the author has it as evidence:

“The best way a man can show that he loves his daughter is to give her his mother’s name.” (Karoooro. 79)

Ishaka feels so proud of the daughter and says to her newborn baby:

“Eva the first woman, the original woman.”

At this moment, happiness is attributed to Fina’s advice to Liz which is in the form of a set of ideas unknown to Liz. Fina saves Liz from a night mare of psychological torture, emotional and social torture. First from the husband Ishaka, secondly; Manga who is Ishaka's mistress and thirdly; the society in which she dwells.

Liz's ability to resist from quarreling with Ishaka her one husband is another form of female agency represented in "The official wife". To avoid quarreling with Mr. Ishaka after turning back home in the morning at 7: 00 am, Liz recalls the water silencer that she got from her mother. She dashes to the kitchen, quickly gets a glass of water from the pot. She quickly takes a mouthful, which she safely puts in either cheeks and closes her mouth. Liz makes sure she doesn't spit out the water. Or else she may be forced to utter words which she may never be able to take back and this would ruin her marriage the most. It is written on Karooro.⁶¹ that Liz borrows this idea from her mother. Liz makes a flashback and this is what she has to say;

“This is an old remedy I got from my mother. If you do not want to quarrel with your man, simply revert to that old trick of water in the cheek” (Karooro. 61)

To be sincere and to tell the truth, this trick of "water silencer" becomes medicine to Liz. She indeed does not quarrel with her husband Ishaka anymore. Mother's words get her emancipated. The recalling of the idea she gets from her only mother indeed saves her dignity and respect with her husband.

An example of a poor housewife and a witch doctor is given to bring out a form of female agency called deception and manipulation. She is never without a bruised face and battered bottom. However, being aware of her rights, she one day visits a witch doctor in search of herbs to save her from the beatings. The witch doctor listens carefully and gives her a parcel of herbs. He then begins to give prescriptions on how to use it. The witch doctor vividly explains;

“When he starts using hot words, put a herb into your mouth, and chew on it – never answer him back; not a word from your mouth, you hear?”

Through this vividly explained action on how to use the herb, we understand that the doctor is not after spoiling the woman’s marriage but rather emancipating her socially, emotionally and psychologically. The witch doctor succeeds at lying and more so manipulating the woman into using the medicine less herb to save her from the beatings of her husband. The witch doctor in the end saves her from being beaten by her husband. It is written that the woman returns six months later without a single beating from her husband. The woman herself bears witness in appreciation;

“You are the best doctor in the land; she declares;

And the crafty old witch doctor smiles at his wisdom for he very well knows that as long as the woman does not bicker, the man can never botch her.”

Evidence;

“All he had given was a simple medicine-less herb that could never cure the mildest headache.” (Karooro. 61)

This clearly shows that the old crafty witch doctor offered advice to this woman instead of bewitching herbs like she expected since the medicine he gives her in the parcel cannot cure the mildest headache. This advice the old crafty man gives is a form of support for the good of the woman. In short, he is empowering the female gender such that her marriage can last without trouble.

Resistance and subversion is another form of female agency portrayed through both Liz and her mother when they are discussing the issue of pulling. Liz’s mom sets her free from the partial feeling about the ideology of saying that a woman has to pull. Pulling is the act of elongating the clitoris located in the vagina. Her mother tells her that pulling is a thing of the flesh and an opinion reason she is not surprised when Ishaka dumps her for Manga. By telling her that it's an opinion, we learn that Liz's mom is aware of her rights and thus educating her girl child regarding the issue of pulling. The idea of “pulling” among women, it is said that when a woman pulls, she does so with the sole

purpose of pleasing a man. Implying that when a woman has not pulled, they do not approve of a man's superiority. That is to western men of Uganda. The author has it;

“You are not paying homage to him and acknowledging him as supreme leader, somebody whom you please!”

This habit is common in the western region of Uganda and partly central as well. However, this is enslaving women, it means that women are just sex objects which are used by men so that they can please them sexually, from the men's point of view since women will always approve and agree without fail to men's rules and also accept the label inflicted on them by the society. This pulling thing is told through a flashback when Ishaka while he is still dating Liz asks if she has pulled. Liz is taken back, she remembers many years ago being advised by her aunt to pull before she sees her first blood. Her aunt asks her to get in touch with her cousin merely for guidance on how to do it. Good enough Liz complies with the rules of doing it though a little bit hesitant. After day one of pulling Liz gets so sore and the following day she can hardly walk. She walks with her legs, a part that her dear mother notices. With eagerness, her mother asks what has happened and in no time she tells her to lie on her back and asks her to remove her pants;

“.....you did that thing that's all right” says mom after examining me.”

Liz is not disappointed as her mother says it's okay to pull. However, she shows dissatisfaction and resistance in regard to the whole idea of pulling because she later pauses, looks thoughtfully into space and tells Liz never to stress herself over such things if she does not like them, hence representing resistance and subversion. Liz's mother completely opposes the idea of pulling and also proves her complete undermining of the power of their tradition by guaranteeing to Liz that pulling is not important. Her mother explains that they are just things of the flesh. Then she goes on to give a vivid explanation on how useless the pulling thing is;

“Things that can be cut off and you remain intact; you remain yourself.” This implies that one can still live life without the things (twin towers) and still get happily married.”

Her mother adds that;

“At the end of the day it is *the you in you* that matters” (Karoooro, 92)

Implying that Liz is left alone to make a decision on her own. Whether to continue pulling or to stop it. And it should be noted that one's power to make a personal decision regarding their life signifies female agency. Therefore her mom is aware of her daughter's rights, she gives her space to make her own choice upon her life. She then gives her a gentle, reassuring smile that empowers her. It is written that;

“My breath whistles out in relief as I rush into her arms and she holds me close to her breast” (Karoooro. 92)

In this way Liz is supported socially, emotionally and psychologically because her mother does not subject her to the painful pulling. Moreover, her mom advises her that even though a woman pulls, what matters is the “you in you” that pulling are just things of the flesh “outward things” since this operation has been disturbing Liz, after her mom’s talk, she feels some relief and they embrace each other. This signifies an emotional support to the daughter thus representing female agency. Also mom in telling Liz to decide what she feels like doing she is setting her free from the enslavement brought about by men who want to treat women as mere sex objects.

Deception and manipulation is witnessed when Liz chooses to trail her husband Ishaka who is said to be in the Parasite hotel room no. 44 to be specific with his side dish Manga (Malaika who chooses to enjoy her sexual freedom with Liz’s husband). Liz follows her husband in order to fight for her marital rights and status as well. When she reaches the parasite hotel, she goes directly to room number 44 and knocks saying “room service” in a soft voice as that of a professional waitress. Liz is clever, she pretends to be a waitress so that they can open for her and she provokes them. However, this does not work for her as Ishaka inquired from Manga if they have ordered something to eat but she responds;

“Not anything I can think of sweetheart. We have enough to ourselves to eat anyway. And then follows this heavy lust filled embittered laughter.”

At the hearing of this, she even regrets why she has come to the hotel. However, she feels she has to carry on with her purpose of fighting for her rights as a married woman. She wants to fight adultery in her marriage and stop it before it goes out of hand. As if that is not enough, Liz knocks again and prompts “you had ordered for a late breakfast “in a quiet firm voice enough to convince Ishaka to open. He still turns her concern down saying;

“No thanks a lot, we have already had an early and late breakfast. Haven’t we been darling?

And a loud kiss follows after laughter which smothers her mouth I guess. This makes Liz angrier. Then Ishaka mocks her saying:

“Hey you! What the hell is wrong with you? You mean you are still there, what sort of waitress are you if you can’t even read. We put a clear do not disturb sign, you should be sacked now fuck off. We are on our honeymoon for heaven’s sake “(Karooro. 97 & 98)

This plunks off the littlest of hair remaining on Liz's head. Wire cut off all of a sudden gets crazy and begins shouting and abusing. It is actually from this mockery and abuse that she gathers strength to fight back. The author has it;

“You lousy son of a bitch, stinking bastard I will give you a honeymoon you will never forget cat, dog, hyena, despicable rat. And that common whore, cheapest harlot ever on the market open the door and I will show you where you came from lousy bitch.”(Karooro, 98)

Liz's abuses are a sign of resistance in a bid to force stop the progress of Ishaka and Manga's relationship Liz abuses Manga all sorts of abuses such that she can leave her husband. She really abuses her hard such that she stops misleading and fornicating with her husband hence portraying the fighting spirit in her. This act implies that Liz is fighting to get back her taken husband thus fighting for her rights leading to the portrayal of resistance and subversion. Subversion is portrayed because Liz commits blasphemy. She trails and abuses her husband in public because what she does beshames the husband since the woman she is abusing is sleeping with her husband Ishaka. And by doing so, she erodes the foundation of her society. Because basically, we are aware that a woman is not supposed to disrespect her husband

be it in privacy or public like Liz does. They actually both get bitter and exchange a lot of dirty words until the voice of the managers brings Liz back to the present by telling her that what she is doing could appear in the papers. This does not stop Liz from fighting for her rights. This is what she has to say in response to manager's question of her appearing in papers the following day;

"I don't care hoot like our people say; *owajwire tatiina mpango* if a woman takes off her clothes she does not fear the size of her partner's penis there is nothing to fear when it comes to fighting for her marital rights."(Karoo, 102)

The statement Liz makes educates us audiences about her strong determined focus she has towards having her husband back. It is usually said that men have the right to go sleeping around with women of their choice and that their wives should have no say but Liz is strongly against that since we see her trail her husband in a hotel and also has the capacity to tell Manga to drop her husband. Her courage to abuse Manga portrays resistance since she has the capacity to fight for her marriage so that it does not break up.

Liz tries to resist her co-wife from taking her hard work for property after the death of her husband in vain. It is written that; "when the angel of death strikes down in a grisly car accident, a lot is revealed about him during the funeral service." Lydia gets a shock of her life as she realizes her one and only husband now the deceased had a spare tire and together had three children. Lydia gets more shocked when all the husband's property is shared equally between her and Richard's spare tire. The author writes;

"Lydia is shocked that this mistress or whatever, whom she did not even know existed, is actually a wife and is treated as her equal before the law when it comes to inheritance. The woman actually takes a large share of property to which Lydia contributed so much, if not more than Richard did."

This gets very disappointing to Lydia as even with the large number of cattle they have, the breed was got from Lydia's family as gifts to the couple to start their new life. So the cattle are shared equally and as if that is not enough, the estate is also divided equally. It should

be remembered and learnt that some four houses in the city that the couple had built were on Lydia's initiative and with more than half of the money from her (Lydia's) wallet. These houses are too shared equally and Lydia is expected not to say a word as the official from the Administrator general's office mumbles that;

“All the property had been registered as belonging to the deceased.”

Implying that it has to be shared equally even though Lydia contributed a portion of money towards some property. This marks the level at which Lydia is used, lied to and most of all betrayed by her one husband. The official further explains that the law demands to chop the property into two, so that each side of the family benefits in equal measure from the deceased's estate. And that the internal dynamics of how this property came into the family is a matter completely irrelevant in the law and is none of his business. Therefore even when Lydia complains on the issue of equal sharing on things she has toiled and worked herself up to, she is not listened to. It is written that;

“Not only did she contribute most of the money; she also personally supervised their construction, making sure everything was done according to the initial plan and that workers did not help themselves to the building materials, as they wouldn't do in such circumstances.”

Lydia gives a lot for she works hard and puts in most of her time supervising the whole construction process and yet at the end of the day the official sets in under order of the law to share her property with the spare tire (Cleopatra) who has not worked for it. Karooro says: “And now, the Hyena that had watched from a cowardly distance as the lions hustled with their prey was on the verge of sharing the spoils in equal measures.”

In refusal, Lydia feels tormented, she gathers her skirts looking for the nearest handy weapons that can help in emancipating herself but all renders futile as the official explains that the law is the law. In this case, the law favors Cleopatra Lydia's counterpart, hence female agency because by all means, she has to take an equal share as that of *The Official Wife*. The official adds that he does not write the law but rather

implements it to the latter. In no time, he appends his signature at the bottom of the page, something that shows that the matter has been concluded. All this is told through a flashback of what Lydia, Fina's cousin goes through. This hurts Lydia a lot and the author writes;

“Lydia bites her lips and clenches her small fists bitterly, as tears stream down her once beautiful face.”(Karooro. 140)

Lydia completely loses hope of reversing what has been done. Her efforts having been put to spoil she bites her lips and tears stream down her beautiful face. When Lydia loses her hard work for property to her counterpart (co-wife), after the burial of her one husband, she accepts and agrees that she has really lost her hard work for property. However, even when she has lost, she feels her daughter should not suffer the same misery in the future. This is what Lydia decides;

“She decides to form a pressure group to fight such injustice against widows in her position, so that at least her daughter should never go through such an ordeal.”(Karooro. 141)

Bargaining and negotiation is portrayed hence reflecting the forms of female agency. The pressure group to fight such injustice is negotiated and created by Lydia and the natives. It is brought out in a flashback to portray women's agency because in some way, it shows resistance from the women's side. It also shows that some women are aware of their rights hence the need to fight to achieve them. By forming a pressure group to fight the injustice for widows especially in Lydia's position is total empowerment of widows in the society. Therefore such flashbacks are used to portray Female agency and its forms. Also the pressure groups help in informing women about their rights. Therefore such flashbacks are used purposely to bring events of the past to present and make them fresh to our memories. And it is from these fresh past events that some characters in the novel undergoing trouble like Lydia and Liz pick lessons and ideas that help them maneuver and overcome marriage trials they are going through.

Female agency is portrayed in the novel when Eva's Daddy denies spinning her around. It happens like this, one fine evening Eva was being used to being hugged and swung up and down, Eva request's her daddy.

“Daddy swings me; she cries happily, expecting the usual answer.”

After Eva’s request, Ishaka answers her back but with a different answer less expected from him again using a tough tone. The author writes:

“Don’t be silly Eva; he growls without another look at her, you are too big to be swung around you are no longer a baby stop these bad manners you are picking from your mother and behave like your age.”

The little girl of six years breaks into tears and is deeply hurt. It is written that the tears that gush from Eva’s eyes as she stands in shocked silence, in a long moment of complete incomprehension, really pierce her mother’s (Liz) heart deeply. Her mother is so trenched that she takes her only daughter to her bedroom for consolation as written:

“I take Eva to her room, hold her gently in my arms and we both weep; silently but very bitterly.”

This is great evidence that female agency is portrayed through mother to child, Eva as they both weep together emotionally. Liz's taking the daughter to her bedroom for consolation, indicates that she is aware of her child's rights and that's the reason she supports her emotionally.

While her mother holds her gently in her tender arms and they both weep, Liz is offering emotional support to the daughter (Eva) who will one day turn into a woman and will as well recall this moment of emotional emancipation from her mother and will most probably empower a fellow lady or herself as women are still going through a lot even when the law has been in place to empower women but least implemented. I say this because a lot of women are still going through hell in their homes as they totally lack emotional, social, economic and political empowerment. While Liz is struggling to forget her past and move on with life, she gets emotionally and psychologically empowered by her boss at her work place. Liz’s boss is bothered by her looks and he one evening calls her back after an assignment and asks if she is really fine.

To get such a privilege of being asked by a boss if one is really not doing well is not for everyone, it means a lot to an employee. It first of all relieves one of stress and there after impacts them psychologically.

You know that feeling of one being bothered about your situation makes you know that you at least have someone who notices, someone who loves you in that they are able to tell when you are fine or not. It shows that a person who is bothered about your situation surely is caring. So her boss inquires;

“Liz, how are you?”

‘Fine, Sir.’

Are you sure you are fine?

The boss looks touched by Liz's situation of being absent minded all the time, the reason he inquires if she is really doing well. However Liz denies her situational state of being not well. After some weeks, her boss insists, bargains and negotiates with her and asks her to take a one month leave so that she can relax her mind and regain life then start living like others in the present. This is what the boss says;

"Liz, try to take time off and relax.

.....

"I once cautioned a friend of mine who loves the bottle, that he was living out a cliff edge existence; that anything could happen and one of these days, he would find himself before his creator."

Through flashback again Liz's boss takes her through his personal experience such that she would get convinced and take in his advice of having a leave in order to relax her mind and entire self, something that would enable her to freshen up and commence living right like other normal people.

Her boss narrates;

“Liz, let me take you through a personal experience. Two years ago I lay in a hospital, like a child, unable to do anything for myself. I had to be bathed, fed and dressed. I spent the time away on my back, staring hard at the ceiling, doing nothing else, as some other people did all my work, both personal and official. That taught me that the world would not end just because one has taken a break from routine and duty.”(Karoo. 147 & 148)

Such a flashback brings the past experience and presents it fresh to the audience's mind. We also learn of what Liz's boss has been through and the reason he is bargaining with her and advising her to

take a leave. It is obvious that the entire world won't stop living and doing their routine just because of one person though a number of us don't usually recognize it.

Boss's advice to Liz is surely valid because if one cannot take care of themselves, it is only them to face the consequences. For instance, if one passed on, they get buried alone not with a friend or family member just because he/she has been a part of them. The same situation happened to Liz's boss, when he got ill, he stared at the ceiling and you can imagine his sickness couldn't stop the world from moving on, everything continued normally.

This is quite shocking but normal. It's the real world we dwell in. Therefore this is the reason why Liz's boss is prompting her to surely take a break from the routine to first regain her real self or else soon she can get herself on sickbed lying helplessly or even can meet the creator due to the too much stress she is bearing. By asking her to take a break, and the advice he offers freely through a flashback her boss is surely trying back, by all means to empower Liz mentally and socially. He wants Liz to gain confidence in herself not forgetting self-esteem in order for her to live again and love herself as well. He continues;

"We simply need some time off for ourselves in the midst of this mad rush. It is important to work, but the fact is we can never finish work. As soon as you finish sweeping the room, you will discover some dust in the other corner. Then you want to do away with it too. Then as you mop you discover there is some patch looking funny in this corner, so you go back. Then the kids come trooping in and within moments all your work meticulously accomplished has been undone."

In this statement, her boss is trying to explain that work can never get done, it is rather her to create some time for resting from her daily routine. Such that she can mend herself mentally and her entire being. Her boss adds that; Karooro. 149.

"There will always be work till you drop dead. Maybe not now but for sure later. Why else do you think people just collapse and die without apparent explanation?"

Her Boss pauses so that what he has said sinks deep into her mind and heart so that she is able to pick something apparently piece of

advice or an idea from his statement. Her boss goes on to make a reference of Jesus on Pg. 149;

“Even the Lord Jesus took time off to be alone. He would abandon the crowds at the end of the ‘crusade’ and move off from His disciples to some quiet place. This is quite shocking then to leave the disciples and go off by Himself to meditate.” (Karooro. 149)

If the lord Jesus feels the urgent need to get time Himself with God such that he is able to make prudent decisions, maintain a calm exterior and also be able to put forward sober answers, what about a mere human being? Liz’s boss makes the above statement to trigger Liz’s mind to think bigger and to also get to know that if Jesus who is son of God can need time off to confer with His thought apparatus then a human being like her or any other can thus need much more time for themselves from the daily work such that they are able to live. This signifies women agency because Liz’s boss wants her to live happily, healthy & mentally as well as fit in their working environment. More to that, he still wants her to live because he wants her to get a break from work so that they don’t see her collapse one time due to overworking and too much stress. Her boss goes on to explain why people need time for themselves. He convinces her:

"We too need time off, time to ourselves and time for ourselves. ‘Just get some quiet and get mentally refreshed. I assure you Liz, you will find it is healthy and necessary; refreshing and rewarding.”(Karooro. 149)

Liz’s boss says all this in order that she feels empowered, gets a rest and starts living all over. He cautions her that the world “..... will march on like you never existed” just in case something happened to her. He therefore ends by whispering to Liz’s ears to go home and relax thereby emancipating her to take courage, relax and live again." In the end, she bargains and negotiates Liz's boss' workout for her hence portraying female agency.

The family structure that comes through Mary Karooro’s work protects the position of the man. As soon as a woman gets married, her life and wishes are interpreted in terms of how she relates to her husband. This is why Ishaka moves out and marries Manga (Malaika)

even when he had initially officially married Liz. And yet Liz is not expected to say a word or move out of her home with Ishaka amidst such a storm. Even when Liz feels she really cannot handle the pain of Ishaka marrying Manga and the way they keep saying hurtful words to her, her own family does not expect her to walk out of her marriage. To them, they feel it's a shame. They think a woman is supposed to keep in her marriage even though she sways dangerously with the force of the raging winds, bowing in every direction she is blown and yet never breaks. Liz's father tries to strengthen her in his speech trying to show how a true African woman should behave:

“A woman dies at the cooking stones. At the frontline.”

This shows that let come what may in terms of struggles and stress in her marriage, Liz is supposed to keep in her marriage that that's what all women go through. So it's not news that Ishaka married another woman and that it doesn't mean she has been rejected. The author writes;

“And daughter, the fact that Ishaka got another woman, it does not mean that he does not care about you, the first one.”

By this statement, Liz's father is trying to empower his daughter not to lose courage also so that she can go back and keep in her marriage with Ishaka. However, her father adds yet a cruel statement saying;

"Besides in our language, there is no word to describe infidelity. In Africa, a man can never be unfaithful; he can only be a man”

Liz's father is trying to cover up for Ishaka but also largely trying by all means to negotiate and mend his daughter's broken heart & to bring it together. Her father really wants her to heal psychologically so that she doesn't get tormented mentally forever. This is the reason he opens up the real truth about African men. That they are never wrong when it comes to marriage issues and that is also why he is able to stand on his two legs and say that in their language there is no word "infidelity". That in Africa a man can never be unfaithful, that he can only be a man. This statement does not mean that he fails his daughter. No! It is their African culture and they are used to it. Am sure if one asks they would not have a reason for tormenting women especially housewives, it is rather as simple as that to them. And mothers those

days never complained a bit of it. This is something contrary to our modern women who have gone to school.

However, from another angle one would interpret it that Liz's Father is humiliating women by saying that in Africa a man can never be unfaithful. As if they are gods and that women are nothing else but rather objects. That women are not human beings. To him only men need to be accorded respect and all good compared to women. Leaving that aside Liz's father shows concern when he gently takes her hand like any other good parent would do, looks directly into her eyes, and calls her by her pet name Mapeela as he softly relishes his thoughts. Through a direct speech, his father has a consolation to say in regard to her daughter's issues and relation;

“Do not think by wanting you to stay in the marriage I just don't care for you.

‘No way. Far be it from me not to care about my own flesh and blood that I hold dear and close to my heart. Truth is that by wanting you to stay in the marriage I am thinking of your family.

In this case, Liz's father is bargaining by all means with her in order to console her as well give her courage to stay in her marriage hence portraying forms of female agency. It should be noted that in Africa, marriage is valued a lot and spouses that divorce or separate are despised in the community. Therefore, in order to keep the daughter's respect, her father adds words of wisdom to console the daughter (Liz) in order to keep her marriage intact. The author writes;

“The African woman, he says, is like the mighty tree bending to break even when battered by the fiercest storms of life and the hurricanes that are inevitable wherever a marriage occurs. She may sway dangerously with the force of the raging winds, bowing in the direction she is blown, yet never breaking.”(Karooro. 150 & 151)

Her father offers all this wisdom purposely to strengthen his daughter. To let her be aware that an African woman anywhere as long as they exist should be strong and able to face anything when it comes to marriage. Such that she can stand, fight for her children and be respected as Ishaka's official wife. He adds that she should be strong and courageous even when she sways dangerously with the force of the

many hurting words and actions, bowing in all directions. Her father advises her to stick to her ground even though drilled and ridiculed, she should bear all the mental abuse patiently but keep her marriage together and raise her children. Evidence;

"Like a mother hen over her chicks, the African woman sits unmoved over her brood, covering them from the tempest and taking the pounding forces so that her brood can stay safe and grow well and strong."

Her father says all this to support the daughter mentally (Psychologically) and once again believe in herself such that she can also have a home and acquire respect from the public. He is also by all means trying hard so that she (the daughter) can have a sense of belonging and provide her kids a good environment where there is both mother and father. Liz's father wants her to also acquire respect (that is Mrs. Alice Ishaka) from Family members and society at large. Respect is the status symbol; Mrs. Alice Ishaka.

This status symbol usually gives women pride and earns them respect from society. Therefore, as Liz's father offers his wisdom and advice to his daughter, especially the patriarchy system, that in Africa men can never be unfaithful; he can only be a man. He does not hate the daughter (Liz) but to him he is supporting her psychologically such that she does not get tormented. He surely wishes good for her daughter. He wants her to earn respect in society and also raise her children in a conducive environment where there is father and mother. He goes on to encourage and thereby strengthen the daughter by saying that in case the situation gets worse, she can easily take a proverbial walk. But minus such extreme situations, a woman ceases to live for herself, transcending self into the higher realm of sacrifice especially for her children because if she walks on, their lives can be forever wrecked, left in the unable, chunky hands of a man or woman worse, the treacherous hands of another woman.

Therefore, the resilience and sacrifice of his encouraging words for the daughter to take on a proverbial walk is what the Africans don't believe in. Real Africans don't believe in walking but rather "resilience and sacrifice" when it comes to marriages. Thus Liz's father is wishing

the best to his lovely daughter; Liz according to the African patriarchy system. It is the reason these African families still exist compared to diminishing Bazungu (whites) families. The author has it;

“That is why to date the African family is largely intact, because it is built on the wisdom, resilience and sacrifices of the woman.”

The kind of wisdom, resilience and sacrifice that is being talked about is according to the patriarchy system where a man is everything and a woman is only left to adhere to what is already said and all she can do is to live a life of sacrifice in marriage.

On the contrary, Liz after listening to her father’s patriarchal kind of African legit advice as said above, this is what she has in response;

“Papa, I am ready to be the oak tree if and only when Ishaka separates ties with manga.”

Through Liz, resistance and subversion is portrayed the moment she mentions the above statement without a glimpse of fear in her voice and her ability to make a collective decision represents forms of female agency. Thus, I would call this self-emancipation and awareness of her rights. It shows Liz is totally not willing to accept the continuation of torture she is going through in her ill tormenting marriage. Liz completely refuses to be in a marriage that undermines her. She in fact undermines her traditional rules which her father just told her; not moving out of her marriage the very moment she decides to walk away from her tormenting marriage hence representing forms of female agency. Liz is determined and indeed breaks ties with Ishaka in order to live and acquire her rights again like a modern woman. Liz manages to stand her ground and make a tough decision to separate ties with Ishaka.

I, therefore, agree with (Rens SE, 2021) who argues that in present culture, our society is overwhelmed with a number of readings and orations which actively place women as empowered, agents, and decisive. Indeed, Liz’s action serves as the best example. Her action confirms Rens SE’s statement because according to the African culture, women are not authorized to get out of their marriages once they are married but due to the increased literature which places women as empowered, self-determining and decisive; she is able to make a

decision on her own. Hence, Rens SE's idea of gender and sexuality in the contemporary times well explains Liz's hard-hitting and resilient decision. Lucky enough her brother Justus supports her decision and even pays a visit to her new home. It is written that;

“My brother Justus is very supportive of my decision. He comes to my new-found home, loaded with chicken and champagne.”

Such moments always call for celebrations. The reason I agree with Rens SE (2021); who according to (Gill, 2007, Gill, 2008; Dosekun, 2015) states that; “A postfeminist sensibility is deeply entrenched in a neoliberal worldview that calls for the celebration of individuality and choice said to be unrestrictedly afforded to women globally.” This indoor party makes Liz feel proud thus giving emotional support to her. Again by doing this, Justus is negotiating and convincing the sister to believe in herself and live again. It should be noted that he does this out of excitement that his own sister has decided and moved out of a cruel marriage with Ishaka.

By way of calling for a celebration, it signifies that he is in full support of Liz's decision of walking out of a cruel marriage. He is in other words emancipating other women in cruel marriages to fight for their rights or walk away from such rough marriages because they are also human beings and deserve the best in life. In conclusion, Justus' statement portrays women's agency because he supports Liz's final decision of calling it quits with Ishaka and more so Liz makes a very tough decision which most women fear to do.

Malaika's ability to deceive and manipulate Ishaka is another form of female agency portrayed in the "Official Wife". Malaika gathers courage and decides to separate ties with Ishaka after chewing all of his money and has run bankrupt. Ishaka confesses his separation with Malaika;

"She put my clothes in a suitcase and threw them outside."(Karoo. 160)

To us the audience, we clearly see that Ishaka has lost it all since he can't support himself anymore. What Manga does is manipulation because she tricked Ishaka to get what she wanted. She managed to get love, money and other material things from him. We also notice that

Manga no longer loves him like she used to since he no longer supports her financially. This is regarded as a representation of female agency because Manga manages to deceive and manipulate Ishaka for her own intentions; it's the reason she throws him out of her house after noticing that there is nothing she can get from him anymore.

The return of the native is the last chapter of the novel. "The official wife "and in it the author portrays women agency using irony. For instance, Fina tells Liz;

"You know, Liz, she continues, wagging a finger and almost poking it into my eyes. You wasted your education; you are just an educated illiterate."

The extract sounds demeaning but it serves right Mary Karoro's intention of causing havoc to Liz and thinks right as well. This mockery wakes up Liz from slumberland. By mocking her, she is telling her not to accept Ishaka's stupidity any more as they usually say people don't change. She is trying to show her that accepting Ishaka would be accepting and welcoming back tears in her life. Again accepting him back would clearly show that she learnt nothing and forgot nothing from her ill past experiences with Ishaka. This kind of irony that Fina tells Liz creates suspense and tension in the audience. And "You are just an educated illiterate" is such a strong ironical statement that stimulates strong emotions in a reader's mind because the reader knows what Liz went through and how she has been living happily after quitting Ishaka's home. Liz feels she is totally ridiculed but Fina's aim is to enable her to make the right decision which she will not regret.

In conclusion, therefore, I agree with Justice Prof. George Kanyeihamba, Judge of the Supreme Court of Uganda who wrote in *The New vision*. October 27, 2003, that *The Official Wife* is a perfect combination of wit, intelligence, sex, and humour, all well rolled into a perfectly written book. More to that, *The Official Wife* is a novel so wonderful that it contains the three forms of female agency including; deception and manipulation, resistance and subversion as well as bargaining and negotiation. It also has a powerful effect on making almost everyone see the world the way a woman sees it, a reality beyond mere sex.

A good example is what Ishaka goes through as a married man. He wishes to have, with Malaika, denies the wife (Liz) her rights as his official wife deserts home, gets rude with the entire family(kids and wife, Liz) until Liz gets fed up and severs ties with him. She relocates with her two children Kirabo and Eva. Only to hear sad news that he is totally a demon with a strange disease .His other wife Manga chases him from her house as she is not able to clean an old person’s feaces. Ishaka gets back crawling to her first wife, Liz. The harlot (Manga) shoots rhetorical questions such that Liz can think twice before she utters insults to her. Again using the same rhetoric questions, Manga is able to emancipate herself as a woman. I mean she is a woman like Liz or any other woman so why wouldn’t a man love her. She says, “How can you stand out there and say no man can love me because I never pulled?”

This implies that pulling has no much meaning when it comes to love issues, the reason Liz’s husband is in love with a woman who has not pulled. Also with the above rhetoric question, Manga is able to defend and emancipate herself both emotionally and socially. To prove that Manga is right about her rhetorical question where she asks that when she asks:

“How can you stand out there and say no man can love me because I never pulled? “Reason, is that in spite of not pulling, she lies in bed with Liz's husband and yet Liz who pulled her out in the cold. Hence, the Association of second wives wrote in 2003 arguing that “All women are equal.” And so is the reason she lies in bed with Liz's husband, Ishaka.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES DEPLOYED IN *THE OFFICIAL WIFE*

Through flashback and narration, female agency is reflected. Liz's old grandma believes in herself the reason she tells emancipating stories to her granddaughter Liz. She tells her stories of long ago usually during their free time purposely to empower Liz socially and relieve her of stress. The writer has it that;

“.....a place whose legend has been told and retold to me by my good old grandma.”(Karoo. 34)

Liz’s grandma engages her in storytelling and through this, Liz is able to attain education regarding “Ibare rya Mugore”; rock of the bride, found in Nyabushozi. In doing so, grandma is resisting social exclusion, exploitation and oppression caused by the hegemonic neo-liberal globalization. She is also procuring the social and political rights of Liz since Liz is able to use this legend that has been told by her grandma to think more and search more about Ishaka reason she says;

“People like Ishaka have not found themselves, so they look for meaning from the supernatural. I have indisputable residences where Ishaka goes to look for his lost self at a place called Ibaare rya Mugore (Rock of the Bride).”

This helps to explain that if Liz had not been educated about ‘*Ibaare rya Mugore*’ through story telling by her one grandma she was not going to have this word of knowledge at all. But now she is able to look and tell from Ishaka’s ways and how he does his things. It is because of this word of knowledge that she is able to look, interpret and tell what’s going on in Ishaka’s life. Therefore it is through flash back and storytelling that we learn of “Ibaare rya Mugore”. It is told in a way of remembering of what had been said many years ago by Liz’s grandma. This particular flashback helps us in the way that it provides a deeper insight into who Liz is and her grandma who helps her to believe in herself. It also helps us to learn of female agency depicted through an interesting person (Liz’s grandma) who supports her socially by telling her stories of long ago like this Bachwezi flashback also break the chronological flow of the story thereby making it more interesting and realistic.

Through flashback, we learn that Fina, a friend to Liz, gives or offers mental help in bid to help Liz believe herself and fight insomnia. She does this by offering a piece of advice which is told through a flashback hence reflecting female agency. It is written that;

“Then I recall the advice Fina gave me in case sleeplessness shows up at a time when every soul ought to be in slumberland. That I should imagine a situation where there are fifty sheep trying to jump over a

fence. Then I should start counting each sheep as it runs towards the fence and jumps over it”

This flashback gives a deeper insight into who Fina is to Liz. It shows that Fina is good friends with Liz to the point that she advises her on how to overcome lack of sleeplessness. If this flashback hadn't been told, we were not going to understand Fina's advice. Liz does not really become a bad audience. She really lends her ear and the reason she reflects on her friend's advice. She affirms on taking her advice as she makes a flash back even when the advice seems childish. The author has it;

“No harm in trying every remedy. Even a stupid sounding one like this one. Desperate situations need desperate remedies.”(Karoo, 43)

This proverb implies that Liz is so much willing to take on a friend's advice that since the situation she is in is desperate, so is a desperate remedy good to fit it. So there is no harm in trying it out. And indeed Fina's advice really aids her out of the strange illness of insomnia she is facing as this very advice of sheep counting finally leads her (Liz) down many years ago while her mother carried her on her laps and sang her lullaby as sleep overtook her. The sheep counting finally leads her to a good memory of her mother that immediately turns into her ever lasting solution to insomnia. Liz speaks of her good memory;

“The minute I think of sleep as a mother, I feel this calmness settle over me. My mom, I see her open arms wide, I enter her warm embrace and I am transported so many years back”.

Through use of flashbacks and imagery, female agency is depicted and it's through imagery that Liz manages to deal with this insomnia. Her mother had died many years ago but as she makes a flashback of her, she recalls the care her late mother always offered her; this recalling of a mother's memory helps the audience to know the relationship between mother and daughter. We learn that it was an amazing one that always brought her peace one can imagine. All the time Liz has had to suffer with this sleeplessness only to be cleared off by a mere flashback and different images of her late mother.

Liz goes on to give a vivid description of an imagination on how she manages to acquire sleep and how much she loved her late mom;

“I am a child and my mother is giving me milk. I take it as I look into her eyes, mom I never got time to tell you how much I loved you and how all the family loved you. In response, her late mother says *shhhh*. I know you did love me, you still love me all of you my children although I left you many years ago, physically. Think of me as just being in another country. *Shhh* my child go to sleep now I have brought you a lovely dream my dear”.

The images of her late mother and her(Liz) help Liz to believe in herself that she can acquire sleep and more to that, we learn of her ability to bargain for sleep through imaginations, images and flashbacks of her late mother. Liz’s late mother expresses more of love for her daughter as she lovingly passes her finger over and over her eyebrows, she goes on to sing her a lullaby softly; one that Liz used to love so much in her childhood days. The writer has it in Chapter 1 of *The Official Wife*:

“Dreams to sell, fine dreams to sell,
Angus is here with dreams to sell,
Hush you, my baby and sleep without fear
..... Dream Angus has brought
you a dream my dear.....

This lullaby helps Liz to believe that insomnia can be healed because as her later mother carries on with the lullaby, Liz's eyelids grow heavy and all over sudden, she gets into slumberland. Liz utters an oath to her long gone mother that she will never suffer again;

“Mom, I will never suffer from sleeplessness again. I have now discovered the medicine to any insomnia.”(Karooro, 47)

Therefore the thought of her late mother becomes the reason she believes in herself that she will not sleep. It empowers her psychologically in that every time she lacks sleep, she recalls the memory of her late mother holding her close to her breast as she used to do while she was young.

Through vivid description and imagery, female agency is portrayed in the novel “The official wife” when Fina a friend to Liz

chooses to bargain and negotiate as well offer free knowledge and advice when Liz shares with her, her family concern of how she and her husband (Ishaka) are yearning for a baby girl and how they can possibly get a baby.

Earlier, Ishaka and Liz agree right from the beginning that they will have two children in the first six years of their marriage, a boy and a girl. And it is said that after getting a baby boy, their knees get sore as they keep on praying for a baby girl in short this gives Liz a hard time and stresses her even more since she now has a co- wife so she is now on competition and therefore wishes so much to make and close the deal she makes with Ishaka of having a boy and a girl before her competitor (co-wife) Malaika does so. While in her long deep thoughts she (Liz) wishes so much to conceive a baby girl even more than Ishaka who looks a bit relaxed now and even starts making imaginations and describing how cuter her baby girl will look like and how she will take care of her assumed and expected baby girl:

“I want a baby girl so that I can spoil her in her infancy. Girls look cute and there are so many things you can do with them to make them look so sweet. Frilled dresses, ribbons in their hair and beads in their braids.....”

In the above statement, Liz vividly describes and tells how badly Liz wants a baby girl and the great beauty tactics she will apply to make sure her baby girl looks cute. The kind of imaginations and pictures that Liz makes shows that she is sure and so believes herself that soon she will conceive then deliver a baby girl and spoil her in her infancy. Vivid description allows us audience to see clearly what the author has envisioned according to Liz’s expectations of a girl child. Vivid description helps to develop Liz's character as a feminist.

However, on the other hand, Liz mentions a time she herself visits a hair salon and finds a small girl being tortured by huge women braiding her hair. It is written that the site of torturing a small girl greatly annoyed her. Evidence;

“I felt like calling the chairperson of the children’s rights commission To tell her to ban all braiding of hair of girls under twelve”

The author uses direct speech to bring out female agency because it strongly shows the mental representation of how Liz feels at this very site of a child in a hair salon. Female agency is reflected again because the statement that Liz utters shows that she is aware of the girl-child's rights and that's why she mentions reporting the case to the chairperson of the children's rights commission. Therefore, the statement clearly represents female agency, the reason being that Liz this time around completely is against plaiting the small girls' hair under the age of 12 since they go through a lot of pain.

The ability of Liz to clap thunderously for the young girl upon the brave action of biting the old woman plaiting her hair signifies female agency. She even goes on to praise her:

"Brave, young girl! You are a girl after my heart, I hail her."(Karoo, 75)

Through the exclamation mark used, we are able to learn of Liz's emancipation of the young girl emotionally and psychologically. Exclamation mark is used to show how much energy the girl uses to bite one of the women plaiting her and this signals that the kid is aware of her rights because in her own way she sends off her tormentor. Also Liz shows strong approval of the biting action the young girl does to a woman plaiting her in the above statement thus depicting female agency because the girl strongly shows resistance to her tormentors. She expresses appreciation of the girl's resistance, something that annoys the three executioners. She even thinks to herself that at least if this kid's hair must be braided, a gentle way of doing it needs to be found. She really feels sorry for the kids that are plaited under harsh conditions and by rude women.

Like I have been saying in one of the above paragraphs that Fina, a friend to Liz, offers advice in the exact time of need how she can conceive a girl. This gets Liz stressed she initially has no idea of doing it. However, by sheer luck, her friend Fina begins on her advice and tips her that if the man drinks a slot of liquor, he produces girls. Implying that if he then doesn't drink too much liquor or drinks no liquor at all he is most likely to father boys. The ball lies in his hands. This gets Liz

confused the more and Fina then gives a vivid description of the whole ideology. Fina vividly describes;

“Well, you know they say that when a man is drunk, his sperm travels a little slower than usual, kind of gently. HE is not vigorous during the act, if you see what I mean. So the sperm goes slowly, gently up stream and the result is a girl. Whereas when he has sex when he is as sober as a judge.....she shoots with all the energy in his body and the sperm results in a rough, tumbling boy.”

It is through vivid description of Fina’s advice that we learn of her social and emotional empowerment to Liz. Fina shows her ability to make a decision and advise a fellow lady without having to first consult anyone thus reflecting female agency. Through vivid descriptions of Fina’s advice, we learn of her social and emotional empowerment to Liz. Vivid description enables us to clearly understand how Liz and Ishaka shall be able to conceive a baby girl that they desire. The description that Fina gives paints the clear picture of using description words like; slowly, gently, vaporous and sober. Something that energizes her speech and the author’s writing thus making memorable mental images stick to our minds. The descriptive words used also enable us to learn of Fina's character as outspoken. Fina goes on to advise Liz to try using the herbal medicines in order to conceive a baby girl;

"But you know what, Liz, you should try those herbal remedies"

This sets in yet another presentation of female agency. However, Liz first doubts the use of herbals. She (Liz) even argues saying;

“Oh please! Both of us have got masters degrees for heaven’s sake! How can an educated person like you talk like that?”

This shows complete dissatisfaction and resistance to Fina's advice. Liz cannot take it in, she simply feels that Liz cannot comprehend the kind of advice given. In short, she imagines a person with a master’s degree taking a concoction of herbal medicine for a change of sex. Liz think's it is weird. Fina insists on convincing Liz to take on her advice and even tells her that “there is no harm in trying.”(Karoooro, 76) Arguing that it is being illiterate to dismiss herbs

as a primitive practice when you know that most of them are medicinal. Liz remains adamant not until the day she witnesses a specialist in herbal medicine prescribe a gallon of some yellow liquid to her uncle who is not currently able to pass urine and guess what. Its performance turns out to be much better than its appearance. In short the herbal medicine cures her uncle and doesn't cause harm to him.

It is through use of direct speech that we are able to affirm her acceptance of taking on the friend's advice. She says;

“I consider all those things and decide that there is no harm in taking herbal medicine in my earnest search for a girl child.”

The above statement confirms that Liz is finally convinced and willing to use herbal medicine. Therefore, the ability of Liz to finally decide to accept the use of herbal medicine reflects female agency because she displays her right to choose what she wants.

Another scenario is that of a woman well known to her who has a malignant cancerous lump in her breast. It is said that after administering some herbal powder from a native doctor who tells her to mix it with honey and eat for a few days; “Before long, the larva is bursting with good health and frolicking with the case of a gazelle.” It is after witnessing all these and more scenarios whereby herbal medicines have been a solution to a number of people she knows that she gives it a second thought and chooses to follow her friend’s advice.

In chapter 4 of Pg. 84 of the *"Official Wife"*, we see self-social and psychological emancipation. Liz empowers herself while in the face of trouble caused by her husband (Ishaka). It all begins when Ishaka turns up home in the morning at 7: 00 am. Worse of it all, he is actually whistling a way merely “As happy as a lark“. His coming while whistling increases Liz’s anger that she is already suffering mainly brought about by Ishaka’s second wife Manga (Malaika). Leaving that aside, Ishaka reminds Liz of the function they both have to attend at Kololo airstrip at nine. Liz feels tormented and asks him to go with his “briefcase”. Manga since she well knows that there are some people who know them all Liz, Manga and Ishaka. She imagines;

“I laugh loudly. I can imagine what those people who know you and me and Manga will think when they see us together.” (Karooor, 84)

The thought puts Liz on notice and stresses her more. However, she regains confidence there by appreciating her own self and in so doing she empowers herself. In self-appreciation, she goes on to vividly describe her beauty;

“....., I am much more beautiful than your Manga. Starting up stairs, down to the dairy section and down to the transport department, I am definitely much better endowed than Manga.

I am a woman that people will look at and say: there goes a beautiful woman. Mind you, I am not claiming to be a head turner neither would I have won a beauty contest in my days. No, I do not halt the traffic on city streets, but I am comfortably beautiful.”

According to the quoted statement, it is clear that Liz believes in her beauty and this helps her to rub off the inferiority complex she had developed because of her counterpart Manga. This self-belief is considered as female agency because Liz proves to us the audience that she is aware of her beauty and so believes in it.

Therefore, Liz empowers herself when she chooses to describe her nourishing beauty. She makes us feel as if we are standing right there with her to watch her beauty as she describes it. The description that Liz makes of herself, appeals to our sense of seeing (eyes) and hearing. First of all compares her beauty to Manga’s as if we know or can see her. This is so because she herself mentions “upstairs”, down to the “dairy section”. All these quoted words appeal to our sense of seeing and hearing since the two go hand in hand. Simply because firstly we hear and after listening we want to see such but in this case we make an imagination of what she says thus leading us to the seeing sense. So the author uses vivid description to portray Female agency which is revealed when Liz supports herself through describing herself as beautiful thus she supports herself psychologically and saves herself from psychological and emotional torture thereby appreciation her God given beauty. The idea of her beauty strengthens her emotionally and she then accepts to attend the function at Kololo Airstrip.

While Liz is totally fixed up and entirely drained of all the positive emotion she gets an unexpected visitor that restores her. After that drama, Liz tries to emancipate herself, tries to emancipate herself by

moving from bed to the bathroom since it's the one place she finds refuge amidst strange stress. As she takes a birth, she commences her communication with God as a way of reducing stress. But, bad images of certain characters keep flashing across her mind, something that stresses her the more. It is written that.

"Though in between images of you know –who keep flashing a cross uninvited, unwelcome images of the horned viper Lucifer's beloved sister, Manga."

The author vividly describes the torment Liz is going through and she also clearly describes the hate Liz feels for Manga. Liz hates Manga so much because she hooked her husband Ishaka and she does not want to let him get back into his original family. Ishaka has totally left his responsibility as a father firstly and later as a husband. The vivid description of Manga helps us readers to understand how much hatred Liz feels for her.

It also enables us readers to visualize the kind of stress and hard times Liz is facing. Actually, she relishes so much but somehow she refuses to go down due to stress. Eventually she throws herself on the sofa and merely stares into space until later when she realizes in shock that one of her best friends Fina is in the house. Evidence;

"After an eternity, I realize with shock that Fina is seated right by my side!

My God, Fina, I did not see you coming in! Have you transformed into somebody from outer space, a kind of invisible woman?

'Liz, I have been here close to two hours.

Impossible! Unless you want to say I have been in a coma, for Christ's sake!

You have said it; your words, not mine. I found you seated the way you are. Eyes wide open; staring at something only you could see. So intensely I got scared shitless."

This kind of state sets in when the victim is too stressed beyond human understanding because you cannot imagine a person entering your house while you are seated on the clutch and yet you are not able to notice them. Then follows an interrogation I earlier on talked about from the friend who visits Liz called Fina. This unexpected visitor starts

interrogating Liz before she gets a lasting solution to her stress. Fina makes sure she utters everything she sees about Liz thereby exposing the real self of Liz. She talks about her appearance and partly how the rest of the world perceives her looks. Fina vividly describes Liz's appearance:

"Your collarbones standing out like curved reeds around a freshly decorated Masai warrior's neck proclaim your state of life."

The vivid description given by Fina shows us readers that Liz is totally deteriorated. "... Collar bones standing out like curved reeds" imply that Liz is in the shape of a skeleton if not she is the exact look alike of the skeleton. We, the audience, are able to visualize the thinness Liz has acquired from stress. Fina does not stop at that, she continues to torment Liz such that she is able to stand and make an informed decision by dragging her to her bed room specifically in front of the full – length mirror and she says to Liz:

"Liz, look at that shattered visage in the mirror. That thing there is not you. Look at it again – perfect account of a scarecrow."

Fina goes on to torment Liz in form of rhetoric question;

"Have you seen those starring Africans that CNN likes TO PARADE? CNN seems to have a penchant for parading horror stories of Africans of children with oozing mucus and thousands of flies zooming about them? Children, either in advanced stages of starvation, or with bellies extended as if in the final month of pregnancy?"(Karooro, 119)

Fina is actually tormenting Liz and rubbing salt in the wound since we all know that she (Liz) is already going through a lot. Fina does this such that she can decide to end the stress Liz is facing. Fina goes to a point of pausing rhetorical questions to Liz and with these questions, the one asking does not require an answer but rather appealing to Liz to think more about her current situation and funny skeleton looks. So in this case, Fina uses rhetoric questions on Liz such that Liz thinks twice about her life. That is ; if she likes to look and keep looking like those starring Africans at CNN, like those children, either in advanced stages starring or with extended bellies as if in the final month of pregnancy .

Fina has the zeal to say all this to Liz in order to open her mind and get her thinking like a wise lady. She also has this to say;

“In your state now, you would be a first class candidate for CNN leading story” mainly coming from the current situation Liz is going through. It is very well reasoned and thought out well that Fina’s aim of making Liz more angry is that she is able to make her well understand the terrible looks she has currently, also that she gets informed that people especially ladies (wives) have the right to stay or walk out of a relationship or marriage when they feel it’s too pressing and no longer of benefit to them. And finally Fina tells of the reason why she comes for the visit:

“I have come so that you can make a decision. You cannot remain the perfect victim for the rest of your life. Life is too short to be wasted just like that. You must make a decision Liz, there is so much hatred and venom in your heart against Manga.

Hatred is an acid that sooner destroys the carrier than the object it is meant to destroy.

As some wise person put it, the grudge is now holding you.

You are not the one holding it!

You must take a decision.”(Karoo, 119, 120)

Fina finally asks Liz kindly to take a decision to save her life. Through alliteration , Fina torments Liz again that even if Ishaka wanted to leave the other woman and have her once again as his only one, he wouldn’t reason being that; “.....you look like some glaze – eyed , crooked – beaked , flat – bottomed and neck- twisted species of a duck .”(Karoo, 120) The alliteration in “glaze –eyed , crooked – beaked”, “ Flat – bottomed “and “neck – twisted“ creates a rhythm that makes the phrase sound nice as if it’s a song. Such alliteration with some sound at the end of each word quoted above creates interest and makes the audience want to read more and more of the story book. More to that, Fina torments Liz without sparing her a bit such that she gets embittered and at the end of the day she can decide because at the moment she is merely existing rather than living. Fina goes on to expose the dirty and true mistakes most married women do and how well they can handle it .The author has it through Fina:

“And that is the mistake women in your situation make. When a man gets another woman you give up on yourself. What you ought to do instead is try and look your best: Go to the gym, dress well, be smart.....”(Karoooro, 120)

Fina shows agency by advising Liz to go for gym and dress well. In doing so, Fina is encouraging her friend to express her sexuality freedom and actually women today are represented as enjoying their sexual freedom and unrestricted sexuality in the modern trending media forms than before according to (Gill, 2007; Gill, 2008; Genz, 2009; Cuklanz, 2016). This statement portrays female agency because Fina is aware of a woman's rights and is by all means emancipating her friend Liz. Fina vividly describes how Liz should take good care of herself by going to the gym such that she can once again look young and beautiful. Fina also encourages Liz to take an important decision in her life.

By going to the gym, dressing well and looking smart, it helps women to feel emancipated in society. When one is well dressed, smart and working, they will not fear to express themselves or even relate with others socially, be it politically. Therefore one's good appearance especially on the women's side can give them more courage to achieve all they want; in other words the sky can no longer be the limit. Thus the beauty or one's appearance contributes a lot to their living like Fina is advising a fellow woman friend (Liz). Leaving that aside, Fina presents four options to Liz to choose from in order for her to live again. The author has the first option;

“Make yourself human again and get a man friend.”

Fina advises that the man friend will help Liz to believe in herself again and restore her self-confidence as well as self-esteem. Second plan is;

“Be-friend your co-wife. Make Manga your friend and the hurt will slowly melt away.”

Fina says this plan B has worked for some women. That when you befriend your co-wife, she later ceases to be special to the man. She becomes like the Official wife. The motive she holds for the man disappears. She becomes ordinary. She then gives plan C; “Get

saved.” Fina tells Liz to get saved as part of the plans she is laying down for her to choose from. Liz feels this might work for her and that soon the pain will go away and she begins to live again. However, she is again a bit worried as she thinks to herself that as long as one becomes a born again Christian, everything one does becomes a public debate, that you are judged as though you are an angel; not a human.

So also plan C is at stake. And there comes plan B. “You walk.” Liz is shocked at the last plan that her friend has to give or offer. However, Fina insists that walking will be the only alternative since she (Liz) is not even having sex with her husband (Ishaka). Fina questions Liz but a gain inform of advice; “For how long will he accept your refusal?” Least but not last Fina concludes by telling Liz to either accept to stay in her polygamous marriage and carry out the most essential part-sex or to walk out of it. Through a proverb, Fina, then makes her very last remark to Liz in a soft voice:

“.....Impossible situations demand a clean cut and in order to make an omelet, you have to break an egg before you can get the yolk.”(Karoo, 126)

Implying that hard and impossible situations like Liz is facing require tough decisions and it's the only way Liz can be able to overcome her sickening situation which is stress filled. This way, Fina is in all ways fighting for Liz to get out of the polygamous drama that her husband Ishaka and Manga are creating. Fina is also fighting for Liz's rights because first and foremost Liz marries Ishaka and they both want a monogamous marriage in which they only want two children, that is, a boy and a girl. However tables take turns and Ishaka falls in love with Malaika or calls her Manga who comes in and destroys their marriage a lot and also has to bear a kid for Ishaka.

This implies that their agreement to have only two kids is broken first of all and secondly remember that they are initially wedded , so that is adultery that Ishaka is doing . Ishaka also no longer comes home, most of the nights are spent at Manga's. Implying that Liz is being denied her conjugal rights. Therefore Fina is not only fighting to improve Liz's social, emotional and mental state but also fighting for

her conjugal rights. Thus female agency is portrayed in the novel *The Official Wife*.

Through flash back, it is noticed that official wives are emancipated socially in terms of shelter. This encourages them to take on the responsibility of the official wife economically and socially within a family. Official wives in this picture are the ones to welcome family on several occasions, prepare nice dishes for visitors and more other responsibilities. So in the novel, official wives are respected and loved something that encourages them to take on different responsibilities assigned to them:

“In traditional polygamous marriage, the most beautiful house belonged to the official wife. It was known as the big house. The small house belonged to the second wife, a symbol that she was the lesser in status.”(Karooro, 131)

Therefore in regard to the title of the novel “The official wife” we notice that women agency is highly recognized through a flashback of how the official wife is treated. This particular act of flashback makes the event of having a beautiful house sound fresh to the audience and also building for the official wife is a sign that represents respect and love.

The official wife of the man feels respected, loved and surely fits in the family and the society at large. Thus in due process, she will feel emancipated bearing in mind that she holds a better position compared to her co-wife.

The ability of Liz's mother to gather all her courage and discuss pulling amongst women represents female agency. Mary Karooro Okurut uses flashbacks again to bring fresh past events that happened years ago. She recalls her mother telling her that pulling is an option since they can be cut off and the vagina remains intact. The biggest part of the novel is narrated as a flash back as Liz recalls the life she goes through as a wife to Ishaka and in the same flash back she a gain recalls Lydia’s her cousin who faces a terrible ordeal at the time of burying her husband and how well the official wives used to be treated many years ago in their society.

Through vivid description, female agency is seen when Fina who is Liz's friend (Alice) appears at her new home dressed in a suit that looks good on her and heels clicking with urgency. Fina purposely appears at Liz's crib to celebrate and jubilate upon Liz's decision of walking out of a cruel marriage. She embraces Liz with a hug that signifies victory on how they should celebrate. Through the author, Fina vividly describes the kind of celebration they should have;

“We are having a goat roasting party tonight. You have shown the way forward for women in torturing marriages. Bring the glasses.”

As Fina comes to emotionally support Liz upon her courageous decision, she declares to her openly that she has opened the door for the rest of women who are facing hardships in their marriages. This implies that Liz does self-emancipation and not only emancipates herself but also emancipates the rest of the women in cruel marriages. She shows the rest of the women that also their lives as women matter and that if a public figure (Mr. Ishaka's ex-wife now) can spiral or divorce with her partner, what about the commoners who are no bodies. If a public figure (minister) is not ashamed to divorce, what about the usual people (peasants)?

It is, therefore, argued out based on the above explanation that Liz becomes the woman's savior in torturing marriages. Her leaving of Ishaka's home opens doors for other women facing torments in their marriages to move out and move on and live again. This is what is called a female agency. And that's why on the 1st November 2003 Karooro.222, Joseph Were of, The monitor wrote that “The official wife”.....It has the same powerful effect of making even men see the world the way a woman sees it, a reality beyond sex.

A very good example to the above statement is Justus who is in place to support his sister Alice (Liz). He really feels marriage is beyond sex. He in fact hates women that stick to cruel marriage. So in other words, he disregards men that misbehave in their homes because he urges women in torturing homes to move on. Here, the way Justus thinks is really in line with how women think; the way he sees the world is exactly how women see it, it is really beyond sex. His character

makes Liz feel like she is not alone. Also her brother has this to say, in addition to his emotional support;

“Liz, girl you are great. Girl I am happy you bull shitted that idiot! You are a woman after my own heart. I hate women who stay in cruel marriages because of all sorts of reasons. And yours was a cruel marriage.....at least psychologically and all the stuff you never told us and which, I am sure, you have no intention of telling us. That Ishaka. He humiliated you to the limit. To put another woman on top of you! Liz, your moving away calls for a celebration. If I were loaded, I would have lifted the entire Shoprite here.”(Karoo, 151 & 152)

The author vividly describes how Justus (Liz’s brother) applauds Liz for the wise and tough decision she makes. He congratulates her resistance to the extent that he exaggerates that if he was loaded, he would have lifted the entire Shoprite right there at her home. Through vivid description, we clearly learn of the happiness Justus acquires from Liz’s tough decision. He even calls her the woman after his own heart. Implying that she becomes a heroine who finally wins a tough battle according to him.

The fact that Liz decides to meet with Arnold, female agency is represented through the use of direct speech. While Liz moves on, having lost man to woman feelings for a long time since the Ex-husband had long deserted her and so this kind of happiness she had long forgotten it. Because even when she gets it, this time round with Arnold, she feels like it has never happened to her all through her lifetime. This expresses how she really feels emotionally empowered by Arnold’s love, something hard to find a man friend that would make her happy and redeem life in her. In response to Liz’s remark of appreciation, Arnold uses figurative language. He kind of mocks Liz. Arnold utters;

“Well, you were a dormant volcano. But I’m happy I have made you happy.”

Arnold indirectly insults Liz in a lighthearted and gentle way when he says that she has been a dormant volcano. Implying that she has not been active; a boring thing just. Uttering bitter and cruel words of mockery is dangerous to one’s mind. Arnold apologizes to Liz for causing this kind of insult because it conjures images to our minds that

Liz has been inactive for so long in terms of sex or what one can call “love making.” However, he immediately cools her temper and puts her right when he says he is happy that he has made her happy thus making her feel courageous and as well confirm that Arnold has really had a good time with her. This confirms female agency because Liz manages to manipulate Arnold to gain happiness.

At this moment Liz feels life again and emancipated socially. Arnold then makes a call and makes an appointment with Liz to meet at Sheraton. Sheraton also becomes another meeting point where Liz gets a good moment with Arnold and helps her to believe in herself once again. This too causes emotional and social emancipation towards Liz. What takes place there after their meeting is what emancipates Liz that she confesses it herself;

"Arnold, you have made me live again after five years. Thank you," I whisper, after a fantastic making."

The author uses direct speech and it is from this narrative style that we learn of the healing therapy that Liz acquires from her new friendship with Arnold. This healing therapy helps Liz to believe in herself once again hence portraying female agency. It should be noted that as Liz and Arnold meet at the Sheraton firstly as Liz comments on Arnold's readiness to open the door for her, Arnold silences her mouth with a demanding, and probing kiss and she finds herself responding with the same passion. So what follows you can guess! What is fine with both is usually defined as a stress-killer. Reason I say this is that Liz feels life again after along torment and torture from her Ex-Ishaka. Arnold entertains Liz with some kind of good fun. He makes Liz feel young again by his words and love. Here is evidence from Liz's own mouth;

"Arnold is a very pleasant fellow. And very intelligent and knowledgeable."

He gets Liz more interested in that she now loves his company more than before. They meet at the club for the weekend by evening, Liz feels all free like she has not had stress before. She confesses;

"I have a great evening and by the time I go home, I don't know whether it is the wine or Arnold's company that does it but I am feeling

so happy, and a bit confused. Happiness is beyond she is not sure. "As we ride the bicycle and all that sort of thing, we talk and talk about nothing in particular sometimes a lot of nonsense like he asks me whether what he is seeing in the sky is the moon and I tell him not to ask me because I am a stranger in these parts. And we laugh. Sometimes it is good to be able to talk nonsense with somebody. By the end of the exercises, we are cordial. See you tomorrow at the same time, Liz? He asks as he flashes me this million dollar smile that reveals a set of great teeth..."The pleasure will be mine."

The statement proves that Liz gets socially empowered as she is saved the boredom at a health club where everyone else looks strange to her more to that she is able to meet and interact with an old friend who brings life anew to her she is in fact extremely happy in that she gets herself talking all sorts of nonsense. It is believed that a person you can speak nonsense with, can easily rub off stress from you.

Furthermore, Mary Karooro portrays female agency when she fronts the meeting of Liz and Arnold at a health club. Arnold was initially a good friend to Liz's sister during their campus days. Before, Liz finds out a sauna which is of one sex, she pays for all the space such that others come out, she gets in alone.

This represents female agency because she displays her right to the use of service hence expressing her sexual freedom thereby confirming Pointiere, Mathilinde statement which says that; ".....in relation to expressions of sexuality, more specifically, women are believed and increasingly represented in contemporary popular media forms as enjoying sexual freedom and free expression of sexuality" (Gill, 2007; Gill, 2008; Genz, 2009; Cuklanz, 2016). Later on, Liz gets in a health club where they have different space for both sexes such that she does not deprive other people of the facility. However, she still lags in the midst of her boring decision and thoughts of not having the courage to take on her decision. It is at this moment that Arnold chips in and asks if they can ride the bicycle together along which they are able to interact and have all sorts of things that gives Liz emotional and social support. The author has it:

"Arnold, you have made me live again after five years. Thank you," I whisper, after a fantastic making."

Liz's meeting with Arnold at the health club proclaims her healing from the trauma she has been facing in her deserted marriage. Based on the findings by Rens SE, it is revealed that "the contemporary culture" puts women in a place where they are able to enjoy their sexual freedom as well as express their sexuality. An idea which validates Liz's action of going to the health club and having fun with Arnold to get rid of stress. This proves that Liz made the right decision of walking out of a torturing marriage and now she lives happily in her new home because she moves to public places during her free time where she is able to meet old friends that make her feel happy once again and feel the true meaning of life.

Ishaka reaches the point of separating with Liz in the past by marrying another wife (Manga) who even later on dumps him. He utters his apologies,

"I know I hurt you real bad and do not even deserve the forgiveness I ask. But please forgive me; Give me one last chance; come back to me. Be my wife again." (Karoooro, 164)

This kind of apology cures a hurt broken heart. It heals the wounds one could have gotten in the past. And indeed, even though Liz dodges the apology and the request that Ishaka makes of her being her wife again, later she accepts to patch up things together. And the once scattered family gets back together again after Ishaka's recovery. Therefore Ishaka's pronounced apology to Liz cures her broken heart, thus emancipating her psychologically and this proves to us that she finally wins the battle because she gets back her husband who had been initially taken by Manga. Ishaka's mistress who chases him from her house after catching a serious sickness forgets about him and moves on with life without wanting to know his whereabouts. It should be noted that Liz and Ishaka's separation had initially tormented Liz even at her work place; her boss recognizes it and is able to tell that Liz is surely tormented and stressed at that time.

Ishaka's vivid description of his confession clearly shows that Liz accepts to stand with Ishaka in his bad situation of serious sickness

when no one else can. And this is the reason Ishaka appreciates her love and care. The vivid description that Ishaka gives on how Manga (Malaika) throws him out appeals to the audience that she is fed up with Ishaka's poor health. The author has it that:

"Liz, she threw me out. Said there is no way she can clean shit of a mature person .Then there was no way I could call anybody to my rescue because I was scared about their reaction. Until this morning after she had left the house and told me she did not want to find me still hanging around (except maybe on a rope) when she returned from work."

Ishaka's vivid description of his confession clearly shows that Liz accepts and decides to stand with Ishaka in his bad situation of serious sickness when no one else could. Liz's ability to decide to put up with Ishaka again signifies women agency. And this is the reason Ishaka appreciates her love and care. Liz's power to decide on her own especially without including her friends like Fina in making the decision, signifies female agency. The vivid description that Ishaka gives on how Manga (Malaika) throws him out appeals to us audience that she was fed up of Ishaka's poor health. To us we clearly see that Ishaka has lost it all. Since he can't support himself. We also notice that Malaika no longer loves him like she used to since he no longer supports her financially.

However, Fina feels disappointed with Liz by the fact that she accepts Ishaka back in her life after all he made her go through. At this point, Liz is caught between interests; one of gaining her respect as Ishaka's wife and another of continuing to live her stress free life. However, Liz is able to make a personal decision without involving her one friend Fina. Liz in fact shouts at her when she tries to remind her of the ill-provoking things that Ishaka had previously done to her. And this makes Fina sad, and Liz apologies to her;

"I am sorry, Fina, I begin, regretting my outburst. It's just that the events of these few weeks are taking their toll on me. But I also think it is wrong timing for you to ask me questions like if Ishaka recovers and wants to come back.... I mean for me right now, the only thing I care about is for him to get well."

Through vivid description, Liz expresses her regret of speaking harshly to her friend Fina. Her ability to decide to ask for forgiveness from Fina without any violence from anyone, signifies female agency. Liz is totally sorry for having talked badly to her good friend Fina. She feels there's no need for an exchange of hot words over a simple question from Fina of whether Liz would accept getting back with Ishaka if he recovers. Fina too is sorry for having said insulting words to Liz, her longtime friend. In response to Liz's apology, Fina apologizes too;

“I am sorry too. Guess I got overzealous...”

Through Fina's direct speech, we learn of her apologizing character because words come direct from the horse's mouth. We also learn of her humble character because she asks for forgiveness from her friend for being rude to her and the two make up again. The ability of the two friends to reconcile to each other without any form of violence portrays female agency.

So the two friends accept that they are in the wrong, apologize and forgive each other as they embrace one another.

CONCLUSION

The study used language and style to discuss the novel in relation with agency. The researcher used a qualitative approach to collect, analyse, interpret and present data. Main information was got by closely reading the primary text; *The Official Wife* (2003). The study therefore concludes that there are three forms of female agency including; bargaining and negotiation, resistance and subversion, deception and manipulation through which women show agency. The author used a number of narrative styles to perfectly bring out the portrayals of female agency including; vivid descriptions, imagery, irony, alliteration, direct speech, flashbacks, dialogue, third person point of view, indirect speech, second person point of view, exclamation mark, rhetoric question and others.

Depending on the study, it is true that the female characters develop agency as a result of trauma and crisis as according to Pointiere, Mathilinde (2021). And it is this much trauma that enables them to show off their abilities. Women access good jobs in the novel. For instance, Liz in *The Official Wife* secures herself a good job in an NGO and it is this job which helps her to move on with her two children (Kirabo and Eva) after separating ways with Ishaka, her husband. Characters like Fina and Malaika are employed. We see girls working in the hotel. We also see women who are working in a female salon. All this depicts 'Female Agency.'

According to the article, females in the selected novel of Mary Karooro Okurut are resilient, spirited, elastic, irrepressible and strong willed. But, they do not use physical violence to obtain what they want. They use forms of female agency like; subversion and resistance, deception and manipulation through which they deceive and manipulate the people around them in many ways to achieve what they want. For instance, Malaika managed to persuade Ishaka that she loved him yet in actual sense, she only wanted to de-tooth him. Because later in the novel, we realize that when Ishaka's money is finished and he is totally ill suffering from a strange disease, Malaika chases him out of his house. Evidence;

"She put my clothes in a suitcase and threw them outside..... Liz, she threw me out. Said there is no way she can clean shit off a mature person .Then there was no way I could call anybody to my rescue because I was scared about their reaction. Until this morning after she had left the house and told me she did not want to find me still hanging around (except may be on a rope) when she returns from work."(Karoo. 160)

This confirms Malaika as a manipulator and a go-getter. Actually, her action portrays deception and manipulation, a form of female agency. In the study, I witness women gaining agency especially when faced with problems. Women know what they want and they fight hard to empower fellow women. For instance, in *The Official Wife*, Fina supports Liz, her good friend, by offering advice which helps her to

believe in herself and live again after being disappointed by Ishaka who chooses to marry Malaika as his second wife.

In conclusion therefore, female characters in the selected novel manage to exempt freedom and ability to shape their journey in life especially when they get in trouble. Hence I agree with Mc Robbie, Storey (2018; 176) who argues that the present culture completely overlooks the feminist gains of the 1970's and 1980's. He suggests that such feminist gains are out of fashion and aged. That feminism is no longer needed in this era where women have the ability to figure out and profile their own progress in life.

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