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Ridiculing Silent Evils: Depictions of Human Trafficking in Apio Eunice Otuko's Zura Maids (2018)

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The evil of human trafficking has often been propagated on social media for many years, and people have had little information about this social problem. Apio Eunice has creatively and vividly portrayed this evil of human trafficking in her first novel, *Zura Maids* (2018). This creative portrayal has made the reader feel the forceful involvement of innocent vulnerable youths in the business of human trafficking. The artistic depth of Apio Eunice in her novel *Zura Maids* (2018) is punctuated with the stark reality of social, political, and moral issues in Ugandan communities, especially in the northern region which had been ravaged by war as well as capitalists who deal in human trafficking within the country and abroad. This paper examines how the novelist exposes the moral degeneration perpetrated by unscrupulous individuals whose aim is to amass wealth by trading their fellow human beings as commodities. This paper depicts Apio's advocacy for the re-evaluation of the social, moral, political as well as cultural values which underscores the rehabilitation of the Ugandan youths to ensure better and affordable conditions of living and the achievement of human labour and dignity especially in the previous war-torn northern part of the country as part of the setting of this novel. This paper also provides the key factors that fuel the menace of human trafficking, as portrayed in *Zura Maids* (2018).

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Eunice Otuko Apio received her PhD in African studies and anthropology from the Department of History and Cultures, University of Birmingham (UK) in 2016. In 2017, she joined the law school, the University of Birmingham as a Postdoctoral Fellow in Gender and Transitional Justice and works on the subject of resilience in survivors of war-related sexual violence (<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk>). Her doctoral thesis examined children born of war in northern Uganda: Kinship, marriage, and the politics of post-conflict reintegration in Lango society. She is the founder and director of charity facilitation for peace and development (FAPAD) based in northern Uganda and has worked in conflict and post-conflict settings in northern Uganda since 2001 (<https://www.ethos.ac.uk>). She contributed a chapter *Uganda's Forgotten Children of war in Carpenters'* (2007), edited volume on *Born Of War, Protecting Children of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict Zones*, and she is the author of several articles on the subject of war, children, gender, kinship, and transitional justice. She has widely shared the report from her studies, including at the United Nations (UN) Security Council (June 18, 2018). She is the author of *Zura Maids* (2018), a novel that explores the realities of human trafficking in today's African society.

Human trafficking is a crime against a person into a country by crossing borders illegally (Polaris Project, 2010). Trafficking in human beings is not a uniform phenomenon. Its scope and extent vary in different cultural, social, and political contexts. Trafficking in persons is a hidden criminal activity, and the number of victims that come into the limelight is only a fraction of the actual number that

suffers under the ambit of human trafficking. Human traffickers target those people in society who are vulnerable and including; the poor, isolated and weak. The majority of the victims of human trafficking are women and children who end up being used as sex slaves and domestic servitudes, among others (Trafficking in persons report, 2008). According to the United Nations (2000), human trafficking takes different forms; sexual exploitation, forced labour or domestic servitude, the removal of organs and trafficking for street begging, among others. In the novel *Zura Maids* (2018), trafficking for sexual exploitation is portrayed through characterisation. Through Lena and other trafficked young girls, the author vividly depicts how young girls are victims of this social evil. Trafficking for street begging is also depicted in this novel, where the traffickers recruit young boys and girls from the Karamoja sub-region and ferry them to Kampala streets as street children, who beg the whole day, and in the evening, they surrender the collections of the day. This seems to be a new form of human trafficking that has posed a challenge in modern times. Through setting and characterisation, Apio portrays the deplorable conditions of these trafficked young boys and girls on the streets and condemns the act. Human trafficking is both internal and external. Human trafficking is a global challenge, and Uganda is not isolated.

This paper is focused on the depictions of both internal and cross-border human trafficking in *Zura Maids* (2018). Apio creatively depicts internal trafficking where young girls are trafficked from up country to Kampala, where they are put in brothels for sexual exploitation and prepared to be exported abroad. This is clearly depicted through characterisation and setting in the novel. This paper

makes use of ideas of both postcolonial and feminist theorists that contribute to the depiction of human trafficking in *Zura Maids* (2018). Frantz Fanon (1960) reveals that the post-independence African leaders mismanaged the political, social, and economic well-being of their countries which caused a lot of problems to the progress of the citizens. It is this mismanagement that results in a war in Northern Uganda which has left many people homeless. It is this mismanagement that Apio chronicles in the novel *Zura Maids* (2018). Lena Ayugi, the protagonist of the novel, and many other characters are depicted as internally displaced refugees because of the war that had ravaged the region.

The trafficked young girls suffer at the hands of their traffickers who are fellow Ugandans. This is what Frantz Fanon observes in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) that the post-independence African leaders became agents of their former colonial masters. The old Ester, who traverses the northern region recruiting young girls for trafficking is a typical example of colonial agents who exploit the trafficked girls both internally and internationally. Tong (1998) asserts that Marxist Feminists tried to use a class analysis rather than a gender analysis to explain women's oppression. To them, money is the driving force to gain power. It is the root cause of women's oppression. To this end, the oppressors are not only men but also women. This is exactly what Apio portrays in her novel *Zura Maids* (2018). *Through* Maltina Maa, Esther, among other female traffickers, many young girls are trafficked and subjected to untold suffering in the novel. The old Esther lures Lena and other young girls from upcountry to Kampala, promising them a nanny job and they end up in different brothels in different parts of Kampala. Maltina Maa, who runs *Zura Maids*, ends up in Luzira prison for kidnapping and trafficking young girls. These female traffickers are heartless and more dangerous than their male counterparts. Thus, the bourgeoisie women are

capable of oppressing both proletarian men and their fellow women.

Marxist Feminists posit women's oppression on the economic dependence on men in a male-centric society (Bryson, 1992), and they argue that capitalism continues to be an overarching oppressor of women. This is portrayed in the novel *Zura Maids* (2018), where women and girls cannot sustain themselves after the war. They are therefore, prone to human trafficking. Lena accepts to be taken to Kampala anticipating a decent job that can give her money to help her siblings at home. It is greed for money on the side of the traffickers that lure these young girls into human trafficking. The capitalistic nature of society worsens the situation when the traffickers deeply engage in the export of these young girls abroad, where they have many agents and a ready market.

"They have a well-organised national supply and -distribution network. The foreign route is more surprising. They have two distribution routes by land. The South Sudan border and the DRC make for the easier routes. The girls are transported like cattle to Bunia in the DRC, where Dumbe a local trader in Bunia purchases them" Arthur said (p. 247)

Frantz Fanon (1960) blames post-independence African leaders for being corrupt and working for the former colonial masters, who remain in control to exploit Africans (p. 102). He argues that the middle class owns big shares of national resources and does not invest in their countries and they mind less about the social-economic development in their mother countries (p. 102). This breeds unemployment and inequality in post-independent African countries. It is this same corruption that Atuko dramatizes in this novel. During the war in the north, the soldiers became corrupt and exploited women and young girls sexually. They abdicate their responsibility to guard the people in the camps which makes the people prone to rebel attacks and traffickers.

CAUSES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN *ZURA MAIDS* (2018)

In her ground-breaking novel, Apio Eunice Otuko delves into a new area in literary scholarship; human trafficking. Motivated by globalisation in modern society, human trafficking thrives on postcolonial challenges such as conflicts, wars, unemployment, sexual harassment, and moral decadence, among others. Being a postcolonial society, Uganda is not exempted from the list of the most hit countries by human trafficking in Africa. Human trafficking is already deeply rooted in society as many members of the public have fallen victim, especially the youths. Apio weaves her narrative in this novel to clearly depict the network of this trade in human beings. The critical analysis of human trafficking as a thematic concern is based on the major aspects of the novel, which include setting, characterisation, and narrative among others.

Chant (2014) avers that "... African migration to Europe is commonly seen as a tidal wave of desperate people fleeing poverty at home trying to enter the elusive Europe Eldado" (p. 8). This indicates some of the reasons why most African youths are trafficked to Europe, as analysed in this paper.

Zura Maids is a secret holding owned by a powerful ring of human traffickers under the cover of an employment agency for housemaids. This is the story of Lena who is recruited from a camp for Internally Displaced People's Camp in Acokara, northern Uganda, only to find herself trapped in the clutches of traffickers in Kampala. So powerful is the network of the traffickers that her efforts to escape land her in prison. She must now make a choice between surrendering and fighting back. Upon her release from Luzira prison, Lena realises that her young sister, Lilly had also been trafficked. Lena makes a serious though risky, attempt to rescue her young sister, Lilly by disguising herself as Maggie and getting a job at *Zura Maids*, where she falls victim to human trafficking again but is

helped by Arthur Mubende, her former attorney and friend. In this powerful first novel, Apio Eunice Otuko breaks new ground for the African novel by creating fresh awareness about a major social evil sustained by human greed on a global scale.

Feminism exposes the plight of the female gender globally. Spivak states that "... the ideological construction of gender keeps male dominant" (p. 82). She maintains that women's subordination is an ideology indoctrinated in men and society as a whole and it is part of the culture. This idea is discussed in the novel that this paper analysed. The paper depicts Lena Ayugi, the protagonist of the novel, narrating her experience at Luzira prison, where she has been on charges of burning a brothel in Kawempe, a Kampala suburb, where trafficked girls have been kept; she has been one of them. Through the first-person narrator, the author depicts human trafficking as a social evil that disorganises society. Lena Ayugi is used by the author as a micro-cosmic depiction of many other young trafficked characters that are facing the same experience in the novel. She represents other victims of human trafficking who have been enslaved by their traffickers for a long time both internally and internationally. Through the setting, the author has been able to depict human trafficking at two levels. The trafficked characters are recruited from upcountry to Kampala and then exported to other countries; thus, a clear picture of the scope of this human trade is revealed to the reader. While narrating her ordeal of human trafficking to Maria and Mama Jen, Lena refers to human trafficking as enslavement; thus, she laments:

"...I know because when she took me, she handed me over to...untold slavery...I would rather not tell you the details of my enslavement", she said (p. 55-56).

The postcolonial theorists blame post-independence African leaders for their political and economic failures. It is because of these failures that traffickers exploit to lure their victims. Fanon (105) condemns corruption as a root cause of African

suffering. Corruption breeds poverty which forces people to look for survival. The age and the economic status of the victims contribute greatly to the occurrence of human trafficking. I argue that the use of the first-person narrator, where the protagonist narrates her own experience, brings out first-hand information about the dehumanisation meted on the trafficked characters in this novel. Lena's suffering in the hands of the human traffickers is the suffering of her fellow young and vulnerable children that Old Esther lures from their camps in Acokara and from other parts of the country and she trafficked them to Kampala, where they are prepared in different brothels for export to other countries of the world as trade commodities. It is therefore through Lena's narration of her own experience that the author depicts human trafficking in this novel. This analysis concurs with Avekadavie P. Mano, who tries to explain why girls are easy targets for the traffickers; as he writes, "poverty, lack of income-earning opportunities, having dependants and being a single mother" (49-50).

Beechey (1979, p. 68) states that "women are more vulnerable than their male counterparts. Women are conceptualised as being a minority group within the male-dominated society". Apio portrays young, naïve girls as major victims of human trafficking in this novel to show how the traffickers get their victims easily. This character portrayal enables the readers to realise the magnitude of the problem. In this paper, I vehemently argue that Lena and her fellow victims of human trafficking are recruited when they are unaware that they have been trafficked from up country only to find themselves in different brothels in Kampala. This is due to their vulnerability in society as young females who cannot provide for themselves. Lena Ayugi and her fellow victims do not even know what human trafficking means; thus, she asks:

"...before you came, Akurut here was talking about human trafficking and trying to link it to Martina... Please explain to me in simple terms

what exactly human trafficking is" Lena said (p. 165).

Although the role of society remains questionable, the systematic network that human trafficking undergoes is not easily detected. Traffickers have many agents in the country who recruit their victims from the villages. This is informed by Spivak, who writes that with the globalisation of capitalism, the comprador countries (3rd world) ensure cheap labour. In the novel, Apio gives detailed information about this network through both characterisation and setting. Esther, who recruits Lena and other victims of human trafficking, coordinates with the management of *Zura Maids*, a business enterprise in Kampala that deals with numerous agencies where young girls are trafficked to. The human trafficking network owns several brothels in Kampala, where their victims are kept as they are prepared for export to other countries of the world. The paper analysed Lena's tribulations when she fell into the hands of the traffickers again. A lady, who identifies herself as the warden of the dungeon, leads her into a dark room where she finds other girls and she is informed that she will be staying there. Thus: "...this is where you will be moulded into something marketable ..." Madam Nancy said (p. 208).

This is an indication that the trafficked young girls are handled and shuffled like material goods for trade because of their vulnerability. The novel, therefore, depicts human trafficking as a trade in human beings. Apio vividly puts this through characterisation in the entire novel. This rhymes with Eisenstein (1979), who argues that the oppression of women is a result of capital organisation and is based on the lack of power and control of the proletariat worker (woman) who creates surplus value for the bourgeoisie (p. 9).

Due to ignorance and naivety, human trafficking victims in the novel *Zura Maids* do not easily realise that they have been trafficked until they are subjected to inhumane conditions. When Lena falls victim to human trafficking again in her attempt to rescue her young sister, Lilly, who has also been

trafficked by the same network that had trafficked her, she tries to inquire where they are, thus;

“...madam, where are we? Why are the girls naked?” Lena said (p. 208).

This paper also analysed that Apio vividly depicts human trafficking through characterisation in her novel, *Zura Maids*. It categorised the characters into two groups, that is, the oppressed and the oppressor. The creative use of characterisation clearly depicts human trafficking in the entire novel has been discussed in this paper. The question that Lena poses to Madam Nancy depicts her innocence and ignorance about human trafficking in which she is a victim. She cannot get the answer from Madam Nancy because she is already under the control of the traffickers who determine the next course of action in her circumstance.

Feminism asserts that corruption and greed have remained an indelible mark in society, where women oppress their fellow women to enrich themselves. This assertion is clearly reflected in the novel. The setting of this novel and character portrayal continues to bring out an elaborate depiction of human trafficking. The setting in Kampala, where *Zura Maids* is located, describes the lucrative and risky nature of this business. The author depicts human trafficking as a profitable business in which traffickers accumulate ill-gotten wealth. For instance, Martina Maa, who had been imprisoned in Luzira women’s prison, is the owner of the *Zura Maids* deals with human trade. *Zura Maids* is one of the companies under the Victoria Group of companies, owned by Martina Maa, a human trafficker herself. Martina Maa had been imprisoned on charges of child abduction. Despite her imprisonment in Luzira, the *Zura Maids* business continues trafficking young girls as usual. Martina’s business partners, Mukwano and Tony continue collaborating with their agents up the country for the continuity of human trafficking as their business is in Kampala, up the country as well as outside the country.

The paper envisages that characterisation, as part of style in *Zura Maids* depicts the epicentre for human trafficking in Kampala. For instance, when Lena and Arthur are on a mission to rescue their sisters, Lilly, and Molly, respectively who are suspected of having also been trafficked by Esther, they reveal a lot of information about human trafficking depictions in this novel. Lena fell into the hands of the traffickers once again during this mission. In this paper, I discuss that the novel depicts human trafficking as a risky, bloody business, thriving on the human greed of the traffickers, who mind more about enriching themselves at the expense of the vulnerable people in society.

The business owners of the *Zura Maids* and managers are heartless, cruel, and selfish. When Martina Maa was sentenced to fifteen years in Luzira prison, Mukwano, her manager, worked hard to take over the business. In the process, Mukwano assassinates Tony who had been the company lawyer and other fellow workers at the *Zura Maids*. Mukwano kills his fellow workers in cold blood in order to take over Martina’s business. The researcher noted that it is through characterisation that the theme of human trafficking and how it affects the victims is well depicted.

The behaviour and nature of the perpetrators of human traffickers are portrayed as another cause of human trafficking. Through character analysis in the novel, the traffickers’ behaviour is depicted. This paper reveals that human traffickers are unkind and cruel to their victims; they violate the fundamental human rights of their victims through exploitation. For instance, when they ask to know what has befallen them, they are denied information. When Lena asks the woman that has led her into the dungeon, she is barked at, “...no questions!” (p. 208), Madam Nancy said. In such a situation, when Lena does not know the place where she is and what is likely to happen, it shows that she has no right at all since she is already in the hands of human traffickers.

Neo-colonialism is a major cause of human trafficking in the novel *Zura Maids*. The post-

independence economies in Africa are capitalistic in nature thriving on the exploitation of the vulnerable people in society. This has made human trafficking a recurrent experience of the trafficked characters in this novel. Through characterisation, the author depicts Lena as a double survivor of human trafficking. Lena is first trafficked from her home, Acokara, to one of the brothels in Kampala where she burns the same brothel and is sentenced to two years in Luzira women's prison. She is trafficked again while on a mission to rescue her young sister, Lilly. The traffickers are brutal to the servile young girls. The relationship between the trafficked and the traffickers is a slave-master relationship, an indicator of post-colonialism problems. In other words, the traffickers are the agents of neo-colonialists and the trafficked are the colonised people of African origin who serve as contraband goods for the market.

Illiteracy and ignorance levels among the trafficked characters escalate human trafficking in the novel *Zura Maids*. The victims are lured from deep remote areas to the city, where they had never been before. This excites them and exposes their ignorance about the impending danger. The trafficked young girls are ignorant about the jobs that they had been promised in Kampala, they are simply led by the human traffickers' agents from up country. The post-independence socio-economic and political failures which resulted in wars, desperation, and unemployment among others, are looked at as key factors fuelling the process of trafficking innocent youths who are equated to the subalterns. The act of being recruited and being taken away from their homes to brothels where they are prepared and trained before export as if they are commodities is dehumanising and it equates them to mere trading merchandise. In this chapter, I concur with Frantz Fanon, who argues that:

"...such dehumanisation is achieved with the physical and mental violence, by which the colonialists mean to indicate a servile mentality upon the natives" (Fanon, 1961, p. 250).

In the novel, Atuko portrays the insecurity that exists in the internally displaced people's camp. The author indicates that it is partly due to the insecurity in the camps that forces the trafficked character to be lured into human trafficking. This is through the narrative point of view that sustains the story in the novel. The author uses the first-person point of view that includes the omniscient narrator and individual personal characters' narrations. The author artistically uses the first-person narrative point of view to reveal first-hand information to the reader. This narrative style helps the reader to understand the depictions of human trafficking as characters share their past and present experiences. The novel opens with a personal narrative of Lena Ayugi, the protagonist of the novel, expressing her joy for freedom at the end of her two years sentence in Luzira women's prison thus:

"...my name is Lena, Lena Ayugi. For the last time this April morning, it is my pleasure to remind you about me", Lena said.

Poverty is also another cause of human trafficking in the novel. The author depicts women as poor and dependent on their male counterparts. Through characterisation, again, human trafficking in this novel re-echoes tenets of Marxist feminism theory as one of the theories used in this study. The theory posits women's oppression on the economic dependence on men in a male-centric society (Bryson, 1992) and argues that capitalism continues to be an overarching oppressor of women. Lena Ayugi and her fellow trafficked young girls are socially and economically oppressed by their traffickers because they have been poor and it is poverty that has made them victims of human trafficking. It is this patriarchal system in society that makes the female gender become the victims of human trafficking in this novel.

"A place where I was being held hostage. A brothel. I burnt it so that I and my friends could escape", Lena said (p. 11).

The nature of human trafficking is not well known by the victims. It was also analysed in this paper that human trafficking is a difficult business to fight, deeply rooted in society, with various networks all over the country and abroad. The traffickers have influence over the courts of law to cover up their business. For instance, when Lena sets the brothel ablaze, her effort to liberate herself and her fellow innocent trafficked young girls is not recognised. She is instead charged with arson, convicted, and sentenced to Luzira prison. Lena could have helped the government to would fight against human trafficking if she got a fair hearing in a court of law. If Martina Maa had been well investigated during her trial, many young girls who had been trafficked and kept in various brothels in Kampala would have been rescued earlier than Lena's second attempt to rescue her sister.

Feminism highlights the experiences of women in society, especially their experiences reflect their plight. This is depicted in the novel. Human trafficking oppresses the female gender in the novel; the author depicts Martina Maa in Luzira prison on the one hand and Mukwano doing all it take to take over Martina's business on the other hand. Considering the number of trafficked young girls and the imprisonment of Martina in Luzira, the author clearly depicts patriarchy that Feminism theorists strongly condemn. The male gender dominates the human trafficking business in the novel, even though most of the agents abroad are men who wait for the trafficked girls at the airports and take them to different brothels. Men who manage the business at *Zura Maids* in Kampala use Old Esther as a conduit to young traffic girls from up-country. Additionally, men use Madam Nancy together with her assistant to prepare girls for export. This paper analyses the patriarchal setting of the society, which exploit women in every aspect of the novel *Zura Maids*.

Through characterisation, the author portrays corruption as a system through which human trafficking thrives in society. For instance,

Mukwano bribes the police detectives to investigate a false robbery at *Zura Maids* to cover up the assassination he has done when he kills fellow workers in his attempt to take over *Zura Maids*. Still, on corruption, the traffickers connive with the immigration officers at Entebbe International Airport to traffic the young girls abroad, where their agents are always waiting for them at different airports.

Through her artistic narrative style, Apio clearly depicts human trafficking in this novel. The narrator reveals that Lena burns a brothel in which she has been kept with other young girls. The setting of the novel now changes from the brothel to the Luzira prison. The novel opens when Lena is released from the prison where she has been for a long time. Through her narrative, life in Luzira's prison is not good; she is thankful to God for keeping her safe and alive. Arthur Mubende, Lena's former attorney helps her to get what to eat and money for transport to Acokara to reunite with her family.

The setting of this novel gives a broader and more detailed depiction of human trafficking. For instance, from Kampala, Lena heads for home. Upon reaching home, Lena realises that her young sister, Lilly, has also been trafficked by the same Old Esther who is an agent of the *Zura Maids* in Kampala. The setting then changes from Acokara to Kampala again, on a mission to rescue her sister from the hands of the traffickers. In Kampala, Lena disguises as Maggie and gets a job at the *Zura Maids*. This leads her into a dungeon, where she is rescued by other young girls who are being prepared for export as if they are trading merchandise. The author exposes depictions of human trafficking through the setting. The trafficked characters experience different exploitation and mistreatment at different places. The setting thus contributes greatly to the depictions of human trafficking in this novel.

Through Arthur, the author depicts another trafficked young girl, Molly, a sister to Arthur. In

his pursuit to offer pro bono services to Lena during an arson case, Arthur Mubende is also looking for his sister. In a conversation with Lena after her acquittal from Luzira prison, Arthur deeply explains Molly's disappearance. Thus:

"Well, I helped you because I...I have a cause. I once had a sister. My young sister, Molly...". Arthur said.

Arthur goes on to depict human trafficking in the process of rescuing his own sister as he meets many people who face the same human trafficking scum. Through his narration, the researcher realised that human trafficking involves both girls and boys, young and old. Thus, Arthur narrates:

"Yes, she was twelve and in primary seven at Buganda Road primary school. One day, eleven years ago, she did not return from school. We searched everywhere. We are still searching. It was right before that infamous story of child trafficking broke in the news all over the nation. We have only lived with suspicions and speculations. Some people said that she was abducted and maybe trafficked to where God knows. Some said she was perhaps sacrificed. I chose to believe she is still alive. And I am still searching and, in the process, helping boys and girls who suffer similar fate" Arthur said. *"Well, there are many young boys and girls out there who need help. A lot of help"*, he continued (p. 36).

Characterisation as employed by the author continues to depict human trafficking in the novel. Arthur Mubende, a lawyer, a former attorney, and a close friend to Lena narrates to Lena how he has been helping young boys who are trafficked from up-country to the city. The narrator recounts; Arthur told Lena of the two newest cases on his files. He had just received the cases of two scrawny, ten-year-old boys who had been trafficked and dumped on the streets. The boys had been brought into the city from the arid eastern plains of Karamojas even months back. They were enslaved to beg on the streets of Kampala. Every day they came to the streets to work while their traffickers watched them from a distant vantage point. At the end of the day,

they surrendered every coin they received, and if they were suspected of having not surrendered all the money, they were caned and denied their daily pay -a plate of food and a rag to sleep on at night in their tinned house at the fringes of Katwe slum in Kampala (p. 36-7). This depicts a new form of human trafficking known as "Street begging".

According to the narrative point of view, human trafficking is depicted as modern-day slavery. The narrator reveals how young boys are slaving for their traffickers without earning anything for themselves on the streets of Kampala. This exploitation subjected to the trafficked young boys dehumanises, demeans, and violates their rights as human beings. The author's depiction of human trafficking through these young boys is a clarion call to the society where such inhuman acts are practised that something should be done to stop human trafficking. The narrative also helps the reader to understand that human trafficking affects both boys and girls, and it takes different dimensions as victims are trafficked for different reasons.

This paper, argues that human trafficking depictions are majorly through characterisation as part of the style employed by the author in this novel. It is not until Arthur joins the *Zura Maids* under the disguise of Kigulu Jessy that the reader gets exposure to how the human trafficking system operates in this novel. Arthur gets access to critical information about the company, and he is determined to use this information to rescue the trafficked girls. Thus:

"I joined the company to get vital information. Now that I have it, I wish to expose the rot and put a stop to such trade", Arthur said (p. 265).

The author's use of characterisation helped the reader to reveal human trafficking at *Zura Maids*. It is through Arthur that the entire business deals and dynamics at the *Zura Maids* are clearly depicted. Arthur, after getting a job as a messenger, exposes the materialism and greed that result in the assassinations of workers at the *Zura Maids* by Mr. Mukwano who tries to own the company alone. Mr.

Mukwano tries to hide the death of Tony and other company workers; Arthur reports the human trafficking scam to the police. This culminates in the arrest of Mr. Mukwano and all other workers at *Zura Maids*. Based on Marxist Feminist literary theory, the researcher argued that Mr. Mukwano and his fellow male workers take advantage of Martina's imprisonment to take control of her business. The researcher concurred with Eisenstein who avers that oppression is a result of capitalist organisation and is based on the lack of power and control of proletariat worker who creates surplus value for the bourgeoisie, especially women (Eisenstein, 1978, pp. 8- 9). It is male supremacy and the patriarchal system in a capitalist society coupled with personal greed that Mukwano is determined to take control of Martina's business at all costs, and in the process, he murders his fellow workers in cold blood.

Based on the role of characterisation in this novel, Arthur Mubende is one of the champion male characters that are fighting for the liberation of women in this novel. The author used Arthur Mubende to show an urgent need to liberate women from the bondage of human trafficking and sexual slavery. Being a lawyer and a human rights activist, Arthur decides to offer pro-bono services to the poor trafficked young girls. He is also on a mission to rescue his own sister Molly, who had gone missing some years ago. The author creatively uses characterisation through Arthur to demonstrate that it is possible to fight human trafficking if everyone in the society plays the same role as Arthur Mubende.

The paper analyses the role of characterisation in this novel and reveals that the author's use of many characters continues to depict human trafficking and its scope. When Arthur gets a job at the *Zura Maids*, he accesses vital information from numerous files of the company; he later shares this information with Odwar, a retired police officer, who later helps him to report the matter to the IGP for the apprehension of human trafficking scam. Arthur observes thus:

"Zura Maids is the oldest of the VG firms. It is publicly known as a domestic labour-sourcing firm. I would say it is the rock of Martina's twenty million US dollars' worth of estate. The largest and most profitable" (p. 246-7).

The omniscient narrator recounts Arthur's experience when he gets files that contain the lists of the trafficked girls at the *Zura Maids*. He pulled out a file cabinet by the desk, ran through the files, and pulled out one labelled *Zura Maids: Year 2*. He studied it. The first page had the word "DRC" running across it. Arthur ran his eyes down the second page. Mr. Dumbe was listed as the official agent of the Zura, followed by several pages of names of girls who had been sent to the. Arthur felt the urge to study the names; perhaps he could identify Lena's Lilly. Identify his Molly. But there was no time. He flipped through the remaining pages-Sudan, Ethiopia, Saud Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Malaysia, India, USA, China, and UK. The list is endless, each showing an official agent and a long list of girls received that year. The researcher, therefore, argued that the narrative point of view played a pivotal role in the analysis of human trafficking depictions in this novel.

The information that Arthur gets from the Zura is an indictment that human trafficking has been taking place and its scope is large because *Zura Maids* is dealing with many countries. Through the narrative, the author enhances the scope of human trafficking in the novel by exposing different countries in Africa and overseas where trafficked young girls are exported. The researcher has been able to know various countries where trafficked girls are exported as illegal immigrants.

The profits that traffickers get promote human trafficking in the novel. The author portrays the *Zura Maids* as the most lucrative business branch of the VG enterprises that brings in a lot of profits. Arthur observes that human trafficking operates both internally and internationally and the traffickers operate in a criminal manner. Arthur shares with Muzee Odwar, thus:

“The VG reaps profits close to five hundred thousand dollars annually from its domestic supply and close to one and a half million dollars for exported girls.....And most of all that money is dirty money! Money got from the suffering of innocent girls”, Arthur said. “They operate like a criminal organisation, Mzee. They are secretive, recruiting girls under the cover of looking for thousands, supplying some to brothels here in Kampala, training thousands in secret places and then trafficking them abroad to serve as sex slaves”, he said (p. 247).

At a cross-border level, the author depicts human trafficking as a profitable business that has networks in many countries. As Arthur continues explaining human trafficking as stipulated in many files at *Zura Maids*, the reader continues to see many routes through which the trafficked girls go to reach other countries. Thus:

“They have a well-organised national supply-and-distribution network. The foreign route is more surprising. They have two main distribution routes by land. The South Sudan border and the Democratic Republic of Congo make for the easier routes. The girls are transported like cattle to Bunia in the DRC where Dumba, a local trader in Bunia purchases them” Arthur continued (p. 247).

More depiction of human trafficking in this novel are made clear when Arthur is reporting to the IGP in his attempt to rescue all the trafficked girls including Lena who has disguised as a job seeker at *Zura Maids* but ends up in a dungeon. Thus:

“I am trying to search for some girls who have gone missing. I trust you can help”, Arthur said. “As a matter of fact, there could be hundreds or even thousands missing. But right now, we are looking for two girls. The information we have so far points to an organised ring of traffickers who lure girls”, he continued.

Arthur continues to give more information now that the Inspector General of Police (IGP) knows the VG Company. Arthur particularly explains the situation in which Lena and other girls are at the *Zura Maids*. It is through the information Arthur avails to the

IGP that gives clear depictions of human trafficking in this novel:

“Sir, I will explain everything. We are here to give you important information about the VG establishment”, Arthur began. “A young woman named Lena is in trouble, sir. It is likely that she is being held against her will in a dungeon. She is being held together with several other girls waiting for shipment abroad into the world of sex slavery”, Arthur said (p. 267).

As Arthur continues giving vital information about human trafficking at *Zura Maids* to the police, through the IGP, the police pick interest in the matter and consider a raid at the *Zura Maids* but on condition that there was enough investigation and planning. The police promise to get the criminals that deal in human trafficking. Hence:

“There is a high possibility that we may carry out a raid on the VG, but we need some critical investigations and good planning”, the IGP said. “If the proprietor and her employees are criminals, then we will pin them down and maybe liberate the girls whom you allege may be in their custody”, he continued (p. 267).

In the meeting, Mukwano ordered the workers present to deny any involvement of *Zura Maids* in human trafficking. He decrees the defence each worker must put so that the reputation of the company remains. Hence:

“...the Zura sticks to its official position of outsourcing and supplying domestic servants to local homes within central Uganda”, Mukwano said. “In other words, the Zura has never ever been involved in sending Maids abroad. The Zura does not house anyone or link anyone beyond the borders of our country. We do not own or associate with any brothels. Does that stick?” he continued (p. 276).

The narrator observes a restless Mukwano trying to hide office documents in case the police come to investigate the company. The omniscient narrator recounts; Mukwano, accompanied by his workers

who carried eleven steel boxes containing all the sensitive documents on *Zura Maids*; the location of the dungeon, brothels, and foreign agents; details of the girls trained and trafficked to London, Malaysia, Italy, Middle East, and those that had died (pp. 276).

Effects of Human Trafficking in *Zura Maids* (2018)

The majority of human trafficking victims are women and children who end up being used as sex slaves and domestic servitudes, among others (Trafficking in Persons report, 2008). This paper reveals the effects of human trafficking on the characters in the novel *Zura Maids*. Displacement is the major effect of human trafficking on the characters. The trafficked characters have been displaced from their homes to different brothels in Kampala, while others are exported abroad. This has been analysed through characterisation. Lena's displacement goes beyond the brothel, whereby she is sentenced to two years in Luzira prison after she burnt a brothel in Kawempe in her attempt to rescue herself and her fellow trafficked young girls.

The author portrays traffickers' displacement in the novel. Martina Maa, the proprietor, and owner of the *Zura Maids* is arrested and charged with child abduction. She is in Luzira, where she is serving her sentence. This leaves her business in the hands of her business partners, who later connive to take over her business. This concurs with what Eisenstein asserted that "women are conceptualised as being the minority group within the male-dominated society".

Mistreatment became part of the trafficked characters' lives in the novel *Zura Maids*. Lena and her fellow trafficked young girls are confined in different brothels in Kampala, where they spend a long time in isolated confinements. This has been done by their traffickers to prepare the victims for export as if they are trade commodities. It is this sort of mistreatment that forces Lena to burn the brothel, where she has been confined with others.

The victims of human trafficking have lost their names and identity in the novel. Their names have been replaced by numbers, and their traffickers have told them to forget their names.

"...from now and possibly forever, forget about who you were before you came here. By the time we finish this session, their identity will be a thing of the past..." (p. 2).

Human trafficking resulted in sexual exploitation in the novel. Through characterisation, the author portrays the sexual exploitation that trafficked girls are subjected to by their traffickers. Mukwano, the caretaker of Martina's business, participates in sexual exploitation against the trafficked girls. In the dungeon, girls are subjected to untold suffering, whereby Mukwano records pornographic films of these girls being dehumanised. The author portrays human trafficking as prostitution. The young girls become prostitutes in the countries where they are exported.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the paper reveals that human trafficking is a social evil that should be fought by every member of society. This paper also concludes that the novelist is well aware of human trafficking in her society and she is, therefore, raising this awareness among the readers as a wake-up call to fight against human trafficking. The paper concludes that poverty as a result of the war in northern Uganda contributes adversely to human trafficking. The paper also concludes that corruption in the institutions of government like the judiciary, ministry of labour and social development as well as the ministry of internal affairs is a key factor in promoting human trafficking in Uganda.

The paper recommends that the government should register and regulate all labour-exporting companies to stop human trafficking in Uganda. The paper also recommends that human trafficking literature should be taught in schools and institutions to raise awareness among readers. The paper concludes in

the words of Frantz Fanon that “each generation must out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it in relative opacity” Fanon (1960:112). This paper is a clarion call in the fight against human trafficking that has escalated in our modern times.

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