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# The Presence of Male Victims of the Congolese Genocide in Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*

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## I. Introduction

According to Tendai Chari, the Western press is “still considered the most authentic and authoritative source of information about world events,” including about African tragedies (333). Examining 195 *New York Times* articles about the 1994 Rwandan genocide, he analyzes how the Western press has conceptualized genocides in Africa, by using “four main frames, namely those of ‘historical baggage’, ‘tribalisation’, ‘Western benevolence’ and ‘Western indifference’” (347), and examines how these frames have shaped public opinion and perceptions of events. He concludes that Western media is not objective but reproduces “enduring nineteenth-century Eurocentric ideologies” (333). That is, in these frames, Africa is a place of peril, chaos, disorder, lawlessness, and savagery; Rwanda is “a jungle where ‘marauding gangs’

wielding machetes and clubs roam the streets in broad daylight” (337); and the Rwandan genocide is just “another African tragedy signifying darkness and hopelessness” (333). Moreover, by presenting its causes as the result of ancient tribal hatred and conflict between the Hutu and the Tutsi, the Western press frames the Rwandan genocide as an isolated local event and reduces it to “a ‘normal’ African tragedy about which nothing much could be done” (347). The representation glosses over its underlying causes and socioeconomic contexts—the colonial regime of Belgium and France and continuing Western interventions in the nation’s internal affairs—and reproduces and consolidates pre-existing colonial discourse about Africa as a *dark*, backward place and a burden of the Western countries and African men as irrational, violent savages.

Wars in Congo have been represented in similar ways, but the Western press, the UN, and international human rights organizations have highlighted one distinctive feature—the unprecedentedly prevalent and violent sexual violence against women. According to the UN Special Representative Margot Wallström, Congo, and especially its eastern part, the Great Lake region—which is shared among Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania and is rich in coltan, diamonds, and gold—is the “rape capital of the world.” International human rights groups have tried to raise public awareness of the problem of rape and sexual violence in eastern Congo since the 2000s by publicizing “a series of catalogued testimonies by women rape-survivors” (Holmes 232) and “the raping of Congo’s women has become the dominant atrocity narrative with which to frame conflict” in Congo (231). However, many argue that the emphasis on the sexual violence against women and common phrases to describe wars in Congo—“rape pandemic” or “rape as a weapon of war”—can result in oversight of the causes of continuing wars.

According to Georgina Holmes, except for their distinctively devastating

impact and brutality, wars and conflicts in Congo have one distinguishing feature: the aim is not to win or lose, but to render “continued instability” (227). Wars continue and are made to continue “because local and international actors involved in the mining industries profit from militarized economies within the region” (227) and the nation’s instability facilitates their exploitation. Holmes thus criticizes that the popular representation as a rape pandemic veils competitive foreign intervention over conflict minerals. Ryan Poll similarly argues that coltan made it possible for “this damnable age of the mobile phone” (*Ruined* 25) as it is a key component of cellphones and many other electronic devices, but it has also enabled genocide by attrition in Congo—a fact that has been neglected, because Africa and Africans are positioned in the invisible margins of global capitalism.<sup>1)</sup>

The dominant Western discourse of wars in Congo, which partially emphasizes sexual violence, can also disregard other types of victims who are not women. The second Congo civil war, often described as the deadliest conflict since World War II, resulted in an estimated death toll of more than five million people. Emphasizing the extreme human insecurities generated by militarized economies, Holmes uses the term “genocide by attrition.” Unlike genocide, mass killing in Congo does not take place over a short duration of

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1) To explain the relationship between Congo and the world of capitalism, Poll examines how “global capitalism is founded upon anti-Blackness”; how “it perpetually structures Blacks as Slaves” (100) and Africa as a source of raw materials; and how it justifies exploiting “resources and bodies (in Africa) without ethical consideration” and guilt (99). He argues that global capitalism continues based on “an unending Black genocide” (82) and that the uneven relationship between Africa (the margin) and the West (the center) has been structurally positioned and perpetuated from the colonial era to the present. He suggests that the Congo civil war is an example of the genocidal structure of global capitalism.

time or as a single act, whereas genocide takes place “as a process” (Holmes 225), ruining the eastern region, its people, and its social, political, and natural environment. The war and ensuing wars have killed and victimized civilians, regardless of gender and age. In the ceaseless wars, men and young boys — victims of war — can become perpetrators recruited by the government army and rebel militia.

Set in a small mining village in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo) during the second civil war (1998 – 2003), Lynn Nottage stages complex representation of the war. *Ruined* depicts Mama Nadi’s bar in a warzone in eastern Congo, which she runs as a brothel with rape victims, such as Josephine and Salima, and a *ruined* girl, Sophie: soldiers had mutilated her genitals with bayonets. These rape victims ironically work as prostitutes in the bar for soldiers (government militia) and rebels, both of whom rape civilians.<sup>2)</sup> Christian, a salesman and Sophie’s uncle who sells supplies to the bar, begs Mama Nadi to take his niece because the bar is relatively safe compared to the outside where these women, shunned and unprotected by their families and communities, become targets of deadly sexual violence and sex slavery. Critics note that by centralizing Congolese rape victims, Nottage stages the devastating effects of the Congo war. Maysoon Taher Muhi, for instance, comments that by focusing on “the crises of women in a marginalized region” that are only mentioned “statistically in media” (92), Nottage’s play is “a loud scream for the whole world to view the physical violence of women and hear their

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2) The original production, in which the same actors play soldiers on both sides of the conflict, denies the audience’s ability to “empathize with one side over the other” and the common representation of “one side as ‘victims’ and the other side as ‘perpetrators’” (Poll 93), thus highlighting that sexual violence was conducted by both sides.

traumatic memories” (91) and the experience of “their violated bodies and their unspeakable suffering.” Focusing on raped women, many critics also examine how Nottage criticizes the exploitative nature of global capitalism and its devastating effect on eastern Congo.

However, the impact of the dehumanization, atrocity, and the horrible reality of wars and global capitalism are not limited to Congolese rape victims but more broadly affect Congolese people. As Hyeong-min Kang puts it, “Nottage presents the three types of violence—genocide, violence including forced rape on civilian women, and prevalent exploitation on the Congolese civilians and natural resources”—exerted by not just the government army, the rebels, and any beneficiaries of war in Congo but also the transnational corporations (35). Although relatively neglected, Nottage depicts the impact of genocide by attrition in Congo and global capitalism on Congolese men who appear as miners, rape victims’ family members, and child soldiers. Focusing on her representation of male characters, I reveal how she challenges the popular representation of wars in Congo as a “rape pandemic” and negative stereotypes of Congolese men as irrational, violent, rapists and perpetrators. I will instead examine how *Ruined* represents the exploitative nature of global capitalism by blurring the binary between women (victims) and men (perpetrators).

## II. Nottage’s Complicated Representation of Congolese Men

During the second Congo civil war, sexual violence against women was wrought on an unprecedentedly massive scale; the war was commonly called a rape epidemic. Even after the Congo civil war officially ended in 2003,

ceaseless wars and conflicts have continued over mineral resources, and “over 200,000 women and girls have been violently raped; in 2008, around 15,996 rape cases were reported, and two out of every three were children” (Muhi 91). The Western media highlights this unusual African tragedy. Exemplifying HBO’s 2008 documentary about the “shocking” and “unimaginable” reality of Congo to “Western senses and sensibilities” (87), Poll criticizes how ““pornographic”” discourse “turns Black pain and suffering into a spectacle for white/Western audiences” (86). Moreover, the popular representation and conceptualization of war in Congo reproduces and reinforces stereotypical imagery of African women as “a homogenous, downtrodden, sexually abused mass” (Holmes 233) and African men as “barbaric, uncontrollable and hypersexual” perpetrators (235), neglecting to portray these men and boys as victims of war themselves, routinely recruited by militias and used as expendable munitions. This narrative lacks “awareness of the position of men and boys—either as victims of rape and sexual violence, as traumatized husbands and family members, or as perpetrators” (234).

The Western feminist frame further excludes male victims in the narrative of wars in Congo. As critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty point out, Western feminism has a complicated relationship with ‘Third-World’ women, a cultural and racial Other whose socioeconomic and historical reality differs from that of Western women. Elaff Ganim Salih et al. specify the difference regarding the issue of rape. They point out that whereas Western feminists focus on “peacetime rape” committed by civilians against civilians and consider “rape action as a feminist issue” in the context of “gender conflicts between male and female in a patriarchal society” (114), rape of Congolese women is “rape at warfare settings which is perpetrated by combatants against the civilians” (119). Comparing wartime rape in Yugoslavia

and Rwanda to that in Congo, Salih et al. argue that it is instrumental and strategic: men's perception of their failure to protect their women causes them to diminish their resistance or "leave their lands and families because of shame and humiliation" (113), which serves to facilitate "the enemy's objectives of usurping mineral rich lands" (117). Salih et al. argue that in *Ruined*, Josephine, chief's daughter who was raped in front of families and villagers, and Salima, who was raped and "taken away by force from home to the bush," are examples of "instrumental rape" (116), the aim of which is to emasculate men in communities and weaken their resistance. It is important to distinguish peacetime rape from wartime rape; however, Salih et al.'s reading of *Ruined* has textual conflicts: Salima's husband, Fortune, and his cousin, Simon, join the government army to find her.

In the play, women are the most noticeable and vulnerable victims. For instance, Salima is raped at home, while her husband is absent buying a pot; the rapists kill her baby daughter and kidnap her and she spends nearly five months in the bush, "[c]hained like a goat" (*Ruined* 69). The rebels repeatedly violate her body and call her soup: whenever they want her, they can have her. They also ask her to perform the role of a woman, such as by making fires and cooking food, or washing blood from their clothing, and of a rebel by carrying bullets, while also being a beast with tied feet. After this cruel experience, she flees from these male perpetrators and returns to her village. She says:

SALIMA: I walked into the family compound expecting wide open arms. An embrace. Five months, suffering. I suffered every single second of it. And my family gave me the back of their heads. And he, the man I loved since I was fourteen, chased me away with a green switch. He beat my ankles raw. And I dishonored him? I

dishonored him?! Where was he? Buying a pot? He was too proud to bear my shame . . . but not proud enough to protect me from it.  
(*Ruined* 70)

Raped women are not considered victims. A village or a home “isn’t a place for a girl who has been . . . ruined. It brings shame, dishonor to the family” (*Ruined* 15), and she, as an impure wife, daughter, and mother, is shunned from the community and family. Salima’s husband, Fortune, beats her ankle raw and expels her from home, therefore acting as a perpetrator of patriarchy. However, emphasizing sexual violence committed by both soldiers and rebel soldiers against women, Nottage does not portray Congolese men as merely “barbaric, uncontrollable and hypersexual” perpetrators (Holmes 235). Fortune feels guilt and joins the government militia to find his wife and fight and get revenge on the rebel soldiers. He is a victim of war who has lost his baby daughter and wife, as well as a perpetrator who has exerted violence on his wife and becomes a killer as another soldier.

Salima’s depiction of a customer, who is a soldier, highlights Nottage’s complicated representation of male characters. After the soldier leaves, Salima, the Hema, says what she hears:

SALIMA: He says fifteen Hema men were shot dead and buried in their own mining pit, in mud so thick it swallows them right into the ground without mercy. He says, one man stuffs the coltan into his mouth to keep the soldiers from stealing his hard work, and they split his belly open with a machete. “It’ll show him for stealing,” he says, bragging like I should be congratulating him. And then he fucked me, and when he was finished he sat on the floor and wept. He wanted me to hold him. Comfort him. (*Ruined* 31)



Miners are customers of the bodies of raped women, but the scene suggests that they are also victims of war. Mentioning one of the Congolese ethnic groups, the Hema, Nottage shows that the Congo war is not a tribal conflict. The mutilated miner and 15 unidentified men instead suggest the violent and exploitative nature of the mining industry to the degree that a miner would lose his life for taking even a small amount of coltan, just the size of his own mouth. Salima's words—"One of those men could be my brother" (31)—suggest how the war destroys communities, making its women raped prostitutes and its men exploited miners. Like the deaths of the 15 miners become invisible, buried in a mining pit, the deadly exploitation of these African people becomes buried in the international mining industry and global capitalism where an African man's life is cheaper and less significant than coltan. There only remain a continuing war in Congo and a brutal but weeping soldier and a Hema rape victim and prostitute in a Congolese bar.

The play further stretches the definition of war victims to include even the soldier, who weeps and needs comfort after killing the miners. Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern problematize the absence of the voices of soldiers in accounts of wars in Congo that "makes it harder to understand such violence" and "reinforces stereotypes of African warriors as primitive and anarchic, driven by innate violence and tribal hatred" (57). Baaz and Stern examine enormous human rights abuses among soldiers and rebels and their economic condition: "salaries are both too low and often delayed, and there is a persistent lack of food and other support" and "soldiers are among the poorest section of Congolese society" (64). Such lack of support weakens the military power and causes soldiers to "prey on the local population for survival" (64). This situation complicates "simplistic distinctions between victim and perpetrator ('villain' and 'sufferer')" (81). The complexity is introduced in the opening of

Nottage's play. When Christian arrives at Mama Nadi's bar, she criticizes the delivery delay. He replies, "nobody could get through on the main road. Every two kilometers a boy with a Kalashnikov and pockets that need filling. Toll, tax, tariff. They invent reasons to lighten your load" (*Ruined* 6). Given Baaz and Stern's study, "a boy" in the play might imply child soldiers who prey on local people: these boys are villains and victims at the same time.

Nottage's depiction of Mama Nadi's bar exemplifies how the play blurs the distinction between women/victims/good and men/perpetrators/evil. A brothel is traditionally regarded as somewhere female bodies are commodified, priced by male customers, and transacted to buyers and where women are commonly placed as victims. However, *Ruined* complicates it by presenting Mama Nadi as a ruined rape victim, like Sophie, as well as a perpetrator who runs a brothel and profits from rape victims. The play opens with a scene describing the bar in which Mama Nadi and Christian are haggling over unlisted, unwanted, and "damaged goods" (16) he brings with other items—Salima and Sophie. Christian requests "the same as usual plus twenty-five" (*Ruined* 9), but Mama Nadi offers \$20 dollars for Salima, "*a sturdy peasant woman*" (10) who is docile enough to do sex labor, and Sophie, young and beautiful but ruined and smelling like "the rot of meat" (17), is sold for free. Christian's request for "the amount of payment [to] be 'the same as usual'" indicates that "this is not their first human trafficking exchange" (Deroze 177). The war shapes the lives of characters, regardless of gender. Mama Nadi gains profits from rape victims and their sexual labor and makes money from disguising miners and soldiers by swindling them on the price of the coltan or diamonds they bring to the bar. Even Christian, who appear as a weak but good man, a victim of war, and a flawed but heroic figure, sells rape victims to Mama Nadi.

Despite this brutal business, many critics read the brothel as a safe refuge

or alternative place for raped women who have been stigmatized and shunned from their communities and families. For instance, Phyllisa Smith Deroze argues that Sophie, Salima, and other women “choose a life of prostitution as a strategy of survival” in Mama Nadi’s brothel which is “transformed into a supportive community where the women find physical protection, emotional support, and escape from starvation” (178). Yonhee Chun similarly reads Mama Nadi’s bar as a place of “motherhood and sisterhood” (201), a shelter, and a place of healing. While this is a fair analysis of the women’s dimension, shifting focus from rape victims to economic activity in Mama Nadi’s bar exposes the bar’s secondary symbolic role as the marginal position of Africa in global capitalism.

The bar is a place of business where a salesman (Christian) sells beers, Fanta, Belgian chocolates, and cigarettes to a businesswoman (Mama Nadi). However, the fact that the bar offers “[t]he only cold Fanta in twenty-five kilometers” (*Ruined* 5) alongside rape victims for its customers interrupts “the dominant ideology of consumption” (Poll 92) and reveals the strangeness of this seemingly normal, familiar economic activity and the poor conditions and poverty of the region. Mama Nadi’s words—“Everyone has their hand open” and “half the country’s starving” (*Ruined* 14)—further indicates “pervasive poverty and starvation [which] is not accidental” but “structural, and genocidal” (Poll 93). The bar—which has a much worse and less stable socioeconomic situation than cities such as Bunia where Sophie gets medical care—is located in the warzone in eastern Congo and the margin of this poor country. Within the marginalized bar, there is another marginalized space where “a covered birdcage sits conspicuously in the corner” (*Ruined* 5). A parrot, invisible in the cage and speaking pigmy, an unintelligible language, once belonged to Old Papa Batunga, who was “the last of his tribe” (8). The extinct tribe reveals the

structural violence of global capitalism that “destroys the diversity of African traditions, communities, and cultures” for mineral resources that “fuel and enrich the rest of the world” (Poll 84).

This margin is not a closed space. Mama Nadi insists that “[t]his is my place, Mama Nadi’s” (*Ruined* 88), but the bar is open and directly connected to the world beyond it, not just the battlefields of Congo but the wider world of global capitalism. Mama Nadi’s words — “I guarantee there’ll be twice as many miners here by September. And you know all those bastards will be thirsty” (13) — gloomily suggest that soon more miners, more soldiers, more wars, and more raped and devastated people will visit the bar, which means that it will be a more competitive war zone. In fact, there is no truly safe place in the play. Even the allegedly last safe place — home — is not protected. Josephine and Salima were both raped at what should have been their homes. Mama Nadi also lost her home. When she was 11 years old, a “white man with skin the color of wild berries turned up with a piece of paper. It says he have rights to [her] family land” (27) and her family became homeless. She has no desire to have another home, because it could be threatened and taken by Westerners at any moment. All this signifies that Congo is the susceptible global margin, implying the brutality inscribed in global capitalism and how unjustly Congo and its people are subjected to the outside world.

Mr. Harari, a Lebanese businessman who buys minerals from both soldiers and rebels, is an important character to mark out this relationship. After Mama Nadi has bought coltan from a soldier at an obscenely cheap price, she asks Mr. Harari why the mineral, which was “just more black dirt” (*Ruined* 25) six months ago, has become precious and created conflicts. He replies:

MR. HARARI: Well, my daring, in this damnable age of the mobile

phone it's become quite the precious one, no? And for what ever reason, 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. (25)

Mr. Harari degrades Congo as *your* “backward country” that is incapable of using the abundant coltan. Criticizing Mama Nadi for cheating the soldier, he posits himself as a reasonable businessman who would offer “enough money” to the soldier who he assumes, will spend the money to “buy” raped women for a month. Mr. Harari differentiates himself from both Congolese men, who do not know the value of coltan and are hypersexual, and Mama Nadi and her fellow women whose bodies are their only valuable commodity. For Mr. Harari, they are backward, not modernized. However, the play reveals that he is an unknowing intermediary of exploitative global capitalism. When soldiers are about to attack the bar, Mama Nadi gives him a diamond and asks him to take Sophie to Bunia where she can have surgery and a better future but he leaves with the aid workers, with the diamond but without Sophie. Mr. Harari's escape eradicates the hope for a better future, revealing what underlies his business—the exploitation of and its cost to these Congolese people.

*Ruined* ends with a scene where Mama Nadi and Christian kiss and continue “their measured dance” (102). Many critics, including Muhi, read the scene positively, arguing that “the romantic ending suggests that men's true love heals ruined women,” connoting “a therapeutic process for all abused women” (95). Pointing out that the two dance together, along to a guitar music, “A Rare Bird,” Seokhun Choi argues that the scene suggests that (Christian's) love and understanding can turn Mama Nadi, as well as Sophie, both of whom are considered objects of contempt and rejection, to a rare bird with rare

beauty and an object of love (383). Similarly, the Pulitzer committee's comments on the scene describes it as an "affirmation of life and hope amid hopelessness" (qtd. in Fox 11). A review in the *New York Times* saw that the "well-shaped, sentimental ending" allows "people who might ordinarily look away from horror stories of distant wars [. . .] [to] find themselves bound in empathy to the unthinkable abused women that Ms. Nottage and the excellent actresses here have shaped with such care and warmth" (qtd. in Fox 12).

However, it cannot possibly be a therapeutic process for Congolese women, as the play, written in English, has mostly been staged for Western audiences after its premiere at the Goodman Theater in Chicago in 2008. Some also criticize these romantic interpretations, by raising the question, "[h]ow long will this 'measured' dance last?" (Poll 101). Moreover, this romantic reading neglects what just happened in the bar: the place where Mama Nadi and Christian dance together is where Salima stabbed her unborn baby conceived by rape and died in the arms of her husband, Fortune. Salima's body, taken from the stage, becomes invisible but raises a question about Christian's role as a romantic savior and the romantic ending with Mama Nadi. As Ann M. Fox points out, given Sophie, "a disabled rape survivor" (2) whose "body remains on stage in the play's final moment, still disabled" (12), the last scene and Nottage's play challenge any romantic ending and "resists [such] closure," as wars and wartime rape still continue in Congo after the measured dance, after the play ends, and after the audience leaves the theater.

### III. Conclusion

As Poll points out, the audience of Nottage's play is often located in "the

wealthy centers of global capitalism” (81), distanced from the victims in a remote African country:

Too often, these centers ideologically imagine themselves to be outside of—and therefore, spectators to—scenes of genocide. In the dominant culture of globalization, genocides happen over *there*, in spaces that seem radically distant from spaces where white/Western audiences feel at home. (81)

The distance makes it difficult for the audience, even female readers, to imagine the reality of “savage Africans” and their *unimaginable* brutality (Poll 88). Many critics, including Poll, argue that despite the distance, *Ruined* successfully makes “Western audiences recognize that they are not neutral spectators to scenes of genocide; rather, they are participants and perpetrators of genocide” (90), by representing what underlies wars in Congo—the cellphone era that facilitates connectivity and convenience of developed countries.

Deroze emphasizes how Nottage succeeds in drawing attention to the brutal reality of wars in Congo and revealing the involvement and responsibility of international communities in these wars—by using “the theatrical stage as an instrument of awareness about gender violence against women” (171). Nottage said in an interview that she herself believed “the power of the theater”:

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. In many societies, *you*’ll find that theater is at the vanguard of change. The communal nature of the medium allows *us* to explore difficult and troubling subject matters that ultimately lead to some form of *collective catharsis for the audience*. (“Why Did I”; emphasis added)

By saying “every time we use cell phones, we are inadvertently feeding a war that is being fought on the backs of women” (“Why Did I”), Nottage emphasizes that “you,” everybody including her, is responsible for wars in Congo. However, in order to raise public awareness of the plight of Congolese women, the pain of the African Other is and should be staged and represented for “us,” the audience, and for the audience’s “collective catharsis.”

Nottage’s another interview with Marco Werman suggests that the result of her representation is ambivalent. Werman asks her whether she was surprised when she heard that her play “is clearly not about the US,” she replied:

I was a little surprised, but if I can just say something about it, not being about the US: I do feel to a certain extent, the play is set in the Congo, but it very much touches upon themes that are relevant to the United States. (“Play on Rape”)

Nottage’s surprise reveals that the audience could read or watch her play as a Pulitzer Prize-winning play or a great literary work depicting the brutality of sexual violence against women in a distant African country, Congo, whose lives are separated from them. The detachment and distance may make the audience spectators to an African tragedy and unintentionally reinforce negative stereotypes of African men. The audience response suggests a constant need and continuing effort to defamiliarize the dominant representing wars in Congo and to see and hear the lives and voices of invisible, the marginalized people in the world of global capitalism—women, men, miners, soldiers, or the parrot in Mama Nadi’s bar, which are all deeply related to the lives over *here* and *us*.



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## The Presence of Male Victims of the Congolese Genocide in Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*

Abstract

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Set in a small mining village in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo) during the second civil war (1998 - 2003), Lynn Nottage's *Ruined* (2008) depicts Mama Nadi's bar in a warzone in eastern Congo, which she runs as a brothel with rape victims, such as Josephine and Salima, and a *ruined* girl, Sophie. These rape victims ironically work as prostitutes in the bar for soldiers (government militia) and rebels, both of whom rape civilians. The bar is relatively safe compared to the outside where these women, shunned and unprotected by their families and communities, become targets of deadly sexual violence and sex slavery. Focusing on raped women, many critics also examine how Nottage criticizes the exploitative nature of global capitalism and its devastating effect on eastern Congo. Although relatively neglected, Nottage depicts the impact of genocide by attrition in Congo and global capitalism on Congolese men who appear as miners, rape victims' family members, and child soldiers. Focusing on her representation of male characters, I reveal how she challenges the popular representation of wars in Congo as a "rape pandemic" and negative stereotypes of Congolese men as irrational, violent, rapists and perpetrators. I will instead examine how *Ruined* represents the exploitative nature of global capitalism by blurring the binary between women (victims) and men (perpetrators).

Key Words Nottage, *Ruined*, Congo, male characters, global capitalism

Note on Contributor:

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