

ARTICLE

The Role of Women: Resilience and Resistance in the Select Works of Scholastique Mukasonga

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Abstract

The Rwandan Genocide remains one of the most devastating events in modern history, profoundly affecting Rwanda's social structures and collective memory. In the aftermath of this tragedy, women emerged as central agents of survival, reconstruction, and cultural preservation. This study examines the representation of women's resilience and resistance in the selected works of Scholastique Mukasonga, focusing on *Our Lady of the Nile* (2014), *The Barefoot Woman* (2018), *Cockroaches* (2016), and *Kibogo* (2021). Grounded in postcolonial feminist theory and trauma studies, the research employs qualitative textual analysis to explore how Mukasonga portrays female characters navigating violence, displacement, and cultural disruption. The study argues that Mukasonga's narratives reposition Rwandan women not merely as victims of genocide but as active agents of resilience, memory, and cultural continuity. Through storytelling, maternal knowledge, and communal solidarity, women in these narratives preserve indigenous traditions and challenge colonial and patriarchal structures that historically marginalized their voices. Furthermore, Mukasonga's works reveal how literature functions as a site of cultural remembrance and resistance, enabling the reconstruction of suppressed histories and identities. By foregrounding women's experiences, the study contributes to broader scholarly discussions on gender, trauma, and post-genocide memory within African and postcolonial literary studies. Ultimately, the research demonstrates that Mukasonga's literary representations transform narratives of suffering into narratives of endurance, cultural survival, and feminist resistance.

Keywords: Postcolonial Feminism; Women's Resilience; Cultural Memory; Trauma Narratives; Feminist Resistance; Cultural Preservation.

INTRODUCTION

The Rwandan Genocide remains one of the most devastating episodes of mass violence in modern history, resulting in the deaths of nearly 800,000 people within approximately one hundred days. Beyond the immediate loss of life, the genocide shattered Rwanda's social and cultural structures, leaving survivors to confront long-term trauma, displacement, and the challenge of rebuilding communal life (Des Forges, 1999) [1]. In this context of profound devastation, women assumed critical roles in reconstructing families, preserving cultural memory, and sustaining community resilience. Despite experiencing gender-specific forms of violence and marginalization, Rwandan women became central agents in the processes of recovery and social transformation (Burnet, 2012) [2].

Literature has played a significant role in documenting and interpreting these experiences of survival and recovery. The works of Scholastique Mukasonga provide an important literary space for representing the gendered dimensions of genocide and its aftermath. As a survivor and witness, Mukasonga reconstructs the memories of pre-genocide Rwanda while foregrounding women's experiences of displacement, cultural loss, and resilience. Her narratives including *Our Lady of the Nile*

(2014), *Kibogo* (2021), *Cockroaches* (2016), and *The Barefoot Woman* (2018) depict women not merely as passive victims of historical violence but as active bearers of cultural knowledge, memory, and resistance [4-7]. Through these portrayals, Mukasonga challenges dominant historical narratives that often marginalize women's contributions to cultural survival and national reconstruction.

To examine these representations, this study adopts a postcolonial feminist framework. Postcolonial feminism critiques universalized Western feminist assumptions and emphasizes the ways colonial histories, ethnic hierarchies, and patriarchal structures intersect to shape women's experiences in formerly colonized societies. As argued by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), feminist analysis must attend to the voices and agency of women whose experiences are shaped by colonial and cultural specificities [3]. Applying this perspective to Mukasonga's work allows for a deeper understanding of how gender, cultural memory, and historical trauma intersect in the representation of Rwandan women. This paper argues that Mukasonga's narratives construct Rwandan women as agents of resilience and cultural resistance who actively negotiate the legacies of genocide, colonialism, and patriarchy. Rather than portraying women solely as victims of violence, Mukasonga emphasizes their roles as custodians of memory, transmitters of cultural traditions, and participants in collective healing. Through storytelling, maternal knowledge, and community solidarity, her female characters transform everyday acts of survival into forms of resistance that challenge dominant historical and patriarchal narratives. By analysing Mukasonga's selected works through the lens of postcolonial feminism, this study demonstrates how literature functions as a site for reclaiming marginalized voices and reconstructing cultural memory in post-genocide Rwanda. In doing so, the paper contributes to broader scholarly discussions on gender, trauma, and literary representation in post-conflict societies, highlighting the crucial role of women's narratives in processes of remembrance, resistance, and cultural recovery.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Genocide Memory, Trauma, and Literary Representation

Scholarly engagement with the Rwandan Genocide has developed across interdisciplinary fields including trauma studies, memory studies, and literary criticism. According to Diboyan and Goliath (2023), many genocides remain underrepresented in global discourse, making cultural and literary narratives crucial for preserving historical memory and amplifying marginalized voices [8]. In this context, literature becomes an important medium for documenting trauma and reconstructing collective memory. Trauma theory has significantly shaped interpretations of genocide narratives. According to Brewin et al. (2025), post-traumatic stress disorder remains one of the most common long-term psychological consequences experienced by survivors of mass violence [9]. However, recent scholarship challenges purely pathological interpretations of trauma by emphasizing processes of resilience and recovery. Isgandarova (2023) argues that victim-survivors, particularly women who endured gender-based violence during genocidal conflicts, often demonstrate post-traumatic growth through acts of survival, spiritual coping, and community rebuilding [10].

Similarly, de Beer (2025) contends that storytelling plays a crucial role in negotiating trauma, allowing survivors to transform personal memories into collective narratives of remembrance. In literary contexts, trauma narratives function not only as testimony but also as a means of cultural preservation and resistance against historical erasure [11].

Reconciliation and Post-Genocide Social Reconstruction

Beyond trauma recovery, scholars have examined the mechanisms through which Rwanda has attempted to rebuild social cohesion after genocide. According to Nowotny (2020), transitional justice processes such as the Gacaca courts created spaces for accountability and dialogue between survivors and perpetrators, although their effectiveness remains contested from the perspective of survivors [12]. More recent research shifts attention from legal mechanisms toward everyday practices of reconciliation. Bigabo et al. (2025) argue that reconciliation villages in Rwanda represent practical models of social reintegration where survivors and former perpetrators coexist while engaging in psychosocial healing. Expanding this perspective, Bigabo (2025) suggests that reconciliation in Rwanda operates through an "action-based model" in which forgiveness and coexistence are negotiated through daily interactions rather than solely through formal justice systems [13].

Similarly, Brett et al. (2024) propose the concept of “embodied reconciliation”, arguing that reconciliation is not merely a political or institutional process but a lived and relational experience shaped by emotional, social, and cultural practices [14]. These perspectives emphasize the complex processes through which post-genocide communities rebuild trust and social relationships.

Women’s Agency and Resilience in Post-Genocide Rwanda

Within these processes of reconstruction, women have emerged as central figures in rebuilding communities and social institutions. According to Li, Batamuliza, and Karangwa (2022), women in post-genocide Rwanda have played significant roles as political leaders, community organizers, and mediators, contributing to national reconstruction while navigating the personal trauma of loss and displacement [15]. Similarly, Jin (2025) argues that women’s political agency in post-genocide Rwanda often emerges through struggles over land rights, economic participation, and social leadership [16]. Nwakanma (2026) further contends that women’s economic empowerment in Rwanda challenges conventional development narratives that attribute women’s success solely to individual “hard work,” highlighting instead the structural and cultural transformations that have reshaped gender roles in post-conflict societies [17].

These studies collectively demonstrate that women’s experiences of genocide cannot be understood solely through narratives of victimhood. Rather, they reveal complex forms of resilience, leadership, and social transformation.

Postcolonial and Decolonial Feminist Perspectives

Postcolonial feminist theory provides a critical framework for understanding these gendered experiences within broader histories of colonialism and imperial power. According to McClintock, Spivak, Mohanty, Narayan, and Yuval-Davis (2024), colonial discourse historically constructed women in colonized societies as passive subjects, reinforcing racialized and gendered hierarchies within imperial ideology [18]. Building on this critique, Kamlongera (2025) argues that decolonial feminism challenges Western feminist paradigms by foregrounding African epistemologies and gender justice movements rooted in local cultural contexts [19]. Similarly, Zahedypour (2026) contends that feminist and decolonial approaches reveal how women resist intersecting forms of oppression produced by colonial legacies and patriarchal structures [20].

Cornwall (2026) further critiques international development discourse for framing women primarily through narratives of vulnerability, arguing that such representations obscure women’s political agency and collective resistance [21]. In the African context, Purdeková and Mwambari (2022) demonstrate how colonial identity politics continue to shape contemporary social and political structures in Rwanda, thereby influencing gender relations and post-genocide reconstruction [22]. These theoretical perspectives provide important frameworks for analyzing how literary narratives challenge dominant historical and colonial representations of women.

Memory, Translation, and the Politics of Narrative

Scholars also emphasize the role of memory and translation in shaping how genocide narratives circulate globally. According to Barakat (2024), translation plays a crucial role in transmitting cultural memory across linguistic and national boundaries, allowing local narratives of violence to enter global conversations about trauma and justice [23]. Similarly, Taylor, Sollange, and Rwigema (2015) argue that knowledge production about genocide requires critical reflexivity, particularly when scholars engage with survivor communities [24]. The authors contend that ethical scholarship must acknowledge the political dimensions of representing survivor experiences, especially when narratives of trauma are mediated through academic discourse.

Longman (2023) further argues that public memory of the genocide is deeply political, as commemorative practices and narratives shape national identity and collective remembrance [25]. These perspectives highlight the complex relationship between memory, power, and representation in genocide narratives.

Scholarly Engagement with Scholastique Mukasonga

Within this broader body of scholarship, the works of Scholastique Mukasonga have attracted increasing critical attention. Writing from exile after losing many family members during the genocide, Mukasonga reconstructs personal and collective histories through narratives centered on memory,

displacement, and cultural survival. According to Fryer-Davis (2024), Mukasonga’s narratives engage in what the author describes as “memory dialogics,” a literary strategy through which competing memories of violence, exile, and cultural identity interact within the text [26]. Fryer-Davis argues that this dialogic structure allows Mukasonga to renegotiate dominant narratives of the genocide while foregrounding marginalized voices, particularly those of women. Similarly, Gowsalya and Jothi (2025) argue that Mukasonga’s writing portrays gendered trauma not only as a site of suffering but also as a form of resistance and survival [27]. Through storytelling, female characters preserve cultural memory and reconstruct communal identities disrupted by genocide and exile.

RESEARCH GAP

Although existing scholarship has examined themes of trauma, memory, and exile in Mukasonga’s works, much of the research focuses primarily on testimonial narratives and autobiographical memory. Less attention has been given to how Mukasonga’s literary representations of women function within broader frameworks of postcolonial and decolonial feminist theory. Therefore, a significant gap remains in understanding how Mukasonga’s narratives reposition Rwandan women as agents of resilience, cultural memory, and resistance within the intertwined histories of colonialism and genocide. Addressing this gap, the present study analyzes Mukasonga’s selected works through the lens of postcolonial feminism to demonstrate how her narratives challenge colonial and patriarchal representations while foregrounding women’s roles in cultural survival and historical reconstruction.

Scholastique Mukasonga's Female Characters

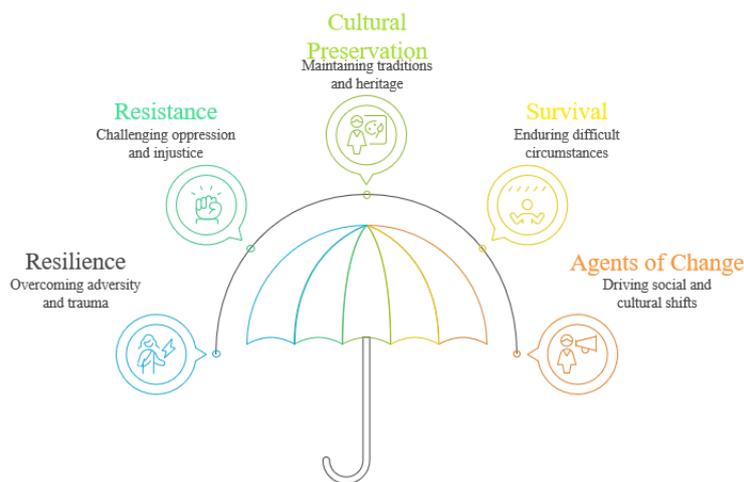


Figure 1. Conceptual Representation of Female Characters in the Works of Scholastique Mukasonga

Figure 1 illustrates the multidimensional roles played by female characters in Mukasonga’s narratives. The umbrella metaphor represents the protective and sustaining presence of women in the context of social disruption and historical trauma following the Rwandan Genocide. Each segment of the umbrella highlights a key thematic dimension through which women’s experiences are represented in Mukasonga’s works.

First, resilience reflects women’s ability to endure and recover from the profound trauma caused by violence, displacement, and loss. Mukasonga’s female characters often demonstrate emotional strength and perseverance while rebuilding family and community structures.

Second, resistance represents women’s active opposition to systems of oppression, including patriarchal constraints, ethnic discrimination, and colonial legacies. Through every day acts of defiance, storytelling, and cultural practices, female characters challenge dominant power structures.

Third, cultural preservation emphasizes women’s roles as custodians of collective memory and indigenous traditions. In Mukasonga’s narratives, mothers and elders transmit oral histories, rituals, and

cultural knowledge, thereby safeguarding Rwandan heritage despite the disruptions caused by genocide and exile.

Fourth, survival highlights the capacity of women to navigate extreme adversity. Female characters endure violence, displacement, and social marginalization while sustaining their families and communities.

Finally, agents of change illustrate how women contribute to social transformation in post-genocide Rwanda. Through leadership, resilience, and cultural continuity, Mukasonga portrays women not merely as survivors but as active participants in rebuilding society. Taken together, the framework presented in Figure 1 demonstrates that Mukasonga's representation of women extends beyond narratives of victimhood. Instead, her works position women as central figures in processes of resilience, resistance, cultural preservation, and societal reconstruction.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative literary analysis approach grounded in feminist and trauma theory frameworks to examine how women's resilience and resistance are represented in the works of Scholastique Mukasonga. Qualitative literary analysis enables scholars to interpret narrative structures, thematic patterns, and symbolic representations within literary texts, making it particularly appropriate for examining cultural memory, trauma, and gendered experiences in post-conflict narratives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) [28]. By employing this interpretive approach, the study seeks to analyze how Mukasonga's narratives construct representations of Rwandan women navigating trauma, displacement, and cultural survival following the Rwandan Genocide.

The analysis focuses on four major works by Mukasonga *Our Lady of the Nile*, *Kibogo*, *Cockroaches*, and *The Barefoot Woman*. These texts are selected because they collectively represent different literary genres and narrative perspectives through which Mukasonga reconstructs Rwanda's historical memory. *Cockroaches* and *The Barefoot Woman* function as autobiographical narratives that document personal experiences of exile, familial loss, and genocide memory. Such testimonial narratives are central to trauma literature, as they allow survivors to transform individual memory into collective historical testimony (Felman & Laub, 1992) [29]. In contrast, *Our Lady of the Nile* and *Kibogo* are fictional narratives that explore broader cultural and historical dynamics, including colonial legacies, ethnic tensions, and the preservation of indigenous traditions. Together, these works provide a comprehensive literary representation of the gendered dimensions of genocide memory and post-genocide reconstruction.

The selection of these four texts is therefore methodologically significant because they illustrate Mukasonga's engagement with both autobiographical testimony and fictional reconstruction. Scholars argue that genocide literature often operates across these narrative forms in order to negotiate memory, trauma, and cultural identity (Fryer-Davis, 2024) [26]. By analyzing both autobiographical and fictional narratives, this study captures the multiple ways in which Mukasonga portrays women as agents of resilience, cultural preservation, and resistance.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employs a qualitative and interpretative research design centered on close reading and thematic textual analysis. Close reading allows researchers to examine language, narrative strategies, and symbolic structures within literary texts, thereby revealing deeper meanings embedded within the representation of characters and events (Barry, 2017) [30]. Through this method, the selected texts are analyzed to identify recurring themes such as trauma, survival, cultural memory, and resistance. The primary data for the study consists of narrative passages, character representations, and thematic motifs drawn from the selected works. These textual elements are examined through thematic analysis, which involves identifying patterns of meaning across the texts in order to interpret how women's experiences are constructed within Mukasonga's narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006) [31].

The analysis is guided by two complementary theoretical frameworks: postcolonial feminism and trauma theory. Postcolonial feminist scholarship emphasizes how colonial histories and patriarchal structures intersect to shape women's experiences in formerly colonized societies (Spivak, 1988;

Mohanty, 1988) [3,32]. Trauma theory, on the other hand, provides a framework for understanding how narratives represent the psychological and cultural aftermath of violence and mass atrocity (Visser, 2014) [33]. When applied to Mukasonga's works, these frameworks allow the study to examine how female characters move beyond victimhood to become agents of resilience, cultural memory, and social transformation. By integrating qualitative textual analysis with feminist and trauma theory perspectives, this methodological approach enables a nuanced examination of how Mukasonga's narratives challenge dominant representations of women in genocide literature and reposition them as central figures in Rwanda's cultural and historical reconstruction.

DISCUSSION

The role of women in postcolonial feminist theory, particularly in the context of resilience and resistance, has been a subject of increasing scholarly attention in recent years. Mukasonga's works provide a rich literary canvas to explore these themes, demonstrating how Rwandan women navigate their socio-political landscape post-genocide. Recent research underscores the significance of literature in documenting women's resilience and resistance against colonial and patriarchal structures. Postcolonial feminist scholars argue that the intersection of colonial history, gender oppression, and ethnic conflict has shaped the lived experiences of Rwandan women (Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 1984) [3,34]. Mukasonga's narratives, particularly *Our Lady of the Nile* (2014) and *The Barefoot Woman* (2018), illustrate how women, despite systemic oppression, serve as cultural custodians and agents of survival. According to Arnds (2022), postcolonial literature plays a crucial role in amplifying the silenced voices of women who have historically been relegated to the margins [35].

A central theme in Mukasonga's works is the resilience of women in the face of genocide and displacement. Scholars such as Bonnerjee (2020) emphasize how narratives of trauma can also be narratives of endurance, portraying women not merely as victims but as pillars of strength in their communities [36]. Mukasonga's depiction of motherhood in *The Barefoot Woman* aligns with Ahmed's (2019) argument that maternal figures in postcolonial literature often symbolize both personal and national resilience [37]. Furthermore, Mukasonga's narratives resonate with Butler's (2021) conceptualization of gender performativity, as Rwandan women are often forced to renegotiate their identities in response to socio-political upheaval [38]. The resistance of female characters in *Kibogo* (2022) aligns with the findings of Mbembe (2019), who asserts that African postcolonial literature frequently employs myth and folklore to challenge dominant historical narratives and reclaim indigenous agency [39].

The role of storytelling as a form of resistance is another critical aspect of Mukasonga's work. According to Hooks (2014), storytelling is a tool through which marginalized women reclaim their narratives and challenge hegemonic discourses [40]. Mukasonga's works employ both personal and collective memory to construct an alternative history of Rwanda, one that acknowledges the contributions of women to national identity and healing. Recent research also highlights the importance of intersectionality in understanding postcolonial feminist resilience. Crenshaw (2019) argues that race, gender, and socio-economic status shape women's experiences of oppression and agency [41]. Mukasonga's portrayal of Tutsi women, who face multiple layers of marginalization, supports this argument by showcasing their struggles in colonial and postcolonial Rwanda. The existing body of research affirms that Mukasonga's works provide a vital contribution to postcolonial feminist discourse. By foregrounding women's resilience and resistance, she challenges the colonial and patriarchal narratives that have historically erased their contributions. Future research could further explore how Mukasonga's works interact with broader African feminist literary traditions, as well as their implications for contemporary gender politics in Rwanda and beyond.

This research situates itself within an interdisciplinary theoretical framework encompassing resilience, resistance studies and cultural preservation. These paradigms collectively offer a robust lens to analyze how Mukasonga portrays the lived experiences, struggles, and agency of Rwandan women amidst the socio-political upheaval of the genocide and its aftermath.

The Resilience of Women in *The Barefoot Woman* and *Cockroaches* - Mukasonga's memoirs, *The Barefoot Woman* and *Cockroaches*, are profoundly intimate accounts of her family's survival of the Rwandan genocide, with a particular focus on the resilience of her mother and other women. These texts

pay homage to the vital role women played not only in protecting their families but also in preserving Rwandan cultural identity during a time of existential threat.

Cockroaches, similarly, focuses on Mukasonga's experiences growing up as a Tutsi in Rwanda before the genocide, emphasizing the resilience of her mother and the women in their community. The memoir reveals how women were often the unseen yet crucial agents of resistance against ethnic oppression. The traumatic events of the genocide are not only depicted as a national tragedy but as an attack on the intimate spaces women create for their families. Trauma theory, particularly in the works of Cathy Caruth, suggests that trauma is not only a moment of rupture but a lingering force. Mukasonga's female characters carry the scars of the genocide, yet they transform their suffering into a form of cultural resilience.

Resistance Against Colonialism and Patriarchy in *Our Lady of the Nile* - In *Our Lady of the Nile*, Mukasonga explores the intersection of colonialism, ethnic tensions, and patriarchal oppression through the lives of young girls at a Catholic boarding school in Rwanda. The novel is set in the years leading up to the genocide and serves as a microcosm of Rwandan society. The school, which is run by European nuns, imposes Western values on the students, eroding their connection to their Rwandan heritage and deepening ethnic divisions between Hutu and Tutsi students. The female characters in *Our Lady of the Nile* are not mere victims of this colonial and patriarchal system; rather, they find ways to resist and assert their identities. The character of Veronica, a Tutsi student, exemplifies this resistance. She is keenly aware of the ethnic discrimination she faces and uses her intelligence and resilience to defy the constraints imposed upon her by both her ethnic identity and her gender. The school, which represents the oppressive forces of colonialism and patriarchy, seeks to mould the girls into submissive subjects, but characters like Veronica resist this control, reclaiming their identities as Rwandan women.

Feminist postcolonial theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) have explored the ways in which colonialism intersects with gender, often marginalizing and silencing women. In *Our Lady of the Nile*, Mukasonga critiques how colonial education and religious institutions serve as vehicles of this double oppression. However, through the resilience of her female characters, Mukasonga also demonstrates how women navigate these systems of control and use subversive methods to resist. The girls' struggles are not only against colonialism but also against the entrenched patriarchal structures of Rwandan society. Despite the rigid social norms, they find ways to express agency whether by subverting the expectations of their European educators or by secretly maintaining their connection to Rwandan traditions.

Narratives of Feminist Resistance in *Kibogo* - *Kibogo* represents Mukasonga's tribute to Rwanda's oral traditions and cultural heritage, illustrating the important role women play in the transmission of stories and cultural knowledge. Set in a period where Christianity and colonialism are rapidly eroding indigenous beliefs, the novel intertwines the story of Kibogo, a legendary Rwandan figure, with the contemporary struggles of villagers to maintain their traditions in the face of foreign domination. Women are central to this process of cultural preservation. In *Kibogo*, female characters act as the carriers of oral traditions, ensuring that the stories of Rwanda's past are not forgotten. The novel portrays the tension between indigenous beliefs and the encroaching influence of Christianity, which attempts to displace traditional Rwandan spirituality. Women, as custodians of these oral traditions, embody a form of resistance against cultural erasure. The character of Mukamwezi, an old woman who preserves the legend of Kibogo, becomes a symbol of this cultural defiance. She represents the resistance of Rwandan women who, despite the pressures of colonialism and Christianity, refuse to let their stories and traditions be forgotten. Feminist postcolonial theory can be used to analyze how Mukasonga positions women as the guardians of culture, resisting not only colonial oppression but also patriarchal forces that seek to silence their voices.

In *Kibogo*, Mukasonga illustrates how women's roles as storytellers and cultural keepers are fundamental to the survival of Rwandan identity. Their resistance is not only physical or political but cultural ensuring that their history and traditions are passed down to future generations. The role of women in Scholastique Mukasonga's memoirs is multifaceted, encompassing resilience, resistance, cultural preservation, and defiance. By centering women's experiences, Mukasonga not only honours their sacrifices but also underscores their indispensable role in rebuilding and preserving Rwandan society. This research underscores the enduring relevance of Mukasonga's work in understanding the complexities of gender, trauma, and cultural identity in the aftermath of genocide.

Women as Agents of Resilience, Resistance, and Cultural Survival - This study investigates the representation of women in the selected works of Scholastique Mukasonga *Our Lady of the Nile*, *Cockroaches*, *The Barefoot Woman*, and *Kibogo* through the theoretical framework of postcolonial feminism. The analysis demonstrates that Mukasonga's narratives foreground women as central figures of resilience, resistance, and cultural preservation within the socio-historical context of the Rwandan Genocide and its aftermath. The findings reveal that Mukasonga consistently portrays women as embodiments of resilience who endure profound trauma, displacement, and loss while sustaining family and community structures. Female characters in her narratives transform experiences of violence and marginalization into sources of emotional strength and collective survival. Through acts of caregiving, solidarity, and perseverance, women emerge as pivotal figures in rebuilding fractured social relationships and maintaining communal stability.

In addition to resilience, Mukasonga's works highlight women's resistance to colonial and patriarchal structures. Her narratives depict subtle yet powerful forms of defiance through which female characters challenge oppressive systems of power. For instance, in *Our Lady of the Nile*, young women navigate colonial educational institutions that reinforce ethnic hierarchies and gender discrimination, while *Kibogo* illustrates how the preservation of indigenous myths and oral traditions becomes an act of resistance against cultural erasure. These narrative strategies demonstrate how women negotiate structures of domination while asserting their agency and identity. Another significant finding is the role of women as custodians of cultural memory and identity. In *The Barefoot Woman* and *Cockroaches*, maternal figures and female elders function as transmitters of oral traditions, historical knowledge, and cultural values. Through storytelling and remembrance, they preserve collective memory and ensure the continuity of Rwandan cultural heritage despite the disruptions caused by genocide and exile. Mukasonga's narratives thus emphasize the importance of women's voices in documenting historical trauma and sustaining cultural identity.

Overall, this study concludes that Mukasonga's literary works challenge dominant representations of women in genocide narratives by repositioning them as agents of resilience, cultural memory, and social transformation. By foregrounding women's experiences and perspectives, Mukasonga disrupts colonial and patriarchal discourses that historically marginalized women's contributions to society. Her narratives demonstrate that resilience and resistance are not merely acts of survival but also powerful expressions of cultural and political agency. From a societal perspective, this research highlights the critical role of women in processes of post-conflict recovery and reconciliation. By emphasizing women's contributions to cultural preservation and social reconstruction, the study encourages a more inclusive understanding of historical memory and peacebuilding. Furthermore, it underscores the significance of literature as a medium for amplifying marginalized voices and fostering awareness about the gendered dimensions of conflict and trauma. In doing so, the study contributes to broader discussions on women's empowerment, cultural memory, and the role of storytelling in promoting healing and social transformation in post-conflict societies.

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