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Abstract:

The Democratic Republic of Congo is recognized as “the rape capital of the world.” (UN-news center) During the Civil War in Congo, rape and sexual assault had applied as potent weapons to attain military and economical purposes. The sexual violence perpetrated against women had been brutal, and it had resulted in physical and social destruction and psychological trauma. Nottage's choice to set Ruined in the Democratic Republic of Congo was guided by the severe attitude towards women during the civil war, portraying the female characters as the victims of the war. The study is a brief description of women's situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, it concerns of how the female playwright Lynn Nottage depicts Congolese women's social struggles, psychological traumas, and physical destruction. The research also discusses the motives and the purposes of writing about a sensitive subject as the violence against women. Consequently, it applies a feminist reading of the text, and it is supported by numerous academic journals, books, articles, and reports from international organizations. It concludes that Lynn Nottage succeeded in presenting the violence against women on stage.

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Violence Against Women: A Feminist Study of Women's Situation during
the Civil War of the Democratic Republic of Congo in Lynn Nottage's
Ruined

By
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A Non-thesis Paper Submitted to the Department of English
at the College of Languages and Translation in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Literature

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Abstract:

The Democratic Republic of Congo is recognized as “the rape capital of the world.” (UN-news center) During the Civil War in Congo, rape and sexual assault had applied as potent weapons to attain military and economical purposes. The sexual violence perpetrated against women had been brutal, and it had resulted in physical and social destruction and psychological trauma. Nottage’s choice to set *Ruined* in the Democratic Republic of Congo was guided by the severe attitude towards women during the civil war, portraying the female characters as the victims of the war. The study is a brief description of women's situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, it concerns of how the female playwright Lynn Nottage depicts Congolese women’s social struggles, psychological traumas, and physical destruction. The research also discusses the motives and the purposes of writing about a sensitive subject as the violence against women. Consequently, it applies a feminist reading of the text, and it is supported by numerous academic journals, books, articles, and reports from international organizations. It concludes that Lynn Nottage succeeded in presenting the violence against women on stage.

Key words:

Violence; Rape; Women; Physical-social destruction; psychological trauma; sexual harassment.

Introduction:

In summer 2004, Lynn Nottage, the African American playwright, visited numerous Congolese refugee camps in Uganda. During Nottage's visit to Uganda, she listened to collective of brutal acts occurred to the Congolese females, recognizing the consequences of the civil war on women. Nottage said to *The Guardian* "Almost all the women I interviewed had been sexually abused and assaulted in horrific ways" (Iqbal). For more than twenty years, the Congo had a brutal civil war between the insurgent groups and the government military in which the civilians suffered incredibly from unstable conditions. This civil war resulted in serious cases of gender violence, which were considered as crimes against humanity that necessitated a considerable effort to denounce the women's situation. The state of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is hard to ignore. Consequently, Lynn Nottage narrated segments of Congolese women's accounts in her masterpiece *Ruined* as it has been assumed that the theater was a powerful medium to raise the awareness of women's issue. "It is no secret that art, including theater, are powerful tools for raising awareness about violence against women and girls." (UN Women in Georgia)

Overall, one of the prominent contributions of feminism in theater is the examination of the violence against women. The feminist writers reflect problems related to sexual assaults in the light of women's rights after the failure and ineffectiveness of the human rights reports on this issue. Therefore, theater is a medium used for that purpose; showing short sections of women's stories has worked to raise the awareness of the violence against women. The objective of this dissertation is to examine how the female playwright Lynn Nottage depicted the Congolese women's struggles in their patriarchal society. She demanded an identity and rights for the Congolese women when there was conflict between them and the dominant ideology of their society. Hence, Nottage displays an intense awareness of the issues that afflict females in Congo.

However, "Feminism" is applied in this dissertation incorporates with Lynn Nottage's masterpiece, *Ruined*. Feminist literary criticism is a literary analysis from the perspective of feminism. It is "the ways in which literature reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women"(Tyson, 83). Feminist critics include other literary schools such as historicism, and psychological analysis in order to "increase our understanding of women's experience, both in the past and present,

and promote our appreciation of women's value in the world" (Tyson, 119). The discipline of feminist criticism usually requires an analysis of the gender roles of the work, and how it indicates or it reverses traditional gender roles. Also, it is an overall project that aims to understand the power structures in society, which is conducive to empowering the marginalized attitude toward women. A feminist literary critic confronts the conventional, cultural and universal presumptions to support and appreciate women. Generally, Feminism is regarded as the contradiction against all methods of patriarchal, sexual aggression and, as necessary, resistance to the patriarchal domination. It is resulted in strategies to reconstruct the social structures permitting the liberation of women just as in the high wave of the 1960s and 1970s that encouraged woman's discourse.

To guide the reader of this dissertation, this part will define some central theoretical concepts. The term gender is often considered as a means of expressing the differences between women and men. It refers to the social constructed functions, behaviors, activities, and characteristics assigned to males and females in a particular society. The concept of violence against women is defined by the United Nations in the "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women", adopted in 1993, as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, [...] whether occurring in public or in private life." Rape is classified under a type of sexual assault; it is a sexual assault of body sensitive parts by "another person, without the consent of the victim" (The Department of Justice US). Sexual assault has a similar definition to rape. It is "any type of forced or coerced sexual contact or behavior that happens without consent" (women health org). Also, the dissertation used activism. It is an equivalent to a remonstrance, an international movement to demand social reforms. Activism is not a new phenomenon; most of the literary writers advocate activism as a component of their writing since they consider literature as a medium to achieve a social purpose.

Chapter One: Nottage's Response to the Violence against Women in Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country located in Africa, rich in natural resources such as coltan, diamond, gold, and copper. For several decades, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has suffered from poverty in contrast to the excessively opulent life of certain individuals as a result of the pillage of the precious natural resources. They often engaged in conflict and degradation such as rape to maintain numerous properties. All the armed tribal groups and the government in Congo started to encounter each other and used violent crimes such as killing and rape to destroy the rebels or the government army. However, the civil war in Congo included women as a weapon for war purposes and strategies. Both the rebels and the government soldiers have frequently raped Congolese women. John Holmes, the under secretary general for humanitarian affairs for the United Nations, has described the women's situation, saying, "The sexual violence in Congo is the worst in the world. The sheer numbers, the wholesale brutality, the culture of impunity; it's appalling" (Gettleman, "Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War").

In this respect, it is worthwhile to consider that the militaristic procedures are not only antagonistic between two contending groups, the military soldiers and insurgent troops, but are also violence against the most defenseless civilians, namely women, children, and elderly men. Throughout the years of civil war in the Congo, sexual assault is among many forms of violence that have been committed against women, in addition to assassination and abduction. Congolese women have been abducted and considered slaves, which permits the soldiers to rape them. However, rape is violence, not a sexual relationship; it is an ultimate form of violence and an instrument to oppress another group and destroy its identity. Rape is a crime that reverberates and reflects through generations and leaves a series of victims whose rights are often ignored. A few of these women were granted the courage to share their experiences of sexual assault with the world, whereas most of the victims' cases remained concealed because the victims sustained humiliation. However, numerous victims did not report the crimes to official authorities for the fear of being considered fugitives and being stigmatized. However, that sexual assault against women is being exposed internationally as researchers who have visited the Congo to examine the situation shared their observations. In a recent study published in the American Journal of Public Health by US scientists Peterman, Bredenkamp, and Palermo reveal that "the number of women who have been the victims of rape in the DRC

estimates of rape among women aged 15 to 49 years ... 1150 women raped every day, 48 women raped every hour, and 4 women raped every 5 minutes.” (1064-1065)

The sexual assaults against women in the Congo have been recently examined by research studies expressing a deeper understanding of the nature of the violence against women in Congo. Generally Speaking, the gender conflict is culturally constructed rather than biologically inherited. It is often a system of social relationships that glorify the state of men in society. Moreover, it is a doctrine that maintains and justifies male domination, which increases a structural discrimination of women. Men naturally have the power and strength to serve in the military and to defend the country. On the contrary, women are often associated with the traditional perspective of women as being the angel of the house. Therefore, the prejudice against women in the male domain created a tendency to practice the violence against them. In consonance with the ideology of the present times, the concept of women has changed; yet, it still has created some difficulties for females. Although they are offered the same rights opportunities as men, some issues still require our attention, especially those females who live in misogynistic culture. Women who are victims of such violence are not able to express themselves because of the domination of men.

Quite recently, substantial consideration has been given to how Nottage made a connection between sexual assault and the exploitation of Congo’s environment. The violence against women is perpetrated by the militias and armies fighting over natural resources. Belliveau's analyses support this issue. Belliveau interpreted *Ruined* through ecofeminism by associating feminist issues such as rape with the environment. Economically speaking, the Congolese government is exploiting necessary minerals, such as coltan, exporting them overseas for industrial countries to produce smartphones. The access to these resources has been extremely advantageous to non-Africans. As stated by Belliveau “The global economy compromises the environments of poorer countries because environmental guidelines and regulations are often relaxed in developing countries.” (“Prospectus: An Ecofeminists Deconstruction of Lynn Nottage’s *Ruined* and Edward Zwick’s *Blood Diamond*”) Therefore, the global economy initiated the conflict that resulted in the human rights infringements in Congo and the numerous reports of sexual assault. The militias and the army have received millions for illegally harvested minerals. Furthermore, the brutality of rape has a deep-rooted history with the

massive violence of sexual abuse lasting for approximately 20 years of struggles in the Congo. The conflicts have heightened terror among women who were numerously raped by either the men in military uniforms or the insurrectionary troops. The purpose of the sexual assault, assassination, and assaults on civilians was to dominate the minerals and women. For instance, in *Ruined*, one of Mama Nadi's clients paid a stone as an exchange for a girl; this indicated the value of Congo's natural sources. Then, Mama Nadi displays the stone to Mr. Harari, the Lebanese merchant and a skilled expert in the diamond field. In this context, it is important to consider the existence of Mr. Harari as a non-African character; a foreigner investing in Congo's essential minerals shows the value of the natural resources. However, he examined the stone and informed Mama Nadi that "in this age of the mobile phone, it becomes quite the precious ... God has seen fit to bless your backward country with an abundance of it. Now if that young man had come to me, I would've given him enough money to buy pussy for a month. Even yours" (Nottage, 25).

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo was brutal and fierce, and the horrendous experiences of Congolese women as victims of the civil war encouraged Nottage to write about this issue. Nottage assumed that there was a strategy for the declining female voices, which is an expected result of the suppression of Congolese women's voices by men. She considered the lack of female voices an important factor that contributed in increasing the violence against women. "I became particularly aware of the absence of female narratives," Nottage said to *The Economist*. Hence, Nottage discovered the motivation to compose a play concerning the brutality toward women in Africa after she and director Whoriskey visited Uganda and Rwanda in 2004. It is worth considering that they were not permitted to access the Democratic Republic of Congo due to the predictable consequences of the civil war. Accordingly, they interviewed a group of Congolese women who were refugees in Uganda. Nottage witnessed individual and private stories of abduction, violence, rape, and aggressive treatment of women. Congolese women claimed that inside Congo, the number of sexual assaults had increased. However, the matter became worse when the Congolese community abandoned the victims, and the victims became asylum seekers in Uganda. Therefore, rape is a systematic process a consistent strategy to degrade civilians. It is a primary device of violence that only targets females. The sexual assault perpetrated by the soldiers and armed groups supports an agenda of domination, humiliation, and terror. For instance, when a woman is

raped, the feeling that women are not being protected increases, and the family is humiliated.

Nottage once said, "I cannot bear to live in a world where such horrific things are happening to my African sisters without doing whatever I can to help them." ("Enough") As a result, Lynn Nottage recorded the stories of Congolese women demanding adjustments of their conditions. Nottage's *Ruined* was written alongside with some plays were written by female playwrights prevalent in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, who have moved drama forward to address the issue of militarizing women's bodies in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Friedman, 116). In *Ruined*, Nottage identified her characters as victims of the civil war in Congo. Mama Nadi and Sophie are aggressively ruined. Salima, on the other hand, is a young girl who is a wife, a mother, and pregnant. She was abducted, kept as a captive, and assaulted by soldiers. Certainly, Nottage adequately documented the violence through interviewing the Congolese women. In a statement written in the acknowledgment of her play *Ruined*, Nottage expressed her appreciation to the women who had shared their stories, including Mama Nadi Zabibu, Muzima Salima, and Sophie Somana, whose stories and real names were demonstrated in the play. A little issue that could not affect the play is that Nottage covered portions of Congolese women's stories, considering their privacy as Derzoe stated: "Even though Nottage does not provide verbatim testimony (out of respect for the women's privacy), Mama Nadi, Salima, and Sophie are the names of real women she met in the Ugandan refugee camp (187).

Lynn Nottage is one of the prominent African American writers who participated in identifying the issue of the Congolese women on the American stage. "She was able to transcend this world to find art in the noble struggles of the voiceless, nameless, and less fortunate" (Shannon, 185). For four years, Nottage was assigned as the press officer of Amnesty International, which achieved a clear perception of women's situation in Africa, such as the oppression of women, patriarchy, gender conflict, rape, and the inequality between male and female. She was able to contact with African journalists, scholars, activists, and most importantly, the victims to examine the essence of the domination of men over women. Throughout her work as a press officer for Amnesty International, she enhanced her perception of the issues in Africa by scrutinizing African civil wars, history, poverty, politics, and human rights abuses. During her work at the office of Amnesty

International, she commenced writing an incomplete book to draw attention to women's state with the consideration of human rights. However, she assumed that the power of the stage could be more efficient than human rights and news reports. She confirmed, "The power of the theater is that it can peel back layers of emotion to reveal human truths that often get lost in clinical human rights reports and detached news stories." (*Enough*). Hence, she located *Ruined* in a small brothel in the countryside of the Democratic Republic of Congo, demonstrating the horror of rape and narrating stories of oppressed and brave Congolese women.

Nottage is considered to be one of the youngest experimental feminists in American theater. In *Ruined*, she embraces the twenty-first-century feminist perspective that is derived from the third wave of feminism, including the collective of the African American perception of femininity. She was influenced by the third wave of feminism, which consisted of remarkable women who wanted to attain voices of their own, including assortment of different groups sharing feminist ideas such as low-income and black women. The movement aimed to formulate solutions that relate to gender issues, and it is concerned with sexuality, gender violence, and rape. Nottage, as a feminist playwright, wrote *Ruined* as a dramatic tool aimed to raise awareness of the violence against women in the Congo. She built actions that reflected the violence against women and introduced the horrific consequences on women of the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the play, Nottage embraces the theme of rape. For instance, Christian introduced Salima and Sophie to Mama Nadi: "Salima is from a tiny village. She was captured by rebel soldiers, Mayi-mayi; the poor thing spent nearly five months in the bush as their concubine"(Nottage, 12). Also, Christian tells the story of his niece Sophie: Christian. ... Yes ... Look, militia did ungodly things to the child, took her with ... a bayonet and then left her for dead. And she was..." (Nottage, 13)

To set this theme in the context, Nottage applied American standards of feminism. Over time, American feminists in the United States modified legislation and laws regarding equality of education, jobs, and voting. On the other side of the world, particularly in Africa, a woman does not have the liberty that a female in the United States has. Therefore, American feminists expanded the theory to include women from other countries after reforms had been applied in the United States. They came into contact with Third World feminists, as they were demanding for equal rights and fighting violence

against women. As mentioned above, Nottage contacted African activists, journalists, and the victims themselves to form a clear view of the situation. Nottage's *Ruined* supported the requests for rights for the oppressed African women. She asserted in an interview, "Our silence on this issue sends a message to the Congolese government that it can continue to rape the land and its people with impunity." She demands for freedom in women's situation in Congo, it is clearly manifested when Christian sings the following lines for Mama Nadi: A circle dance/ grace nearly broken/ But it ends peacefully/stillness welcome.(Nottage, 101) The vitality of the African American women's protests against oppression inspired Nottage to confront the patriarchal African societies. Nottage asserted in an interview with *Enough* blog,

I am a storyteller. I remain committed to telling the stories of women of the African diaspora... Sexual violence against the women of Congo is one of the great human rights crises in the world today, and I am using the tools that I have at my disposal to raise awareness and draw attention to the situation.

However, the play recently studied by various authors demonstrated that *Ruined* is a combination of feminist and political perspectives. Nottage was one of the playwrights to take the issues of African women to the American theaters during the time of the black political power in the White House. As Abrams says, "the [African American] literary movement was associated with the Black Power movement in politics" (118). *Ruined* was published during the presidency of Barack Obama, the first African American president. However, this development had a considerable effect on the preponderance of the play's themes; Nottage uncovered issues to gain the catharsis of the audience. Therefore, it will be reformed in African women's states. As a playwright, Nottage stands for Congolese women's rights; the play proposes to raise awareness of gender violence. In her interview concerning performing *Ruined* at *Arena Theatre* in Washington, D.C., Nottage acknowledges: "I am really excited to bring the play to Washington, D.C., because it is the seat of power, and I feel as though the message needs to be heard by an audience that's in the position to really affect change," (Nottage, YouTube). This element contributed the production of *Ruined*. Whoriskey reported in the preface of *Ruined* that the play attracted "the attention of the United Nations and the United States Senate. Several delegates from the United Nations, including General Ban-Ki Moon, have attended the performance" (Whoriskey, xiii).

Nottage consolidated African techniques of narration in *Ruined*. "The music in *Ruined* becomes a means of excavating character, of uncovering scars" (Brantley). The African approach of storytelling requires consistency of music and choreography to maintain the themes of the play. This technique sanctioned the performer to elucidate and comment on the events of the play. Therefore, Nottage authorized the character to raconteur the effects of the civil war as "songs". Apparently, the audience is accustomed to African storytelling as some of them consider it a section of religious celebrations. However, Nottage contained this technique to highlight the brutality toward women in the Congo. Christopher Olsen supported the African narrative techniques by declaring, "This technique has its own alienation effect in the sense that the universality of surviving war turns this play into a referendum on gender violence in the times of war. Indeed, the bodies of women are once again the source of violence " (85). Furthermore, Nottage employed music to emphasize the plot, provide effects, to intensify the response of the actions.

However, numerous studies have assumed *Ruined* of being an adaptation or a rewriting of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Olsen concluded that the play is indeed a rewriting of *Mother Courage and Her Children* dealing with the consequences of the civil war in Congo. Olsen explained "Nottage has structured her play with a conscious acknowledgment to Bertolt Brecht" (82). However, the arguments and research of these studies suffer from some weaknesses. They do not take into account that Nottage initially proposed to rewrite *Mother Courage and Her Children* to document the war in Africa. It is frequently asserted that Nottage replaced some ideas in Brecht's play to concentrate on the brutality of sexual violence and its consequences in Congo. As the director of the play, Whoriskey, stated, "As we interviewed more people, it became clear that we didn't want to be beholden to Brecht's ideas. She decided to abandon the idea of adaptation for a structure that was true to our experience in Uganda." (*Ruined*)

Theses studies are inadequate to consider how *Ruined* is an "adaptation," or rewriting of *Mother Courage and Her Children*. The central intensive case is the themes of the plays. Nottage introduced a conception of the brutality surrounding women throughout the civilian conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She demonstrated the suffering of the victims of sexual assault. For instance, Congolese women such as

Salima and Sophie were the victims of sexual violence; Salima had been abducted and labored as a sex captive for five months, and Sophie had gotten a ruined female organ due to the circumstances of her rape. On the other hand, *Mother Courage and Her Children* proposed to interpret the unscrupulous issues of war trauma. Mother Courage's silent daughter, Katrin, identifies herself as the character experiences the traumas of war since the war took her sound when she was a child.

Furthermore, *Ruined* and *Mother Courage and Her Children* ended conversely. Brecht in *Mother Courage and Her Children* did not end as sympathetic resolution, and paradoxically, the audience comprehended that Mother Courage did not identify her flaws. On the other hand *Ruined* concluded on an optimistic and promising note with the engagement of Christian and Mama Nadi. It was a delightful resolution not only for Mama Nadi, but also for the ladies who had experienced rape and other forms of sexual violence. *Ruined* respected the tragic, real-life stories of women who had been sexually assaulted by soldiers. Nottage eliminated the affliction of the women's struggles. "At the end of the play, [there is] hope that Christian can begin a new life with Mama Nadi and hope for the brothel's women that they too will experience happiness" (Jordan, "Melodrama or Simply Drama: Hope of Women Examined *Ruined*").

Chapter Two: A Feminist Reading of the characters:

The theatrical plays present women's bodies during wartime. To confront the traditional representations of female reality, feminist activists and authors have dedicated an extraordinary effort to report, interpret, and recreate the phenomenon of rape during wartime. The feminist perspective on sexual assault contributes to understanding the

consequences of rape during wars and the importance of breaking the silence of rape. Feminist authors dedicate their time to prevent sexual assault not only in intense situations such as wars but also in daily life. However, the high prevalence of rape is a grave and tragic problem facing women. As a feminist playwright, Nottage seeks to confront the structures of the patriarchal theater regarding the representation of the female body on stage as an object to satisfy males and something to objectify. This claim is supported by Cuder and Sánchez-Palencia findings. Nottage modified the position of women prevalent in phallogentric perspectives on war. The masculine interpretation of war presents the soldiers as the heroes, who are identified by their scars and wounds, defending the homeland from enemies. Indeed, the female body appears to be second and only useful to comfort the heroes' bodies. In the contrast to this strategy of demonstrating the conflict from a phallogentric gaze, Nottage presents the sufferings of Congolese women. The Congolese women's pains are unquestionably aggravated by the soldiers from both the government and rebel armies.

Once again, Nottage investigated this traditional gaze. She depicted how women became weapons and trophies in the civil war of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, producing an exaggerated characterization of the female characters. Also, she showed the horror of the male soldiers' discriminated sexual crimes and presented certain civilian women's strengths and capacities. However, Nottage accurately portrayed the victims to raise awareness of women's violence in warfare. Most importantly, the characterizations are enlarged from actual statements, which is a correct description of the Congolese women's situation. Hence, *Ruined* was constructed from the reports of Congolese women. The play unveiled Congolese women's struggle to survive and their horrific experiences of violence. Nottage portrayed three female characters —Salima, Josephine, and Sophie— who were horrendously raped by soldiers. Moreover, she presented the role of Mama Nadi and her efforts to support the young girls who had been ostracized by their families.

Nottage characterizes the male characters thoroughly as "soldier miners." The duality manifests the relentless evil of the manly qualities, which are the corrupted, fraudulent, and unethical discrepancy toward female figures. Christopher Olsen, a male character embodies "arrogance, cynicism, and [a] manipulative nature." For instance, the soldiers who raped Salima and kept her as a captive for five months were very aggressive. The soldiers murdered civilians, assaulted women, and were proud of their barbarous

actions in order to disseminate terror among the civilians. Salima claims that the soldiers are proud of killing fifteen members of her tribe, the Hema. "You know what he says? He says fifteen Hema men were shot dead and buried in their mining pit, in mud so thick it swallowed them right into the ground without mercy... bragging like I should be congratulating him" (Nottage, 31). Furthermore, Osembenga, the leader of the government army who is egotistical and manipulative, and Fortune, Salima's spouse, instigated the oppression of women in the brothel by announcing to Osembenga's army that the leader Kisembe frequently visited the brothel. Christian is the exception. He is friendly, sentimental and pacific, and he vehemently opposes the actions of the two armies. He also accepts a beer from Osembenga even though he does not drink (Mobley, "Melodrama sensation and activism in *Ruined*").

Nottage progressively develops Salima's character in the two acts of the play. Salima is an African lady who is approximately nineteen and the mother of a child. She goes through a challenging experience: she is kept captive and attacked by many soldiers who kill her daughter. The sexual crimes result in Salima's becoming pregnant, and she describes the fetus as "the child of a monster" (70). In this case, Salima had been abandoned by her tribal groups; therefore, she settled for serving at the brothel. She confirmed, "I walked into the family compound expecting wide open arms...Five months, suffering...my family gave me the back of their heads...I dishonored him." (Nottage, 70). The experiences of sex slavery, gang rape, and violence raised physiological issues for Salima. She ended up aborting her own baby and committing suicide to terminate her existence in this horrific world. Nottage commented on Salima's story.

To formulate an accurate perception of Salima's sexual assault, Nottage presented an interesting conversation between Salima and Sophie, in a tragic tone; Salima described the day she was abducted. The abduction occurred on a sunny, tranquil afternoon. Salima had been carrying her daughter and gathering tomatoes from the meadow. Acceleratedly, a troop of insurgents arrived in the territory, "and the tall soldier slammed the butt of his gun into my cheek," and "one of the soldiers held me down with his foot, he was so heavy." They murdered her daughter: "A soldier stomped on her head with his foot. Moreover, she was quiet" (Nottage, 68). Her story distinctly defines the description of the horrendous treatment Salima confronted through the gang rape. They announced that Salima was a "soup for everybody." In the doctrine of Congolese as a population, the woman who is

raped is a disgrace. To highlight this distinct point, Nottage portrays societal perspectives of assaulted women through Josephine's judgment of Salima as a wild, promiscuous girl. "Let me say that what we all know is that you are something worse than a whore. So many men have had you that you are worthless" (Nottage, 37). Salima's husband was not nearby at that time; he was absent purchasing a new pot. After five months of distress, Fortune-- Salima's husband--decided to retrieve Salima to his house, as he assumed that Salima stayed in Mama Nadi's brothel. Most importantly, Fortune was back holding a new pot, which was a representation of his inability to defend Salima. Dolan says, "He holds the new pot in his fist, a pitiful symbol of reparations he's unable to make." However, Mama Nadi doesn't let him talk with Salima. "He left her for dead. See. This is your home now. Mama takes care of you" (Nottage, 66). It is fair for the people to condemn Fortune for not taking care of Salima. Simon says, "If you are angry, then be mad at the men who took her. Think about how they did you, they reached right into your pocket and stole from you" (Nottage, 74).

The suicide occurs when the soldiers force Josephine to the floor, trying to rape her. Salima appears on the scene bleeding, having a self-abortion, yelling at them, "Stop!" At that moment, she cries, "You will not fight your battles on my body anymore" (Nottage, 94). Salima dies prematurely, pregnant and outraged; she is a representation of horrifying violence including rape, humiliation, and sexual assault. However, death liberates individuals in circumstances like those that afflicted Salima. The scene "indirectly reflects all freedom of Salima." (Khanna, *Tramboo*) She prefers to free herself from reality even though the cost is her life.

Another girl accompanied Salima to Mama Nadi's brothel is Christian's niece, Sophie. An attractive adolescent, Sophie was talented and had a beautiful voice. Christian encouraged Sophie to serve at Mama Nadi's brothel after the soldiers had sexually assaulted Sophie for so long that she had become ruined and hopelessly inadequate as a female. Sophie had been ostracized by her family for the same reason as Salima; both of them had been raped and consequently had been disgraced and humiliated in the eyes of tribal inhabitants. After Sophie's family had discarded her, her uncle Christian urged her to commence a new experience. When Sophie appeared at Mama Nadi's brothel, Christian convinced Mama Nadi to receive Sophie even though his niece had been physically damaged. He stated, "And as you know, the village is not a place for a girl who has

been...ruined. It brings shame, dishonor to the family” (Nottage, 15). However, these accelerated developments were consequences of the brutality of the rape. Mama Nadi asked Sophie whether the soldiers had remorselessly damaged her virginity: “Did they hurt you badly?” Sophie whispered, “Yes” (16). The question was included to evoke the audience's emotions. "It is a significant reminder to the audience that war rape and its moral and physical consequences are irreversible. This was enhanced by the fact that Sophie remains unhealed and limps throughout the play" (Salih et al., 166). To fix her female organ and to transform her into being adequately healthy, it requires one diamond for the medical surgery's payment. Therefore, the purpose of her coming to Mama Nadi's shelter is to accumulate money to do an operation to repair her female organs. Consequently, Mama Nadi preserves a diamond to support the financial payment of the operation. Mr. Harari promises Mama Nadi to take Sophie to the infirmary. Nonetheless, at the end of the play, he runs away with the diamond, neglecting Sophie apparently with no financial advantage.

However, Mama Nadi assigns Sophie to be a bookkeeper, to perform songs to tempt Mama's customers into spending more money and to forget the trauma of the sexual attacks. As she says to Salima, “While I am singing, I am praying the pain will be gone... but what those men did to me lives inside my body” (Nottage, 32). Sophie performed songs that resembled her character. Mobley in “Melodrama sensation and activism in *Ruined*” states, "At this moment, Sophie's musical interlude, a metaphor for the plight of women in the Congo, teaches us about her character while at the same time contributing to a sense of calm that marks the beginning of Act One, scene four." An example is the following lyrics:

A rare bird on a limb sings a song heard by a few.
 A few patient and distant listeners.
 A sound that haunts the forest.
 A cry that tells a story,
 harmonious, but time forgotten.
 To be seen is to be doomed.
 It must evade capture,
 And yet the bird still cries out to be heard.

Despite Sophie's ruined state, she exhibited a positive perspective of reality. For instance, Sophie reads a section of a romantic fiction to Salima; she shared an optimistic sense of the destiny, declaring, "Being a ruined one she never gives up, she always compromises with herself and seeks hope to survive. She believes that she is endowed with endless talents. She sings and sings nicely as she hopes to make it a way out to possess something for her better future" (Khanna, *Tramboo*, 193).

Surviving the violence requires specific strategies including economic independence. Alfred Wallace suggests that if women liberated themselves by being financially independent of men, they would succeed and survive "in a state of society in which all women were economically independent, were all fully occupied with public duties and social or intellectual pleasure" (Wallace, 147). Wallace contributes an essential intellectual basis and justification not only for women's equality but also for women's power in the future. For instance, Mama Nadi is the owner and manager of the brothel, where the brothel is only a safe place to live. Her intelligent thinking and flexibility guide Mama Nadia to survive during wartime. First of all, she is economically independent by establishing a bar/brothel and satisfying her customers with beers, cigarettes, and girls. Her fundamental concern is to preserve her business and the girls, as she assumes that being economically independent is the single way to survive. She repeatedly says that her bar/brothel is her business. She says to Christian, "Wanna judge the way I run my business. This is my place" (Nottage, 86)

The brothel depends on the power of sex to obtain money and security for those who have been raped. Mama Nadi is aware of the fact that during the civil war, women and girls were used as battlegrounds with the support of government and rebel leaders. Mama Nadi follows the best policy: taking a neutral posture. However, she learns that her clients are dangerous; therefore, she asks the soldiers to relinquish their weapons while they are in the brothel. When Osembenga, the leader of the government's armed force, goes to her bar, Mama Nadi says: "Monsieur, I must ask you to leave your bullet at the bar; otherwise you don't come in" (Nottage, 42)

Mama Nadi owns the brothel, which is described as a refuge, shelter, and home. She says, "You are in my house. Moreover, I make the rules here" (Nottage, 42). She fights against corruption in a world where evil patriarchal brutality threatens the stability of society. In this circumstance, the bar/brothel is the domestic province, the

home constructed by women; is a domain of nonviolence and relative calm. The deadly terrorist endangering the consistency of domestic “tranquility” is the extreme conflict (Mobley, Melodrama, sensation, and activism in *Ruined*).

However, the relationship between Sophie, Salima, Josephine, and Mama Nadi is a female bond. This female relationship has the essential purpose of formulating an atmosphere that empowers women to confront the patriarchal society. For instance, Mama Nadi runs her business to protect other girls from any violence and help them survive. She accepts Sophie, Salima, and Josephine to live under her roof after they are expelled by their families. The women in the brothel have all been raped frequently by soldiers and forsaken by their tribal communities. These women's choices are challenging and limited. As single women in the country, she would be defenseless in the face of sexual attack, gang rape, and death, but staying in the brothel would give her massive protection, sustenance, aid, and safety. However, as previously mentioned, the bar/brothel is originally a business place that depends on the power of money as an exchange for sex, and it becomes a domestic and safe location for them “a brothel is a place of sexual exploitation ... the girls working there are much more respected and safe than they would be outside where they would be constantly in danger of being raped, ruined, or even murdered” (Garcia, 133). Therefore, the play illuminates an optimistic perspective that women can establish shelters, bonds together, and live as one family to confront patriarchal ideals.

Conclusion:

One of the most significant findings of this study is that theater is an influential medium to raise awareness about violence against women and women's rights. The plight of women against savagery, vulgarity, and sexual abuse is not restricted by national boundaries. Therefore, Nottage used the horrendous stories of women in the civil war in Congo to create literature. She seeks to stop sexual abuse against Congolese women. According to Nottage, Congo's civil war included a conflict fought over women's bodies. “The situation in the Congo is so complicated and chaotic that... I decided to focus on one war: the war against women.”

Nottage is a feminist and a playwright, and her feminism motivates her to write about sensitive cases in patriarchal countries. She was influenced by third wave feminism,

a diverse movement in which African American women also participated. Nottage was assigned as a press officer by Amnesty International, which encouraged her to scrutinize carefully and thoroughly the life conditions of women in Africa. In her literary works, she frequently gives consideration to African-American women, and she has expanded her themes to support women in Africa. She also has employed African narration styles (singing and dancing) to familiarize the audience with African culture and maintain the action.

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that Nottage was determined to visit Uganda in order to observe the consequences of the civil war in the Congo. At first, Nottage and director Kate Whoriskey shared the same interest in doing an adaptation of *Mother Courage and Her Children* in Africa. However, Nottage shifted her attention to the African women situation in general and the Congolese women in specific after the interview of the Congolese women. She recognized that the civil war had revolved around women. Consequently, she responded to the sexual abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by writing a powerful play that was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

Furthermore, Nottage was more concerned with sexual violence than with the theme of war. Her principal objectives were to explore and shine a spotlight on the violence against women in the Congo. Consequently, she saw the issue of sexual brutality as a universal problem that demanded political reform. "Secretary of State in 2009, Hillary Clinton also worked to raise awareness. She toured Africa twice, visiting organizations that care for women who have been raped. Clinton brought further attention to the crisis when she publicly refused to visit Rwanda" (Mobley, Melodrama sensation, and activism in *Ruined*).

This dissertation has addressed the basis of the conflict as well as the circumstances and the consequences for women of the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rape is one of the most popular features of the war. This claim is supported by the analysis of *Ruined* by Salih et al. They examined the play approaching Jonathan Gottschall's Strategic Rape Theory, concluding that the rape occurred for militaristic purposes. However, the relationship between human rights abuses of women and children, especially rape in wartime, and the patriarchal system is, in fact, manifested

in *Ruined*. The consequences of sexual crime affect both the body and the mind of the victim. Hence, she formulated optimism in Mama Nadi's engagement to reflect that there is always light in the dark.

Nottage reverses the patriarchal gaze that it was incorporating the female body on stage. Nottage transformed the attitude of women that exists in phallogentric perspectives of the war. The masculine gaze on the war demonstrated the soldiers as the heroes identified by scars and bruised. Indeed, the female body followed as inconsiderable and existing only to comfort the soldiers. In *Ruined*, however, women are the victims of the civil war, having been raped and sexually abused. Furthermore, the author reverses the image of men as war heroes whose bodies have scars and wound marks. Men in *Ruined* are arrogant, are irreverent toward women, and endeavor to satisfy and to accomplish their strategic purposes.

This dissertation explained the importance of Mama Nadi's effort to guard the young girls who were forsaken by their families. The positive consequence of their economic independence is their independence and ability to survive in a patriarchal society. She establishes her bar/brothel to make money and guarantee the safety of forsaken women. The bar/brothel was primarily a business place that was constructed on the power of money as an exchange for sex. This strategy of the bar/brothel converted the brothel into a tranquil and safe area. Her assistance for Salima, Sophie, and Josephine is a portion of the sisterhood. Therefore, the play manifested an optimistic prospect that Mama Nadi establishes a shelter and bonds with the raped women to live as one family to confront the patriarchal ideals.

To sum up, the research has demonstrated that Nottage in *Ruined* succeeded in producing the feminist issues of the sexual violence against women, tendering the matter of sexual brutality toward women as social and political success. As Mobley asserted, "*Ruined* has indeed successfully employed spectacle as a methodology of social reform....the play not only pleased critics but sparked feminist activism".

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