



Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *the First Woman*: Inversion of the Taming Metaphor Surrounding Female Sexuality

Malini Sheoran

University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Abstract

Published in 2020, Makumbi's contemporary Ugandan novel displays her unique treatment of female sexuality as she shows the pre-pubescent journey of her central character into womanhood. This paper explores the author's renewed perspective on female sexuality, which is shaped through the intersection of myths with modern misconceptions and prejudices surrounding female sexuality. It also contrasts the traditional outlook on issues like menstruation and labia elongation with the liberated perspective offered by Nsuuta, outcast as the village witch. Where other women try to domesticate Kirabo's sexuality, Nsuuta educates her on the power of women, drawing upon mythical legends. As an extension of this idea, transgressive sexuality symbolised by Nsuuta is read in depth. The last component that the paper studies is the presence of ecological elements contained within references to water and nature metaphors in Nsuuta's mythical stories on female agency. Female sexuality is placed in dialogue with ecofeminism, employing discourses of Greta Gaard and Stacy Alaimo. Unravelling a unique perspective on female sexuality, the role of water/ rains as ecological entities activating female desire is read in a new light.

Keywords: ecofeminism, female agency, misconceptions, myths, transgressive sexuality