

## The Power of Silence

### *Waiting* – A Novel of Uganda at War

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Set in a village in Hoima District, Western Uganda, in 1979, *Waiting* (2007)<sup>1</sup>, Goretti Kyomuhendo's fourth novel, portrays the brutality of the civil war at the collapse of Idi Amin's regime and its consequences for a Ugandan village community. Here worlds of horror and violence, of hope and love unfold through a narrative where no word is redundant and yet decisive aspects about the characters and their lives are unveiled through the power of silence. In reference to the narrative in *Waiting*, Margaret Daymond briefly remarks in her afterword to the novel: "It is what remains unsaid that [...] holds us in suspense"<sup>2</sup>. While Daymond's remark is a general statement, this article will analyse the ways in which silence, generated in the novel by the unsaid narrative, reveals the situation and emotions the characters of *Waiting* are faced with. Thus, it will illuminate the extent to which silence in the mode of the unsaid narrative in *Waiting* provides the key for understanding states of anxiety and trauma, curiosity and hope the characters in the novel experience.

The narrative of *Waiting* starts off in past tense, thereby indicating that the situation we are presented with at the beginning of the story has already taken place. We are told that "[i]t was a Saturday evening. Tendo was perched up high up on one of the inner branches of the big mango tree, which threw hazy shadows over the large compound"<sup>3</sup>. The narration draws us in from the very beginning with what it leaves unsaid. Questions come up immediately: Who is Tendo? And why is Tendo "perched up high up"<sup>4</sup> on one of the *inner* branches of the big mango tree? We wonder if Tendo is a small kid who climbed the tree out of fun, or if Tendo is a grown up and hiding from something or watching something from the inner part of the tree as not to be seen? The feeling of suspense is intensified by the remark in the second part of the same

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<sup>1</sup> Goretti Kyomuhendo: *Waiting* (2007).

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Daymond: "Afterword". In: Goretti Kyomuhendo. *Waiting*, 121.

<sup>3</sup> Kyomuhendo: *Waiting*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Unless marked differently, the italics in the quotations are my emphasis throughout the article.

sentence where we are told that the mango tree cast “*hazy shadows*“ over the compound. The haziness of the shadows hints at the setting sun on that Saturday evening, but also underlines the fact that the compound is being veiled by the darkness of the approaching night, bringing with it perhaps a danger that is yet hardly tangible. At the end of these introductory sentences, the reader is left in a state of uncertainty, which translates into a state of uneasiness when reading the next sentence, in which the “leaves [of the tree] *trembled despite* the lack of wind, and one *wafted slowly down* from the branch and fell before us“<sup>5</sup>. Automatically, further questions are triggered in the readers’ mind: What makes the leaves of the mango tree shake on a windless evening? Is it an earthquake or magic? Do the leaves tremble like a human being as a result of anxiety or excitement? Why does one leaf waft down slowly, thus drawing attention to itself as if to make an announcement by falling before the people, who are obviously seated not too far from the tree?

With a woman, “picking up the leaf and turning it slowly over in her hand“, the narrator introduces Kaaka, who provides us with an explanation: “It’s announcing a visitor, [...]. A visitor who comes from far away and has no intention of returning – like the leaf“<sup>6</sup>. Through the usage of the indefinite article in Kaaka’s reference to ‘a visitor’, we gain the feeling that this visitor is unknown and maybe even uninvited. Moreover, Kaaka’s remark that the visitor has no intention of returning, makes the visitor appear like an intruder, with his or her motives unclear: Will he or she stay, or pass through to somewhere else? Is he or she dangerous or harmless? Kaaka’s gesture of turning the leaf *slowly* over in her hand suggests her thoughtfulness and the fact she may know more than she said.

As the narrator zooms from Kaaka closer into the group of people seated next to the mango tree, the reader senses that they are as anxious as the people around them. The narrator tells us:

Suddenly, a whistle rang out from the mango tree. Startled, we all looked up expectantly. “What is it, Tendo?” Father asked sharply, nervously. “Nothing,” Tendo answered with a light laugh. “Nothing,” he repeated as if we had not heard him the first time.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kyomuhendo, *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

By now we feel our own uneasiness deepen. Obviously, Tendo was not sitting in the tree out of fun, but as to look out and warn the people living on the compound – maybe about the announced visitor. When Tendo's whistle breaks the silence of the evening, the people are not positively excited, but alarmed. They look up expectantly, thus indicating that they know why or for whom Tendo is looking out. The father asks Tendo sharply about the reason for the whistle, thereby revealing his own unease and warning Tendo not to joke in this situation.

The narrator's description of the conversation between Tendo and Father also gives away that the reader has directly stepped into the daily life of a family. Moreover, the 'we' and the introduction of the father as 'Father' with a capital letter reveals that the narrator is part of this group of people or maybe even a member of the family.<sup>8</sup> This is the first moment in the novel that we as readers start to suspect that the story is told through the eyes of someone who is directly involved with the people and the situation at the point the story takes place. The level of suspense, that we have found ourselves in since the beginning of the story, reaches its first climax towards the end of the first page when the narrator turns from Tendo and Father to Kaaka and Mother, reporting:

We were all eating our evening meal in the yard between the main house and the kitchen. Mother pushed away her plate. Kaaka turned and looked at her. "You must finish that food," she said tersely. "You'll need energy to push out that child...or," she paused, "to run."<sup>9</sup>

While so far, it had still been ambiguous what kind of danger the family is facing, we now realize that the danger is seen as life-threatening by the family. Everybody, Kaaka's comment implies, even pregnant Mother would have to run – to run for life. Although the family seems to know what causes their anxiety, the readers are left untold at this point in the story, yet absorbed in the strained atmosphere and involved in the feeling of unease and anxiety the characters experience.

The characters' anxiety and the alert atmosphere at the beginning of *Waiting* is transferred to the readers through ideophones and figurative language. Although

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<sup>8</sup> Since the narrator in *Waiting* uses the words 'Father' and 'Mother' like names throughout the novel, I will also continue to do so throughout this article as to pay tribute to the fact that this is the way the narrator refers to the parents either out of respect or due to the fact that the actual names of the parents are unknown to the narrator.

<sup>9</sup> Kyomuhendo, *ibid.*, 3.

dialogue between the characters is kept at a minimum, ideophonic verbs, adjective-noun and verb-adverb combinations like ‘perched’, ‘tremble’, ‘hazy shadows’, ‘wafted slowly’ evoke sensory events, triggering visions in the readers’ minds through which they „see“ and feel the atmosphere in the novel more strongly. In addition, adverbs such as ‘sharply’, ‘nervously’ and ‘tersely’ in reference to all of the characters’ comments reinforce their feeling of anxiety which is thus directly passed on to our reading experience.

Moreover, aposiopesis,<sup>10</sup> which in *Waiting* is marked graphically by a series of three dots, as if the characters are unwilling or unable to continue speaking, becomes a frequent strategy within the unsaid narrative, at times conveying inner fears, as well as states of exhaustion, grief and trauma the characters in the novel wrestle with. We first encounter this strategy in Kaaka’s comment to Mother and keep meeting it throughout the novel. When Kaaka tells Mother to finish her food, dots in her statement indicate a speaking pause: “You’ll need energy to push out that child...or [...] to run“.<sup>11</sup> Kaaka, who, as we learn later, is Father’s aunt<sup>12</sup> and as a woman of old age<sup>13</sup> takes on the role of the experienced grandmother figure in the novel,<sup>14</sup> encourages Mother to eat well as to stay healthy for the child. Yet as she utters the sentence, it seems that reality hits Kaaka and she holds her breath for a second before expressing her fear that under the circumstances pregnant Mother may have to run. In reply to Kaaka’s statement, “Mother answered, with a sigh. [...] ‘Potatoes give me such heartburn and beans make me break wind the whole night....!’<sup>15</sup> The dots at the end of Mother’s statement suggest her exhaustion, with the exclamation mark echoing her sigh.

At another incident later in the novel, the dots reveal Father’s grief and state of trauma when he remembers: “We used to hide in the banana plantation at night, but

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<sup>10</sup> Aposiopesis (Greek: becoming silent): “A rhetorical device in which speech is broken off abruptly and the sentence is left unfinished”. John A. Cuddon: *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Kyomuhendo, *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Although the woman is Alinda’s greataunt, she is referred to as ‘Kaaka’ which translates as ‘grandmother’. Kaaka is called ‘Kaaka’ by all family members, who thereby emphasize the social status of Kaaka as a grandmother in the family.

<sup>15</sup> Kyomuhendo, *ibid.*, 3.

since the death...since the killings...and the baby...".<sup>16</sup> Overwhelmed by his emotions, he is unable to continue speaking. What the dots leave unsaid, but what the aposiopesis thereby suggests, is the emotional shock Father is in. As a result of the traumatic events the family has gone through, Father cannot voice the facts of who died and who was killed.

Apart from fears and trauma, the aposiopesis also illustrates the emotional stress especially the children go through during this time of war. In conversation with Father, the children Tendo and Maya at times fail to finish their sentences as Father won't hear them out. When Tendo tries to defend himself against another command that Father gives him, Father cuts him off: "But you told me not to come down, Father!" Tendo answered, defensively. "I'm supposed to...". "I know bloody well what you're supposed to be doing!" [...] Father looked as if he would have hit Tendo if he'd been within reach".<sup>17</sup> Maya faces the same situation in conversation with Father, when one day she fails to follow up on her daily chores as to help her older sister:

"Have you prepared the evening meal yet?" "No," Maya answered. "Alinda hasn't told us what to cook. She was sleeping the whole afternoon. She was even dreaming and..." "Why do you wait to be told? Can't you see Alinda is minding the baby? You must help her, Maya".<sup>18</sup>

While these short exchanges of words in the said narrative clearly acknowledge the presence of Father as a dominant family member, as well as the inner fear for his family and tension that he experiences, the aposiopesis in the children's comments creates a silence that hints at their suppressed status during the war situation. Here the unsaid, as signalled by the aposiopesis, suggests the frustration and fatigue that Tendo feels upon taking further commands from Father. In Maya's case, Maya's childlike, light-hearted talkativeness is smothered by Father's comment, reminding her that the family's life is tough and that he needs Maya to start being more responsible and supportive of the family. The unsaid narrative implies that in the war situation the family is living in during the story, there is no space and no time for children to be children. But although the children have to act like grown ups, they are

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 48.

not fully accepted as such since they fail to voice their feelings of resistance, anxiety and happiness. Here silence thus raises awareness of the children's emotions that are hardly voiced, but come through in the unsaid narrative, thereby catching the readers' attention.

The uncertainty and fear that the characters have before the arrival of Amin's soldiers in their village is further expressed by the usage of personal and demonstrative pronouns. In Chapter One, Kaaka warns her family again at dinner: "No one seems to be eating these days. I've told you again and again, if *these* men come, they'll kill you unless you have enough energy to run and run fast."<sup>19</sup> As readers, we wonder if there is a connection between 'these men' and 'a visitor' that Kaaka had predicted earlier, or if these are different people since the plural in 'these men' and the singular in 'a visitor' creates confusion as to whether they could be the same. While we accompany the family after the dinner to their sleeping place in the banana plantation, the I-narrator informs us: "I put the garden tools and other sharp implements in the store and locked it – just in case *they* came tonight."<sup>20</sup> At the sleeping place we meet other characters of the village community, the Lendu woman and Nyinabarongo. When Mother tells them that Kaaka has stayed behind at the house since at her age she is tired of packing, the Lendu woman is concerned, saying: "But suppose *they* come tonight?" Later that same night, Nyinabarongo remarks: "If *they* want to find us, *they* will find us."<sup>21</sup>

It is in Chapter Two that the I-narrator tells us that "a month before [...] President Idi Amin was about to be overthrown"<sup>22</sup>, and the reader understand that with 'these men' and 'they' the characters are referring to Amin's soldiers:

Our district was situated on one of the highways that led, via Lake Albert, to the West Nile and northern regions, and so, Amin's soldiers were using it as their exit route. And they had come in large numbers, invading the town of Hoima, looting and killing people at night. The bush and banana plantations were the safest place to sleep and during the day most homes posted a sentry in the tree to watch out for the soldiers.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

At this point, we understand that our feeling of uneasiness about Tendo sitting in the mango tree was justified as the character functions as the family's alert post to warn about Amin's soldiers, and that the hazy shadows of the approaching darkness indeed announced danger, for the soldiers move and kill at night. Nevertheless, the characters keep using pronouns when talking about the soldiers, rather than referring to them directly: "I'm ready for *them*,'[...] [Tendo] said, continuing to punch the air with both fists"<sup>24</sup>. This only changes when the soldiers actually arrive at the family's compound: "It's the soldiers,' Father answered. 'I think they are coming. The gunshots sound so near'"<sup>25</sup>. It is the first time that the pronouns are substituted by the word 'soldiers'.

In the characters' comments above, the personal pronoun 'they' and 'them' function as linguistic markers of resistance and anxiety, thereby revealing the characters' uncertainty and fear of what horror a possible interaction with Amin's soldiers might hold for them. Worried about which consequences the encounter might have, the characters avoid naming the originators of their anxiety. For the characters, the pronouns thus work as a euphemism through which they can talk about the lurking danger the soldiers may bring, yet suppress their fear that naming the danger would suddenly make it more real.

That it is a real danger to the characters is conveyed by Kaaka's reference to 'these men', by which Kaaka warns her family through the demonstrative pronoun 'these' that the soldiers are nearby in time and space, without stating it more directly. Through the effect of the personal and demonstrative pronouns, the unsaid narrative is foregrounded and conveys a subtext of emotions and information about the characters and the situation, predominating the narrative that we are told.

The narrative that we are told as readers is strikingly limited. In her afterword Daymond already touches on this aspect briefly, pointing out that: "It is not until Chapter Two, [...] that we learn something of the larger context, but our knowledge is still limited to what the village characters themselves can find out"<sup>26</sup>. While this may be the first impression, our knowledge as readers is in fact not limited to what the village

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>26</sup> Daymond: "Afterword", 122.

characters can find out, but to what the I-narrator tells us. It is only until a few pages into the story, after when all the members of the nuclear family, Father, Mother, Kaaka, Tendo and Maya are presented, that the I-narrator introduces herself through 'I'<sup>27</sup> for the first time. Already in Chapter Three do we learn that Tendo is the narrator's older brother and Maya her younger sister, but it is only in Chapter Four that we get to know the narrator's name, Alinda<sup>28</sup>; and it is in Chapter Twelve, already half way through the book, that we learn that Alinda is thirteen by the time the story takes place<sup>29</sup>.

Alinda has no room left for herself and her emotions because all her senses are fully concentrated of the outside world and the dangers that could occur. Throughout the novel, details of individual stories of the characters and facts about the situation are just revealed bit by bit whenever instances seem to trigger a memory with Alinda. Thus, we meet the old man for the first time in Chapter Five in the compound of Alinda's family, where Alinda tells us that he would only come to the house "when Father was around [since] Mother did not like him"<sup>30</sup>. She remembers that: "Mother [...] kept saying that he was 'a dangerous man,' and [...] never allowed us to go near his house"<sup>31</sup>. However, it is seven chapters later, in Chapter Fourteen, that we learn why the old man was a dangerous man. There Alinda tells us about how she and Nyinabarongo went to look after the old man at his house since he was in pain, having lost one leg to a landmine that supposedly Amin's soldiers had dropped. Alinda recalls:

"It's some kind of punishment from God," Nyinabarongo said as we walked towards our house. "Why do you say that?" I asked, surprised. "You don't know his story?" "No." [...] "That man! He came to live in our village about six years ago, soon after he had been released from prison. When Idi Amin came to power in 1971, he wanted to convert the people to Islam. [...] Then the prisoners who were serving life sentences were told that if they converted to Islam, the president would pardon them. The old man fell into that category. [...] He murdered his wife!" Nyinabarongo answered bluntly.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Kyomuhendo, *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> See *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibid.*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

It is Alinda's report of her visit to the old man's house that brings back her memory about her conversation with Nyinabarongo about the old man's history and the circumstances that characterized the regime of Idi Amin. In previous chapters, Alinda is occupied with talking about what happens to her family in the time before the arrival of the soldiers since the well-being of her loved ones and the dramatic consequences the encounter with the soldiers could hold for them is her main concern.

Apart from being delayed, the narrative breaks off regularly as if voicing these experiences blocks Alinda from continuing with her narration or from going into details right away. This is most noticeable when she reports the deaths which her family had to take due to the brutal encounter with the soldiers. When the soldiers came, Kaaka, Alinda's great-aunt, was in the house with Mother, whereas Alinda, Uncle Kembo and Father had not made it back to the house in time and were hiding at some distance. As Kaaka resisted the soldiers, Alinda reports what she saw and heard:

"Heeeeh," [...] [Kaaka] laughed. "If you are real men, go and fight with your enemy, instead of coming here to terrorize a poor harmless old woman like me. Eh?" [...] The soldier whom she had addressed pointed the gun at her and fired. [...] The soldier kicked Kaaka once more and she screamed loudly. [...] Kaaka was covered in blood.<sup>33</sup>

Instead of telling us, however, if Kaaka survived or died, Alinda stops here and turns to her Mother who was lying in labour that night. "I ran inside the house to find Mother [who] [...] was gasping, and calling out softly for help. I saw a cushion of blood, and heard a baby crying"<sup>34</sup>. She recalls: "Mother was talking to me. Her voice seemed distant and weak. [...] The words seemed to be falling from her lips"<sup>35</sup>. Again rather than telling us what happened to Mother straightaway, Alinda leaves us speculating about this last sentence at the closure of Chapter Seven. When in Chapter Eight, she continues: "Mother sings as she works. [...] I am seated next to her, holding the baby"<sup>36</sup>, we as readers are relieved, assuming that Mother has survived the delivery of the baby. However, our assumption is proven wrong when a few sentences later Alinda tells us how Maya comes back from the well, carrying a pot with water on her head:

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 45.

She asks me to help her put it down. Stupid girl, can't she see I am holding the sick child? "Ask Mother," I tell her. "Mother is not here!" Maya yells at me. "You're dreaming!" Maya cried out. I opened my eyes. The baby was lying next to me, crying silently without tears.<sup>37</sup>

The shift from past tense to present tense is the only time in the novel that Alinda shifts between the tenses, thereby giving away that she has either not yet come to fully realize that her mother has passed away or that it still is too painful for her to talk about it. This pain surfaces in her daydream about Mother, where Alinda is grieving and longing for her mother to be there for her and the sick newborn. Embedded in the unsaid narrative is thus not only the stress she feels when substituting the mother for the baby, while at the same time being only a child of thirteen, but also the longing and deep sorrow for her mother that has marked her psyche.

Alinda prolongs the narration throughout the novel, going back to details or remembering additional facts only as she remembers the incidents of the civil war chronologically. Through her language and delayed mode of narration, it seems as if Alinda keeps the readers waiting while it is in fact Alinda's process of slowly coming to terms with her talking about the shocking experiences of her past. She needs time to remember and concentrate on details as she revisits her past and searches for emotions to express what she felt at that time. The detail of the blood on the floor thus, for example, becomes a substitute for her dead mother. To voice the fact that her mother is dead, is too much for her. The time Alinda takes to reveal her past and which is regularly acknowledged through the silence in the narrative therefore does not only hold the reader in suspense, but actually shows the emotional and mental efforts Alinda needs to perform in order to be able to talk and find a language of her own about the horror she has experienced. It becomes obvious that on a meta-level the unsaid narrative, pervading the novel, reveals the trauma that Alinda is still in when re-living the events by narrating them retroactively. The silences which follow the regular breaks and delays in the narrative, as well as throughout the restricted description of events and characters, generate the unsaid stream of the narrative.

In *Waiting* the traumatization and the search for an appropriate language becomes evident as language breaks down. Alinda's experiences with Kiswahili switches from

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 47.

the traumatizing scenery to a challenge with the language as such. The first time that Alinda is confronted with Kiswahili, she hears it as the language of the soldiers, brutally attacking Kaaka and demanding, as Uncle Kembo translates, “women, food, and money”<sup>38</sup>. Then the language is frightening and alien to her as well as for Kaaka<sup>39</sup>, while Uncle Kembo tells Alinda that “Kiswahili [is] [...] a language mainly spoken by Amin’s soldiers”<sup>40</sup>. The second time that Alinda hears Kiswahili, however, is in conversation with Bahati, a young Tanzanian, who has come to her village with the Liberators, “a combined force of Ugandans who lived in exile and the Tanzanian soldiers who were assisting them”<sup>41</sup>. When Alinda hears Bahati and Jungu, her friend from school, communicating in English and Kiswahili, she becomes curious. All her worries seem to disappear for a moment, as she eagerly demands: “Teach me a little of Kiswahili,” I said to him after a time. “What do you want to know?” “What does *kanga* [italics in original] mean?” “It means hen. [...]” “What about Swahili?” I asked, laughing.<sup>42</sup> Through the encounter with Bahati and the *kanga* that he represents as a gift to Jungu, “Kiswahili can be recognized as one of the languages of friendship and love [in the novel], instead of only death”<sup>43</sup>. This is again suggested through the unsaid narrative that resonates beyond the dialogues we witness between Bahati, Jungu and Alinda. In Alinda’s second encounter with Kiswahili, the language serves as a signal of vitality, exchange and good feelings, thereby also reflecting Alinda’s will to live and hope to recover from the pain.

The representation of Kiswahili ultimately also implies Alinda’s limited exposure to other cultures and languages at her age. For Alinda, as we find out through the “Song of Doves” that she hears her mother sing in Chapter Eight, the primary language is Runyoro, the main language of Hoima District. In her understanding, English is the lingua franca that people in Uganda, speaking many different languages, use to communicate with each other<sup>44</sup>. When Alinda asks Jungu why Bahati speaks only a little English, knowing that he went to school, Jungu informs her:

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>43</sup> Daymond: “Afterword”, 127.

<sup>44</sup> See Kyomuhendo, *Ibid.*, 82.

“Yes, he did [go to school], but you see, everyone in Tanzania speaks Kiswahili. It is used in offices, schools, and even among the village people who never went to school. English is only taught in private primary schools as a language of instruction. But in the government ones where the majority go, they use and teach Kiswahili only”.<sup>45</sup>

In response, Alinda wonders “But what about their own languages? I mean the languages of their tribes? [...] [H]ow can they tell what tribe someone belongs to?”<sup>46</sup>. As Alinda starts to explore the connection between language and identity, her questions reveal that she has not been exposed to the reality outside Uganda or even her village in Western Uganda. Through communicating with Bahati, however, she learns about the geo-politics of Uganda and neighbouring Tanzania. This discovery of a sociolinguistic continuum brings her back to life and re-awakens her thirst for knowledge, learning, and speaking.

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The article has pointed out that it is only through acknowledging the delays and breaks in narration that we come to realize that the I-narrator, Alinda, still suffers from trauma. Since the story is told retroactively we can presume that she has survived the events, but are left pondering at what point we meet Alinda in the present. Assuming that Alinda talks from the point in time the novel was written – in 2007 could make her a woman of over 40 years. When considering the emotional and mental efforts Alinda needs to perform in order to be able to speak about her past in retrospective, it becomes clear that the experiences during the civil war have had a long-term impact on her as we meet Alinda as a grown-up narrator. Set in 1979, *Waiting* thus implies the lasting effects the Ugandan civil war situation in Northern Uganda, which has been troubling the country up to date, as well as *Waiting* carries a universal element in that on a meta-level it uncovers the mental effects basically any war situation can have on a human mind. It is exactly this aspect by which *Waiting* gains not only sociopolitical, but especially literary relevance: Through foregrounding

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

the search for an individual expression for the traumatizing situation, thoughts, and stories of individual characters, the silence in *Waiting* is seen as a part of the voicing of people in Uganda's conflict areas. Most importantly, however, the originality and distinct literary form of *Waiting* emerges from the fact that Kyomuhendo is able to craft a language and style within the novel by which the protagonist is enabled to narrate her traumatic experiences in a way that projects all of Alinda's anxieties, her memories of the horror as well as the emotions which she is unable to fully articulate directly onto the reader. In the process of reading the emotional state of the protagonist and we as readers almost merge, as we are reliving Alinda's traumatic experiences through her eyes. By this unique mode of narration in *Waiting*, the reader is inevitably taken in, electrified and captured by the life of a young girl until the end. In *Waiting*, Kyomuhendo achieves to capture the traumatic effect of war through language and successfully translates it into the literary mode of the novel.

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