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THE 'WOMAN QUESTION' IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE:
A STUDY OF SELECTED NOVELS BY UGANDAN FEMALE WRITERS

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DECLARATION

This project is my own original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any institution of higher learning.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis presents a critical study of the situation of the woman in contemporary Ugandan novels by women writers in the country. The study examines Ugandan women writers' attempt to construct their identity within repressive patriarchal situations while emphasizing the role women have played and continue to play in the construction of the Ugandan nation. The novels studied for this research are *Silent Patience* by Jane Kaberuka, *The Invisible Weevil* by Mary Okurut and *Cassandra* by Violet Barungi. The study investigates how the novelists write women into Ugandan political and social history. This comes against the backdrop of initially stifled voices of Ugandan female writers or perhaps what Lloyd Brown calls 'other voices' in reference to women's writing in Africa – rarely discussed and seldom accorded space. The study is guided by a set of objectives: *t*o examine Ugandan women writers' contribution to the development of the Ugandan literary space in Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience*; to investigate Uganda women writers' narration of the Ugandan nation in Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil*; to interrogate how women writers in the country adapt to the changing social norms and centre women in Uganda's history in order to link it to societal challenges in contemporary society and; to compare and situate the Ugandan novel within the corpus of women's writing in Africa. Utilizing an eclectic theoretical approach, the study employs the feminist theory, specifically Elaine Showalter's arguments on Gynocriticism. Besides, New Historicism is found crucial in examining the perspectives that are critical in contextualizing the study and the historiography that the novels reveal. Narratology as propounded by Gerard Genette is also critical in the analysis of the salient stylistic aspects of the selected texts. Charles Ragin's Case Oriented Methodology provides a foundation upon which each novel has been sampled as a case study that represents female writing in Uganda. Finally, the study engages in a comparative reading of the selected novels to evaluate how they collectively contribute to re-writing Uganda's political and social history and how they can be compared to other contemporary novels written by female writers on the African continent. In particular, the study establishes that the authors endeavor to centre women as agents of change in nation building and social transformation in the contemporary Ugandan society, thereby correcting the often known common view of linking only the men with this very noble duty. The study further found out that the deployment of the bildungsroman tradition of writing as a narrative technique parallels the growth of the woman and the nation alongside that of the family and also uses the family as an allegory for the nation.

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 Introduction

1.1Background to the Study

The phrase 'woman question' is a Germany phrase translated from the French term 'querelle des femmes' referring to intellectual debates on the nature of women and feminist campaigns for social change. It is a phrase usually used in connection with social changes which question the fundamental roles of women. In this thesis the phrase concerns the women writers' attempt to construct and reconstruct their identity in patriarchal situations while emphasizing the role women have played and continue to play in the construction of the Ugandan nation. The entire thesis is all about the women question: women reconstructing themselves in breaching the silence they have suffered, forcing their visibility in the construction of the Ugandan nation, and emphasizing salient concerns in society. The study presents a critical analysis of the situation of women writers and women in general in contemporary Ugandan novels by women writers in the country. It investigates how these novelists write themselves in the social and political life of the country and on the literary landscape.

Female artists and critics advance the fact that female works of art have often been ignored, neglected, and despised. Florence Stratton *(*1994), states that "African women writers and their works have often been rendered invisible" (1994: 3). She further notes that works of art by women writers have been "trivialised, distorted and maligned as a result of their non-conformity to the literary set canon and androcentric tendencies" (6). Stratton still argues that "the periodization of contemporary African literature based on men's writing operates to exclude women's expressions as part of early African literature" (9). These statements resonate with the situation in Uganda and focus on the women question in contemporary Ugandan literature.

Presenting his findings on measuring the literary stature of Anglophone African writers, Bernth Lindfors asserts that "to be famous, to be reputable, to be deemed worthy of serious and sustainable consideration, an author needs as much criticism as possible, year after year after year" (The Famous Authors, 1990: 143, qtd. in Stratton: 3). Here Lindfors affirms the need for constant critical attention and this study looks at contemporary Uganda female works of art in an attempt to find out how contemporary literary critics have looked at female literary productions.

While speaking on behalf of African women writers at the second African Writers' Conference in Stockholm in (1986), Ama Ata Aidoo decries the low critical attention paid to female writers saying that "it is pathetic to keep on writing without having any consistent, active critical intelligence that is interested in you as an artist" (Stratton, 1994: 4). She further says that the African woman has been denied serious critical attention and cites well-known critics of literature who omit women writers. She complains about "a literary criticism which is based on the text and the female writers' intention and not on speculations about her ability to be a good mother as well as a writer" (Kirsten Holst Peterson 1998: 14). In this way Aidoo contests "the relegation of the African woman writer that denies her chance to articulate her desires" (Ogundipe, 130). The argument is that the African female author is accorded limited critical attention yet her contributions are always tremendous.

Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi in *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference* (1997) posits that African women writers have had "to endure these same kinds of exclusions and contempt of a predominantly male dominated African literary scene" (2). She further maintains that African and third world women are often deeply in the shadow as "silent observers who simply fulfil their destiny and that this brings to the forefront problems of identity in women's writings" (5). She avers that the woman writer seeks, through the power of the pen,

to speak and bring out herstories to express "her points of view on women's culture and on women's silence, thus bringing to her work a critical self" (2). Such is also reflected in the efforts of Ugandan female written novels, especially as far as thematic concerns and stylistic strategies are concerned, as my discussion in this study will show.

While this study appreciates the identification of themes by some critics that may interest women's writing, the allocation appears narrow and to a large extent trivial. It is my view that Uganda's women writing really goes beyond these confines to address global issues beyond the male/female dichotomy. The study, thus, explores the thematic spectrum beyond the cited confines, if not as another way of attempting to unravel the secret of Ugandan women writers' contribution to contemporary literature. This study also critiques style, the span of ideas, thematic concerns, settings, plot variations, characterisation, points of view and other features which these narratives use to add to or deviate from the existing conventions of writing, not only in Uganda, but the world at large. The study continues to explore how the current crop of women writers is giving voice to further contemporary female literary writing in Uganda particularly in the backdrop of the creation of FEMRITE. FEMRITE is a Ugandan women writers' association founded in 1996 by a group of dedicated women writers led by Mary Okurut. These women writers had noticed a considerable silence of women during the formative years of post- Ugandan Literature. It was meant to create space for women writers to shed light on the inhibitions imposed by society and to build confidence in the image of women as a way of changing the society's negative image towards women writers and women in general. This writers' club was also meant to create space where feminist discourses in Ugandan women's writing thrive. FEMRITE has always been a platform meant for women to contribute to national development through creative writing. The club saw writers like Mary Okurut, Violet Barungi,

Jane Kaberuka come onto the literary scene. It had specific goals, as stated in the keynote speech of the launch by the founder member, Mary Okurut. The first one was to encourage female authors into writing and producing good works of art that could match with what already existed. Secondly, it was to give voice to Ugandan female authors by identifying and establishing literary strategies, principles and approaches which would be friendly and pertinent to the situation in Uganda.

Indeed, the efforts by contemporary Ugandan women writers to redefine their literary position and their apparent success towards this end could perhaps be explained in two possible ways: one is that the thematic concerns on the table resonate with the fundamental interests of women, and two, that the strategies of presenting the said concerns effectively and sufficiently voice these concerns. Strategies like the journey motif, letter writing and giving prominence to female characters are given prominence.

This research examines literary contributions made by female authors to contemporary Ugandan literature. It limits its focus on selected novels by Ugandan female writers. These include *Silent Patience* (1998) by Jane A. Kaberuka; *Cassandra* (1999) by Violet Barungi, and *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) by Mary Okurut. The selected novels are analysed as representative samples in terms of their stylistic elements, thematic concerns, and socio-cultural concerns addressed in the texts.

Jane Alison Kaberuka, the author of *Silent Patience* (1999), was born on 28th August 1956 in Uganda. She is a writer of fiction and autobiography and her first novel *Has God Forgiven Me* (1990) is a story of loneliness, desperation, dependency, loss, and confusion to the point of suicidal tendencies and endless physical emotional pain. She also wrote *It is Natural Darling*

(1991), a novel narrated by a mother who wishes she had instructed her daughter into womanhood. In the novel she comments on the lack of discussion on sex among members of a family in an African setting. Kaberuka was a columnist in Ugandan Newspapers between 1992 and 1994. Her novel *Silent Patience* is a narrative about some Uganda's traditional societal values and it looks at gender discrimination in the contemporary East Africa. Her other novel *The Cherished Grass Window* (2003) explores the difficulties women face in marriage and the challenges of polygamy. Her husband Will Kaberuka was a Presidential Advisor. They have four children, two girls and two boys. She is now a retired senior civil servant.

Violet Barungi, the author of *Cassandra* (1999), born in Mbarara District, Western Uganda, is one of Uganda's prolific female writers. She is a novelist, writer of children's literature, playwright and an editor well known in Uganda and internationally. The play *Over my Dead Body* (1997) won Barungi the British Council International New Playwright Award for Africa and the Middle East. Flourishing as a writer, her publications include: *The Shadow and Substance* (1998), *Cassandra* (1999), Short Stories for Children which include Tit for Tat and other Stories (1997), *The Promise* (2003) and *The Boy who became a King* (2004). In her narratives Barungi mainly deals with human relationships, gender issues and the girl child. She is one of the founding members of FEMRITE and was the editor from 1999-2007. She is married and has six children. *Cassandra* brought her fame and inclusion in the list of popular contemporary Ugandan female authors who narrate the female experience from feminist perspectives.

Mary Okurut born 8th December 1954 in Bushenyi is a well-known Ugandan educator, author, and a politician. She has worked as the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Affairs, Spokesperson for NRM and now she is the elected Member of Parliament for Bushenyi District

Women's Constituency. Prior to her political career, Okurut was a lecturer at Makerere University, best known for her contributions to Ugandan Literature and she is the founder of the Uganda Women Writers' Association, FEMRITE; an organisation which has since received international attention. She is popularly known as 'Mother Hen' by Ugandan women writers. Okurut's literary contributions include: *The Invisible Weevil* (1998), a novel that records Uganda's tragic experience with HIV/AIDS. She was voted Uganda's top woman writer in 1998 by the New Vision National Newspaper. Her other works include: *The Official Wife* (1998), *Child of a Delegate* (1999), a play *The Curse of the Sacred Cow* (1999) and a short story anthology entitled *Milking the Lioness and other stories* (1999). She was co-editor of *A Woman's Voice: An Anthology of Short Stories* by *Ugandan women* (1995). Her recent play *The Trials of Thomas Sankara* has not yet been published. She is a widow to the late Stanslaus Okurut and has eight children: five boys, and three girls. She generally deals with national political experience and gender concerns.

In Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* the study pursues themes such as development and the position of a woman in the Ugandan socio-cultural set up and discusses ideas like aspects of betrothal, female silence, and marriage as a contractual obligation under the patriarchal legacy. Barungi's *Cassandra* examines the major idea of power relations between men and women exploring the question of female identity in contemporary Ugandan society and the ever-changing notions of social norms. It further looks at (self) assertion, actualization and self-discovery interwoven in a journey motif that purposes to see a self-articulated and independent woman. Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* looks at the role of women in nation building. It appears that a woman will have to shoulder the domineering patriarchal hold, hostile political

atmosphere, diseases and other vices like rape, corruption, and greed, which Kaaka the mother-in- law of Nkwanzi the protagonist brands as invisible weevils.

It is apparent that the Ugandan society and nation have undergone rapid transformation from the days colonialists set foot on Ugandan soil to the contemporary time. The rapid transformation of Uganda has not only been captured in the factual historical books but also as a representation in the literary writings. What is seen in the literary presentation of Uganda is that the initial years of Ugandan literary production was largely dominated by male writers who generally focused on the nationalistic themes at the expense of other equally important concerns. This period of silence occasioned by the absence of female writers from the initial literary production, led to a seeming representation of women in the fictional texts by male Ugandan writers and also a silence on some of the salient issues in the history of Uganda such as the role of women in the struggle for a more stable nation; the effect these struggles had on the family; as well as some critical cultural changes witnessed in the Ugandan society, such as the entry of women into the work force and the challenges that came with it. Also of other significance is the introduction of contemporary moral issues such as abortion, divorce and even single parenting.

The inclusion of women writers into the literary production of Uganda may thus be expected to witness an injection of fresh thematic concerns that centre the women in the history of the nation and its narration. This way, one is likely to witness an attempt by female writers to embark on a process of somehow re-narrating Ugandan history and in the process including some of the concerns that had hitherto been overlooked by male writers. Consequently, the process may of essence possibly create a new literary tradition and open new avenues in the evaluation of various literary discourses of and in the Ugandan nation. It is a discourse that not only places

women at the centre of the Ugandan society but also seeks to visualise a society in which women and men relate without the retrogressive strangleholds of patriarchal traditions.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

As a thesis focusing on "the women question" this study explores the texts: *Silent Patience, Cassandra,* and *The Invisible Weevil*, in a move to foreground the attempt by Ugandan women writers to write themselves out of silence and to (re)construct their identity in the patriarchal setups that they find themselves in, while emphasizing the role women have played and continue to play in the construction of the Ugandan nation. This comes in the backdrop of Lloyd Brown's 1981 assertion that women writers' contribution is considered "the other voices" in reference to the fact that they are unheard and rarely discussed voices. The key question then is: What in particular engages women writers who have over time been 'othered' or silenced? However, the study being a literary one, it equally focuses on how the women writers write themselves into visibility. Besides, what is their (women) role in, whether the narration of, or/and construction of the Ugandan nation? The study pursues these concerns by analysing how women characters have been presented and represented in the texts under study and what this means for the women writers themselves in their attempt to give a voice to their fellow women in society, as they give visibility to the Ugandan woman writer.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1) To examine Ugandan women writers' contribution to the development of the Ugandan society in Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience*.
2) To investigate Uganda women writers' narration of the Ugandan nation in Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil*.

3) To interrogate how women writers in the country adapt to the changing social norms and centre women in Uganda's history in order to link it to societal challenges in contemporary society.
4) To compare and situate the Ugandan novel within the corpus of contemporary women's writing in the Africa.

1.4 Hypotheses

1) Women writers have contributed greatly to the development of the Ugandan novel in contemporary times.
2) The writers of the novels under study use literary techniques that have developed within a corpus of women's writing from Africa in recent times.
3) The thematic concerns in the novels under study reflect the desire of women writers to represent a historiography of Uganda in order to counter existing narratives on nation formation in the country.

1.5 Justification

An overview of Ugandan literary scholarship reveals that most critical works focus on male authored novels and tend to ignore literary contributions by female authors. Through an analysis of the women situation, their thematic concerns and literary strategies in *Silent Patience*, *Cassandra* and *The Invisible Weevil*, this study investigates how the Ugandan female novelists write women into Ugandan history and society. The domain of writing Ugandan history, as argued for in this thesis, has largely been through the perspective of 'the male gaze'. A study of the works of female novelists invites an understanding on how women perceive themselves and

their place in Ugandan society. Such an approach also enhances the critical appreciation of Ugandan literature by women in the contemporary times.

Kaberuka, Okurut and Barungi have treated themes that require close examination to justify their literary involvement. To be able to look at these texts as specific artefacts with a particularity in need of study, I have put emphasis upon style, content and narrative strategies. This study gives exposition to what could be found distinctive with *Silent patience*, *Cassandra*, and *The Invisible Weevil*. The need for this is to foreground newness in writing and thereby enrich the conventional writing in literature in general, and female writing in particular.

A research of this magnitude is beneficial to different stake holders in society. The findings indicate the need for the literary society to appreciate female literary contributions in Uganda. This research establishes how women's literary agency has thrived despite the initial social, cultural, political, and educational challenges.

This study could also create an interest in the upcoming writers and readers as they share what Ugandan female writers are bringing on board. The uniqueness that may be unearthed in these writings would bridge the gap thus noticed and expose literary strategies that give voice to women writers in contemporary Uganda. Generally, there seems to be no critical study which has systematically inquired into the women question, literary strategies and thematic concerns in the selected texts, and this study intends to explore this.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study is an analysis of the thematic concerns in *Silent Patience* by Jane Kaberuka, *Cassandra* by Violet Barungi, and *The Invisible Weevil* by Mary Okurut. Although these authors

may have written other literary works in various genres, this study considers these novels as its primary material and as a representative sample of the literary works by Ugandan female authors. This thesis explores and analyses the literary approaches Barungi, Kaberuka and Okurut apply in order to narrate issues affecting women and influencing the female reality in Uganda.

In reading the texts I explore and analyse issues raised by Ugandan women writers through feminist perspectives. Although the study looks at three novels, the spectrum is widened by the case-oriented methodology which focuses on concrete social phenomena while at the same time going back to the origins of specific phenomena which may be common in similar situations (Charles Ragin 1994: xxi). *Silent Patience, Cassandra,* and *The Invisible Weevil*, present a commentary on the issues affecting women in general and specifically in Uganda. These issues appear to resonate in various female situations in almost a similar manner but in rather different styles.

In *A Readers' Guide to Contemporary Literature* (1993) George Lukacs' is quoted rejecting the mere photographic representation. He advocates for realistic work which gives a sense of the artistic necessity of the images presented, which he says possess an intensive totality of the world of the novel. He further says that realistic works of art, more often than not, reflect lived reality "not by rendering their mere surface appearance, but by giving us a truer, more complete, more vivid and more dynamic reflection on any lived experience in general" (Selden et al. 1997: 87-91). So, this study presents the lived reality of a contemporary Ugandan woman in the narratives under study. The novels narrate the Ugandan society from the early pre-colonial times to the contemporary times and centres women in the imagination of the Ugandan society. The three novels present a commentary on issues affecting women in general and Ugandan women writers in particular.

1.7 Literature Review

In this literature review I examine studies on female writing in general and studies that have been conducted on Ugandan female works of art that specifically deal with the selected works under study. Prior to the narratives under study, there have been women writers whose works have not been included in the literary cannon and hardly receiving critical attention. There has also been a paucity of strong and influential female characters in Ugandan literature. The review is structured into: Critics on female writers in general and Ugandan critics on Ugandan female writing. The former looks at criticisms on the feminist tradition of writing and also events around which writing by Ugandan women stemmed while the latter looks at how writing Ugandan women became grounded within Uganda literature and also critical discourses on the same.

1.7.1 Critics on Female Writers in General.

Florence Stratton (1994) quotes Chinua Achebe saying that "every literature must seek the things that belong into its peace, speak of a particular place, and evolve out of the necessities of its history, past and current, and the aspirations of and destiny of the people" (1994: 11). A reading of *Silent Patience, Cassandra* and *The Invisible Weevil* show that most of Ugandan female authors write out of the need to tell their story, (Herstory). This study intends to show that Uganda female writers have been active literary agents by voicing their situations and subverting the literary silence through chronicling the small happenings of their lives first in oral tradition and then later in their writings. This work, therefore, makes a follow up of the women's proposed forefront position as they take lead into what concerns female existence in Uganda and elsewhere.

Molvaer (1997) states that ''authors hold a mirror up to their society and that society finds its expression through its authors and in its literature and art, a society reveals its 'soul' " (1997: ix).

Through the exploration of *The Invisible Weevil*, *Cassandra* and *Silent patience*, the study purposes to establish how these works of art act as mirror to the Ugandan literary community.

In *A Literature of their Own* (1977), Elaine Showalter mentions three major aspects of the Gynocritic theory about the examination of female writers and their place in literary history (1977: 69), and these are evident in Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil,* Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience and* Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* as protagonists endeavour to redefine themselves. In all this, Gynocriticism seeks to appropriate a female literary tradition to discover how female authors have historically perceived themselves and how they wrote themselves out of the literary silence.

Showalter argues further that, each generation of women writers has found itself, in a sense, without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex. This seems to resonate with Kaberuka, Barungi and Okurut's endeavour to encourage approaches that facilitate and favour women's writing. So, this helps to expose the female literary concerns and appreciate the literary strategies that *Silent Patience*, *Cassandra,* and the *Invisible Weevil* present.

Candice Taylor (2015) talking about the reality of traumatic experience among women reiterates that writing for Ugandan women writers becomes a way of "working through their experiences of love, anger, trauma, sadness, betrayal, injustices and oppression" (2015: 8). However, she does not underline the narrative strategies through which these writers communicate such experiences. This study reads *Silent Patience, Cassandra,* and *The Invisible Weevil* to establish how and in which ways this has been done and the impact they have had on Uganda's contemporary body of literature. Omorala Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) asserts that in their novels

African female writers "place the female experience as pivot of their artistic constructions and analysis in their work, so that it is inevitable to notice the female presence" (1994: 11). The present work examines how the selected texts place the female concerns in the centre.

In the mid-nineties, with the enactment of the Ugandan Constitution (1995) and the country's declaration of the Affirmative Action on the plight of women, women from all fields of life came to the forefront to speak about issues concerning them. Lynda Gichanda Spencer (2014) writing about upcoming writers in Uganda and South Africa asserts that although the voices and concerns of women writers were suppressed, stifled, ignored, and almost completely silenced, the late 1990s show a steady increase in works of art written by emerging women writers in Uganda. She further observes that "female writers are emerging and finding cracks in which to foreground the female experience by inserting women voices and concerns into the national agenda" (2014:4).

Spencer tries to emphasize that Ugandan female works of art are finding a position on Ugandan literary landscape. By focusing on the selected Ugandan novels, this study leans on the arguments by Lynda Spencer to further the critical reception of contemporary Ugandan feminist fictional writing. The novels: *Silent Patience, Cassandra* and *the Invisible Weevil* present women's attempts at self-discovery and at forging their own freedoms from the woman's point of view.

The first African female writers, Florence Nwapa, Grace Ogot and Aidoo among other trail blazers, advanced female writerly activity from a woman's point of view. This is backed by Elaine Showalter (1984) who in her critical commentary delineates the woman as a writer, a producer of her own text "in a language of her own, by her own thoughts combined with her own

feelings and reactions" (1984: 40). The present study through reading *The Invisible Weevil, Silent Patience* and *Cassandra*, cross-examines how Ugandan female writers have broken the culture of silence and invincibility and asserted their selfhood.

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie *(*1994) further states that the "self-assertive and self-reliant aspect of the woman's role in Africa can only become visible through the collective efforts of female writers" (1994: 52). The study interrogates how Okurut, Barungi and Kaberuka's artistic works in line with the formed women writers' organisation, FEMRITE, take strides to this end.

Talking about female writers in Africa Lloyd Brown (1981) affirms that the female writer (in Uganda) up to until recent years was regarded as "the other voices, rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and the predictably male oriented studies" (1981: 3). Odiemo Munara-Lennox (2008) seems to contradict with Brown when he says that "women writers in their texts are not seen as passive or barely visible entities, but as articulate and talented producers of art and knowledge and as heroic makers of history" (2008: 6). This contradiction creates a gap which the researcher has to fill by relaying the literary concerns of Ugandan female writers.

Alex Wanjala (2012) states clearly that he works on liberating the study of novels by women writers from a kind of discursive imprisonment, which brands them as 'third world' texts. He further contends that "rather than condemning or ignoring female works of art, and their participation in what was an unquestioned reality in their societies, we learn about their hereto ignored aspects and understand them" (2012: 8). Wanjala further reiterates that, "the African woman should take advantage of her vantage position in the margins and re-inscribe herself into

history in her own terms" (6). His arguments are central to this study as the researcher also tries to liberate the Ugandan female authored novels from the category of neglected literature.

Like Ama Ata Aidoo said when commenting on the limited attention to women writers in Africa, Ugandan female works of art "are also getting the general neglect and disregard that women in the larger society receive" (Adeola 1990: 8). The argument is that despite the massive production of female literary works, thematic concerns and stylistic strategies, these works have not been investigated.

With the above assertions, the current study draws much meaning from Spivak's (1992) philosophy of "speaking for the Subaltern" and perhaps makes Ugandan women authors' existence on the Ugandan literary scene a timely one as it offers women in Uganda space and voice to write and tell their stories from their own points of view. The same sentiments are expressed by Armstrong, H.A. *(*1985) when he avows that Novels published by Ugandan female writers, are changing the image of women in Ugandan fiction and society as they explore the issues from the point of view of women characters and establish a legacy of women. An examination of *The Invisible Weevil, Cassandra* and *Silent Patience* fills the gap as it helps us to appreciate the above assertions.

Gloria T. Hull *(*1998) avers that the black literary scene had historically been a male preserve over the years. She however notices a blossoming of a large corps of female writers. She affirms that these had existed before, but the male dominated publishers had not seen it fit to publish the work of the female writers and also only "the male articulations had been viewed as worthy of literary expression" (1998: 84). Therefore, this explains the irony of the African female writers' late entry into the creative arena as women were traditionally taken as "oral literature bearers,

tradition effectors and transmitters in the home because writing was as well as education a sole prerogative of man" (Stratton, 6).

Jones and Palmer *(*1982) also argue that "Ugandan female writers' objective experience has generated the zeal to transform their lives and those of other women and ultimately of all humanity by challenging the negative image of women propagated by their male counter parts" (Jones et.al, 1982: 15). They further articulate that through the creation of these expressive texts, Ugandan female writers have chosen to fight silence - one of the tenets of sexism and the most powerful tool used to ensure that the woman should neither be seen nor heard. This resonates well with Marie Kruger's assertion that "African women are engaged in a literature of demystification and a complete self-liberation." She further says that the African woman is not content in being a victim; she opts to be an actor in the literary world" (2011: 10). This study investigates the facilitative literary strategies that favour female writers in the contemporary world.

In this study I refer to Gloria Chukukere (1995) who observes that women are forced to respond to the literary tradition and frequently insist upon correcting the imbalances in which they are portrayed. Therefore, they resort to "the power of the pen" (1995: 9). Through a reading of the selected novels, I investigate the literary concerns and stylistic strategies these female writers employ to correct the alleged imbalances. Animala Thompson (2009) quotes Abidemi Sanusi whose work was shortlisted for the 2010 Commonwealth Prize saying that, "through their work women have shown that the African woman is not an invisible homogeneous group, but a vibrant complex human being with all the personality traits that make her the unique individual she is" (2009: 42). Writing has provided space where women can add their voices to a dominant narrative that fails to fully capture their realities and lived experiences. In this study, the

researcher cross-examines the said vibrant personality traits in the central characters presented in the selected novels.

Reading the novel, *The Invisible Weevil*, Lynda Gichanda Spencer (2014) declares a new era for women writers in Uganda; saying that "cracks are widening for these new voices, creating more spaces that allow them to foreground, interrogate, engage and address wide ranging topics which lacked more forms of expression in the past" (2014:8).

Deliberating on women's literature in Kenya and Uganda Marie Kruger (2011) affirms that the desire of social mobility through education informs the novels of FEMRITE writers, from Barungi's *Cassandra*, Wangusa's *Memoirs of a Mother*, to Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* and it also dominates the fiction of established Kenyan writers like Grace Ogot, Asenath Odaga and Margret Ogola (2011: 10). Contemporary Ugandan writers look at the education of women as a steppingstone to the self-actualized female existence.

Buchi Emecheta (1988) answering questions in an interview at the second African writers' conference, talks of chronicling everyday happenings, weave them into novels, poems, documentary fiction, articles, because a writer has the freedom to control, to imagine and to chronicle; for she writes for everybody (1988: 175, 182). An analytical reading of *The Invisible Weevil*, *Cassandra* and *Silent Patience*, brings out rightly Emecheta's ideals in writing; for she writes about the little happenings of everyday life. She says that being a woman, and African born, she sees things through an African woman's eye; and chronicles the little happenings of the lives of the woman she knows (181). Okurut, Kaberuka and Barungi's writings reflect and present Ugandan Women's artistic creativity to tell the world what has been their lot for ages. The present study aims to establish the contributions Ugandan women writers have made on the

contemporary Ugandan literary scene through a cross-examination of the three novels. The study takes on Buchi Emecheta's celebrated views which make her a leading female voice in contemporary African literature and credits her for "establishing an important female presence in the previously male-dominated literature of modern Africa" (1980: 181).

The statement could be backed by some ideas from Gloria T. Hull *(1982)* where she notes that although the literary scene has predominantly been a male preserve, "there has been a blossoming of a large corps of female writers but suppressed by the male-dominated publishers" (1982: 2). Lloyd W. Brown (1981) complements and affirms that "female writers (in Uganda) up to until recent years, were regarded as "the other" voices, the unheard voices, rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and predictably male oriented studies" (1981: 3). *The Invisible Weevil, Cassandra* and *Silent Patience* relay their thematic concerns from the female points of view. Women play centre stage as it is with Okurut's protagonist Nkwanzi, Barungi's Cassandra and Kaberuka's Stella and Agnes. This study follows up on this commendation.

Sulochana Rangeya Ragha Va*(*1992) affirms that the novel is the most socially conditioned of literary forms. It replicates society as it is, at any given time and it is inclusive of stylistic devices and societal issues. The three selected Ugandan novels aim at establishing how inclusive of the female concerns in Ugandan society these are.

1.7.2 Ugandan critics on Ugandan Female Writing

In conjunction with the growth of a movement for women's liberation (Affirmative Action; Ugandan Constitutions; FEMRITE), the situation of 'othering' women has been dramatically reversed in recent years. 'Othering' is a process of excluding, denigrating and isolating people. It

is a power play strategy where an individual group establishes itself as normal and distances themselves from those they perceive to be different, 'not one of us.' They make the difference with a purpose of proving their superiority. There is always the in-group and the out-group phenomenon. The concept of 'othering' is similar to in-group and out-group effect. It is a set of dynamics, processes and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities. There is a call for belonging and inclusion as the only sustainable solution to this problem. This study investigates the solutions to the female literary silence experienced for decades in Uganda and elsewhere, through reading and analysing the selected novels by Okurut, Kaberuka and Barungi.

In her discussion on voice, sexuality and subversion in African women's writing, Sarah Namulondo (2010) foregrounds the need for women to speak their own truth and reality from a female's point of view. She argues that to counter the challenges, African women have engaged in rhetorical and performative strategies to reconstitute the cultural erasure women voices have encountered. She talks of female authors' strides to break down the subject/ object duality that will help the woman escape society's external definitions (2010:1). As a critical response to the selected novels, this study analyses the centrality of the woman question in contemporary Ugandan feminist writing.

One would argue that these strategies are working, given the achievements now observable in Uganda's contemporary literature. Apparently hinting on the said achievements, Mildred Barya (2015) in her address to the women writers gathering around what they call the 'FEMRITE evening fires', said that the last two decades have witnessed a literary renaissance with new voices of contemporary African writers earning global attention for their works. Kyomuhendo as

one of the founder members of FEMRITE, also underscores the achievements of women writers in Uganda by throwing the spotlight on some of the successes.

She first observes that Ugandan women writers have successfully written artistic works in all genres. She then goes ahead to report that three of FEMRITE titles won national awards and others received international recognition and that a good number of female authors have been representatives of the country at many international forums. She further notes that Makerere University, for instance, has recommended two FEMRITE titles on the university syllabus and one other title is taught in two Universities in the US, which makes one to want to take interest in what these texts are and what makes these productions exceptional.

In a preface to *Women Writing for Africa* (2007), Austin Bukenya suggests that the element of continued and determined struggle by women, to voice out their concerns, is a central element characteristic of the modern female works of art. He further corroborates this struggle when he argues that "the fight for survival by women is a result of the power to be, do and grow amidst the hostile environment which is all a creation of patriarchal impositions" (2007: xix-xx). Bukenya in a way looks at the emerging Ugandan female writers as struggling towards selfhood and self-actualization.

This study explores the texts under study to counteract the power struggle thus presented. In the same way Barungi in *Cassandra* paints Cassandra, the protagonist as a woman who is in search of an identity. Here we see inter-gender power struggle; the struggle of selfhood and self-actualization by women in contemporary Ugandan society at stake (Kiyimba, 194). Cassandra wants to be free from the dependence syndrome women are purportedly made to thrive on. As an

independent minded youth and ambitious young girl, she wants to make something of her life "without being beholden to men" (Barungi, 13).

In the same way Betty Kituyi affirms that there is need to think about the threats to women's freedom of expression, saying that "Our voices have to survive; we need freedom to express ourselves" (2008: 2). How are female writers' voices surviving on the Ugandan literary scene? What keeps a Ugandan female writer keeping on? These, among other questions are critical to the study and the selected texts purposes to answer these questions.

Writing about the plight of women in contemporary Uganda, Sylivia Tamale (1991) asserts that Ugandan women writers have had little opportunity 'to crow' in Ugandan literature (Kiyimba 2008: 193). 'Crow' in this study refers to; "talk, voice out, participate or take part". A reading and interpretation of Barungi, Okurut and Kaberuka's narratives justify that women have been crowing and their immense contributions to literary materials have made them 'crowing' hens on the Ugandan literary landscape, but with little attention from the scholarly sphere.

In his article Abaasi Kiyimba (2009) also says that women writers in Uganda have had little opportunity to crow (2009: 194). He extracts this metaphor from Sylivia Tamale (1999) and echoes the patriarchal legacy which relegates women to the lower rung of the social ladder and denies them space to talk or participate in public activities. Tamale articulates that female chicken (women) normally do not crow (1999:1). She employs a local metaphor to refer to the inherent enforced silence that the female gender experiences. Her metaphor of the 'crowing hen' is challenged by the upcoming female writers as this work will later discuss. Kiyimba further points out an observable change that now seems to contradict what had always been. He particularly appreciates the emergence of new writings by a host of Ugandan female writers

altering the picture of a hitherto male-dominated Ugandan literary scene and praises its contemporary richness by a list of new emerging ideas.

Furthermore, in an interview with the New Vision Newspaper (2008), when asked why she writes, Kyomuhendo openly declares that she is not satisfied with the world she lives in. She wants to create another, thus projecting a plan to embark on something new and different from the ordinary. In this way corroborating Buchi Emecheta's statement that the African woman has always been a woman who achieves. She will have higher aspirations and achieve more where those cleverly structured artificial barriers are removed; affirming that "women must have confidence to value their contributions to the world and start singing of their heroic deeds" (1988: 181). Through considering the contemporary female narratives, the researcher endeavours to place Ugandan female writers in the literary framework through an appreciation of their literary approaches and strategies used in writing their novels as they attempt to handle the female question.

In an interview with Folasade Hunsu (2014) Hilder Twongyeirwe focuses on Ugandan women writers' commitment to promote women's literature in Uganda. She asserts that "women's literature (voices) can no longer be ignored or simply be taken as appendages to men's experiences" (2014: 283). Their voices and articulation on salient contemporary issues are clearly reflected in making women characters spokespersons of women's concerns in contemporary society. She further observes that to give women voice is like saying; "men have been there for too long, or like saying, men, please let us have some space or level ground" (283).

Twongyeire's above statement purposes to create space and voice for women concerns. In this study, I bring to sharper focus the literary strategies that perhaps make Ugandan women narratives a powerful weapon for attaining a hearing on the Ugandan literary landscape. She says that they "use all the possible opportunities to put the woman on a pedestal" (286). This leaves us to investigate the key literary impressions in the artistic work of these narratives. The assumption is that Barungi, Kaberuka and Okurut are launching specific approaches to literature on the Ugandan literary scene. The novels under study *Cassandra*, *Silent Patience*, and *The Invisible Weevil* seem to be applying specific innovative literary benchmarks favourable to Ugandan women writers' situations.

The study is primarily anchored in the feminist literary theory and principally fits in Elaine Showalter's (1977) Gynocriticism. This is a feminist strand which studies women as writers. It explores and records female activity and attempts to understand women's writings as a fundamental part of female reality. Showalter avers that female writers must write themselves out of the literary silence to showcase their desires and aspiration in a world dominated by patriarchy. This study presents Jane Kaberuka, Violet Barungi and Mary Okurut as strong female authors whose concerns and literary strategies are pertinent to the contemporary literary landscape.

Molara, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) corroborates other critics that the self-assertive and self-reliant aspect of the woman's role in Africa can only be visible through the collective efforts of African female writers. So, the formation of FEMRITE, a female writers' club in Uganda in 1996, where the selected Ugandan female authors belong, was a timely venture. However, a reading of *Silent Patience, Cassandra* and *The Invisible Weevil* shows that some of the pertinent female concerns that make these narratives significant literary texts have not been investigated. That is why

literary scholars on African literature seem to agree that works of art by female writers in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa "are rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the literary mainstream" (Nfah-Abbenyi, 2). This work, therefore, is set to interrogate the neglect thus noticed.

However, reading one earlier popular literary work by a male writer Okot p'Bitek: *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* (1966), one notices a Ugandan male writer giving voice to a woman Lawino in the songs that explore her feelings towards her husband's adoption of western life. It is a perfect portrait of a scorned woman whose innocent voice sticks to her past and original values and tries to preserve her identity and African traditional values.

The choice of texts in this study is based on the principle that they all assume the feminist ideology in bringing out innovative and inventive literary approaches. They are representative to the socio-cultural atmosphere of the late 1990s which is a period that was characterized by serious advocacy for women rights and proper presentation of the image of a woman.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study is conceptualized within a number of approaches to literary criticism: the feminist theory, the Stylistic literary theory, the narratological theory and the sociological literary theory plus the New Historicist literary theory. The feminist concerns as observed by Virginia Wolf in *A Room of One's Own (*1992) presents arguments on the difficult conditions in which early female writers had to operate. The theory looks at literature from the female point of view and examines the social economic and cultural aspects of literature and what they portray about the position and influence of women in society. It takes literature as a means to social transformation. Feminism as a theory further looks at literature as a means to understand the nature of social

equality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality, promoting women's rights, interests, and issues.

It therefore explores themes such as the position of women in (Uganda's) socio-cultural set up, oppression and repression of women, gender stereotypes and male – female identity. It seeks to redress disparities in literary studies where women work of art are relegated to the periphery and it studies female authors whose works have been previously downgraded.

The theory embraces the following tenets. That the patriarchal ideology permeates all the great written literatures and that all traditional aesthetic categories and criteria for analysing and appraising literary works are "infused with masculine assumptions and interests so that the standard ranking of literary works are gender biased" (Stratton: 1994: 10). It again reiterates that gender is a cultural construct formulated by the patriarchy and meant to bias society to silence women. It further advances that society is pervasively patriarchal and subordinates the female gender against the male gender in almost all domains: cultural, social, economic, political, and artistic.

The feminist theory has various strands distinct in approach to literary texts. Our study primarily takes on Elaine Showalter's Gynocriticism feminist strand. This is a feminist strand coined by Showalter in the 1970s when feminist critics shifted their attention from works by male writers to concentrate on those by female. The strand is mainly concerned with identifying topics and themes which are taken to be distinctively feminine subject matter in literature written by women. It therefore studies the themes, language, styles, historical backgrounds, and structures of literature by women.

Gynocriticism is writer-centred and interested in the woman as a writer and her representation of the female reality from a female point of view. The theory is pertinent to our study as it gives women space to articulate their issues in their own voices and from lived experiences; "taking up the challenge to delve into the African woman question broadly, vigorously and on their own terms" (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997: 148). In exploring themes in *Silent Patience, The Invisible Weevil* and *Cassandra,* Showalter's tenet of looking at the woman as a critical writer, is put to the forefront. A step which leads women into criticizing self thus contributing to the establishment and development of the female aesthetics and therefore moving from the marginal to the centre.

The study is also supported by Hudson-Weems's (1980) feminism focusing on the experiences, struggles, needs and desires of Africana women. It generally presents something unique and African in the portrayal of the female reality. This is depicted in Nkwanzi, Okurut's protagonist as she vulnerably strives to vocalise the female concerns; Cassandra, Barungis' protagonist and Kaberuka's main character Stella, all female characters who negate the traditional metaphor of the "crowing hen."

The New Historicist literary theory has also been consulted in analysing the historicity of the narratives under study. Proponents of the theory, like Stephen Greenblatt asserts that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of the history of the author. He further avers that to understand a literary piece we need to understand the author's historical background and the ideas circulating at the time. New Historicists analyse texts with an eye of history involving the author's intentions.

The study also takes on Leech and Short's 1981 stylistic tenets of connotation, ornamentation, and coherence, which are related with expressiveness, emotiveness and emblematic features that characterise most of Ugandan female writers' narratives. The theory dates back to the literary scholarship of the Greeks and the Romans of the Fifth Century BC where dominant art was rhetorical. Rhetors and orators used decorative language to influence the emotions and opinions of their audiences.

It was meant for impressing or affecting others emotionally. Roman Jakobson (1960) refers to it as conative function because the emphasis was to arouse certain attitudes and feelings of the audience. They effected aesthetic stylistics in its ornamental approach and thus viewed this special use of language as the dress of thought. Stylistics investigates language use in literature. I read *Silent Patience, Cassandra,* and *The Invisible Weevil* along the lines of aesthetic stylistics deliberating on the substantial use of emblematic language in Ugandan female's narratives. Mary Okurut, Jane Kaberuka and Violet Barungi as representative samples interactively use structures such as imagery and symbolism, humorous incidents and comparative structures like similes and metaphors to convey meaning effectively. As part of stylistics, I also take particular interest in Gerard Genette's narratological theory. The theory looks at the internal mechanism of the story and the form taken by a narrated story. Gennette looks at not what a story says, but how a story is told; he looks at the text's composition. He further contends that every text discloses traces of narration which can be studied in order to understand exactly how the narrative is organised. He gives a number of narratological processes like the narrative time, narrative order, narrative frequency, narrative instances, perspectives and narrative mood, which create different effects for the reader. So, with Genette's narratology I study the narrative processes in the narratives,

specifically in *The Invisible Weevil*, in order to understand how the text is organised alongside the narration of the Ugandan nation.

Furthermore, aesthetic features of these works of art like structure, setting, plot development, characterisation, thematic concerns, and points of view meant to create specific literary perceptions will be analysed. By focusing on and centring the female characters the authors of the texts under study use various narrative perspectives like the omniscient narrator, style, characterization, and thematic treatment. These narrative strategies cement the place of women in Ugandan literature and society hence calling for a feminist reading of the texts.

The study also consults the sociological literary theory. Literature is concerned with society. The proponents of this theory like Burke Kenneth and Hipolite Taine opines that the theory pays attention to the various aspects of society and mirror social realities. The origin of the theory can be traced back to the 18th C when literary scholars like Taine advanced three principles that they believed would bring positive change if observed. These include Art for man's sake, context in literature and the writer as a change agent.

Regarding art for man's sake, sociological critics argue that what makes a work of art great is its ability to mirror the social realities in a given society. They believe that literature is about people in society and that it has an important role to play (Dipio 1998: 155). Literature according to the sociological theory should therefore, not only entertain, but also serve as a tool for social transformation (Mushengyezi 2002). That is why Hipolite a French scholar said that "literature is the consequence of the moment, the race and milieu" (Scott 1962: 123). It implies that a text exists in a particular social context and it cannot be divorced from the entire physical, sociological, and temporal setting in which it is produced. "The history of the people, their

cultural norms and values, economy and politics should all be included in a work of art if literature is to serve its mimetic role" (Mushengyezi: 2003: 75). According to Mushengyezi the social realities of a people give literature its raw materials. He therefore argues that while writing a work of art, writers should portray their characters, thematic concerns and conflicts as depicted in society because the relationship between literature and society is reciprocal. So, it is not only the result of social conflicts but also the cause of social effects.

The sociological literary theory further stresses the role of a writer as a change agent. Literature according to the sociological theory is "a conscious intervention in the struggles and conflicts taking place in society" (Dipio 1998: 157-158). The writer therefore has a role to play in that she /he has to influence society, to accept and adhere to certain norms and values represented by some characters and reject others. A reading of *Silent Patience, Cassandra* and *The Invisible Weevil* replays the Ugandan social atmosphere of the time. This theory is helpful to this study because Ugandan female authors' works of art anchor their roots in the Ugandan society and use the metaphor clear to its very people.

The theories selected for this study are also critical to the methodology since through them the study appreciates how the texts contribute to different theoretical discourses. Through the feminist theory, the study subjects itself to understanding the place of women in the society as represented in literary works. The feminist approach helps the study foreground the ways in which women, and the women writers, subvert retrogressive patriarchal practices. The sociological theory creates an environment through which the study reads the selected novels not just as products of the society but also as products from the society. A sociological reading hence extends the long held adage that 'Literature is a mirror of the society'. The stylistic approach helps the study appreciate the literariness of the novels under study. This approach focuses on

evaluating the novels not just for their sociological merits but also for their literary merits. This approach is closely tied to the narratological approach through which the study analyses the effectiveness of different narratological perspectives to the formation of a literary aesthetic. Then the New Historicist literary theory gives the background in which the narratives are rooted.

The novels analysed in this study, therefore, are what Alex Wanjala (2012), refers to as observational units. He defines an observational unit as the novel, for it focuses on the known histories and identities of the societies that the study concentrates on (Ugandan women). The study also relies on the historians and other critics of Ugandan (African) literature who have written about the texts under study and the society within which they are situated. This is what Wanjala calls an explanatory unit because it forms part of the historical data, which is societal (2012: 13).

1.9 Research Methodology

The study involves close reading of *Silent Patience, The Invisible Weevil* and *Cassandra* in a library-based technique. Using the textual analysis method as a way of appreciating the literary text as an aesthetic construct, I take the selected texts as the central focus of analysis and interpretation. I conduct a holistic analysis of the novels' specific concerns ascertaining the similarities and diversions, as a way of establishing the factors that have prompted the Ugandan female authors into writing themselves out of the literary silence. I also focus on the literary strategies in the selected novels to find out the styles that the selected writers use to bring out the concerns of the contemporary African woman. This helps to underscore the impact Uganda women writers have made to Uganda's contemporary literature.

I also conduct an in-depth study of the selected texts to identify to what extent each text has treated a similar issue in different situations. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology approach in analysing the findings, specifically, by using Charles Ragin's Case Oriented literary method which advocates for case-by-case analysis. Case by case literary method is an approach that considers each case individually rather than considering several cases together as a whole. This makes it possible to carry out a comparative study. Charles Ragin's assumption provides a foundation upon which each novel is to be read and interpreted in relation to the others. He further argues that each case is a complete whole and must be integrated and well-coordinated" (1994: i). He however warns that different parts of each case studied should be understood in relation to another and in terms of the whole that they form together. This in a way enables us to "explore similarities and differences across cooperative cases by pooling similar cases and comparing them as configurations" (xxi). Charles Ragin calls this kind of study the comparison of commonalities whereby the relevance of the texts for the study is based on their similarity in the cases/concerns. All the novels are from Uganda and by female writers from the country, analysing the cases (concerns), in each text and conducting a comparison is imperative. In my data collection and analysis I was guided by a set of questions which are attached in Appendix 1.

1.10 Chapter Outline

The thesis is made up of six chapters.

The first chapter gives the general background study and the ground upon which it stands by putting at the centre the discourses that this study contributes to. The chapter presents the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, hypothesis as well as the study's scope and

limitations. Other areas that this chapter covers include a review of literature on the contribution of African women to literature with a bias to the Ugandan literary scene and also a review of literature that relates to the study or which the study seeks to rebuff, theoretical framework, justification of the study and its methodology.

This study approaches the next five chapters through various critical perspectives of the novels under investigation in a case-oriented method along the lines of thematic concerns, literary strategies, and the impact these compositional elements have on the literary landscape.

The second chapter of this study examines the rapture of silence and the quest for belonging in Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience*. In doing so, the study investigates how Kaberuka presents the pertinent issues to the female question, from the socio-cultural point of view. The chapter subsequently takes an analysis of how the situation of the woman is presented as evolving over certain chronological periods through focussing on two generations of a family in Uganda, thus the deployment of the bildungsroman tradition of writing.

The third chapter focuses on the narration of Ugandan history in Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil.* This chapter deliberates on Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* and analyses the role of the Ugandan woman in constructing the nation. It looks at the challenges that a woman goes through as she strives to chart her career path outside her traditionally prescribed roles. It is traditionally conceptualized that it is only men who go for war, but here Okurut presents fictional women (Mama, Nkwanzi, and Atim) who actively involve themselves fully in the liberation of their country to change the course of history. The novel gives agency to Ugandan women who took part in the struggle to tell their stories. Okurut uses her characters to narrate the women's experiences of the struggle in the socio-political history of the country. The chapter also pays

attention to the treatment of the women after the struggle for peace and how ensuing opportunities are shared.

The fourth chapter of this study is an analysis of the presentation of changing norms in Violet Barungi's *Cassandra*. This chapter focuses on Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* and analyses the representation of changes in social norms and the depiction of the Ugandan woman's attempts to explore her identity in the contemporary world in search for (self) actualization and idealization. Male writers have been criticised for "idealizing and equating women to eternal beauty, motherhood and romanticizing them as Mother Africa, eternal nurturer; marginal, submissive and always at the periphery" (Nfah Abbenyi, 35). A reading of Ugandan female narratives, especially Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* shows how Ugandan women in the person of Cassandra the protagonist, "seek to break away from the dominant male stance by presenting women who create their spaces and locations from the female point of view" (35). For instance, Cassandra is committed to make something worthwhile of her life without compromising her values and principles (Barungi, 13). The chapter discusses the consequences of the African woman's attempts at an escape from the traditions that force her to the lower rung of society.

The fifth chapter of the study is an analysis of the emergent themes that string the three novels studied. In doing so, the study focuses on the exploration of history in the contemporary Ugandan female novel. The chapter conducts a comparative study of the three novels to showcase the commonalities in the three novels. It analyses how the authors bring out the concerns of the Ugandan woman from a female point of view in an endeavour to highlight contemporary Ugandan female writers' efforts to attain voice and reconstruct identity in patriarchal situations. The chapter also looks at the centrality of history in the representation of the Ugandan society by the contemporary female novelists.

Chapter Six situates the contemporary Ugandan novel within the corpus of women's writing in Africa. The chapter interrogates the representation of Ugandan social life in the studied novels in light of similar novels by female novelists in Africa. The chapter analyses the emergent discourse of various subjects of interest to the authors. It reads Ugandan literature as a key component of African feminist literature.

The conclusion summarises the study by showing how the three authors have highlighted concerns that affect women in contemporary Ugandan society and their place in African literature. The section also offers possibilities for further scholarship on Ugandan literature.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 Voicing the Female Quest for Acceptance in Ugandan Society: Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents Jane Kaberuka's novel, *Silent Patience,* as a representation of the changing notions of women in the contemporary Ugandan society and how these changes parallel the nation's journey from a purely traditional setup to colonialism and then to independence and its challenges. In examining the thematic concerns and how they respond to societal challenges in the contemporary society, the chapter focuses on the changes that the various regimes take the country through and the personal transformations of the individual female characters.

I rely on the theories of feminism, which look at the gender inequalities as a societal problem that is deeply ingrained in the social structures and not as an individual matter. Elaine Showalter's concept of gynocriticism is also a crucial approach in this chapter since it advocates for the understanding of texts by women and the examination of the female struggle for identity and the social construct of gender and the evaluation of female experiences in novels by women. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* (2009) observes that for gynocritics, the focus in literary analysis becomes the history, styles, themes, structures, and genres of writing by women…" (118).The thematic concerns in the novel are largely a depiction of the social and cultural concerns that the author reflects upon, and this echoes Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* (1972) whereby he observes that, "Literature and the novel do not exist in isolation; neither does its raw material form in a vacuum" (4), that society and the writer influence one another. As the writer reflects on the

society, the novel also plays an influential role in shaping the society. Kaberuka responds to the changing social environment through her work which Ngugi perceives that the writer is the "sensitive needle to register with varying degrees of accuracy and success, the conflict and tension in the changing society" (47).

I also espouse Hudson-Weem's (1980) perspectives on feminism, which focuses on black unity, which Weems accuses white feminism of destabilizing. Africana womanism presents itself as an alternative and suitable framework for the individual needs of the African woman. Weem presents a unique portrayal of the African female reality in literature, which the other strands (considered Western) do not. Hers is a liberal approach, which proposes a belief in "self-naming and self-defining" in assessing female realities. I use the two strands to examine Jane Kaberuka's presentation of the fictitious female reality as she bases her work on her experiences as a woman.

Judith Lorber in *Gendered Bodies: Feminist Perspectives* (2011) understands the concept of gender inequality as having been built into the organization of families, politics, religion, work, economy, the arts and other cultural productions as well as the languages that people speak. She observes that "gender is now perceived to be social status, personal identity, and a set of relationships between women and men, and among women and men. She further avers that sex is no longer seen as a one-way input or basic material for social arrangements, but a complex interplay of genes, hormones, physiology, environment, and behaviour, with loo-back effects" (8). Thus, according to her, the idea of complementarity necessitates social and individual solutions; a fact we seemingly discover in the writings of contemporary female authors.

The bildungsroman tradition in novel writing gives this chapter a conceptual framework from which we can understand the maturation of the characters through their experiences as

represented by the author. The idea of searching or seeking for a lost object and endeavoring to find a resolution to the sense that something is missing in a person's life and the possibility that there can be a restoration; are some of the themes that nearly all forms of literature are concerned with although in diverse contexts with different styles. Nevertheless, these ideas become more pertinent when reading novels that we can categorize as 'quest narratives' or the Bildungsroman.

Apollo Amoko in *Autobiography and Bildungsroman in African Literature* (2009) makes crucial arguments on the nature of the African bildungsroman that influence the arguments in this chapter. In reading autobiographies together with the bildungsroman novel Amoko argues that they both "participate in the same conversation regarding the fundamental nature of African societies in the wake with colonialism" (196). Even though Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* does not venture into colonial debates it parallels Amoko's argument on the nature of African societies with regards to patriarchal institutions and the characters' desires to usurp the retrogressive enforced by these institutions. This parallel of the novel and Amoko's argument is reinforced further when Amoko states that:

> Both autobiographies and bildungsroman have provided important avenues for African writers to explore new ways of being in the…postcolonial worlds. By telling stories of individual passages from childhood into adulthood, the authors critique the past and present and offer alternative futures (197)

Amoko reads the autobiography together with the bildungsroman due to their nature of being works that focus on the growth of the characters. *Silent Patience* offers an understanding of being in the Ugandan postcolonial society by telling the story of Stella, Agnes, their past as well as their present and imagining the future. Through this narrative, we get to see the growth of the "young protagonist in an uncertain world" and also a period of social upheaval "where the

traditional ways were being seriously undermined if not forever transformed" (200), as espoused by Amoko. These transformations, as argued in this chapter are largely voiced by Agnes, the protagonist.

In *Struggling with the African Bildungsroman* (2015), Ralph A. Austen studies African novels that have followed the tradition of growth. He observes that:

> A common feature across this cultural divide is an engagement with historical change, although one whose specifically political dimensions have been […] misrepresented in much of the established scholarship (215).

Austen also continues his argument by noting that critics of the African bildungsroman have particularly focused on the political aspect of the genre and on the question whether such writing is oriented towards the nation state (222). Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* conforms to Austen's argument on the African bildungsroman. The conformity to Austen's argument is seen when we read the family as a microcosm of the nation as represented from the beginning of the novel when Kaberuka introduces the reader to a significant moment in the history of Uganda—the swearing in of Agnes as the first woman Minister of Health (1). Though the family takes center stage in the narration, Kaberuka overtly weaves in the challenges the country is facing, as it moves towards a stable democracy, in terms of civil wars and how the family is affected by this. The challenges the family has been facing as it moves towards liberating itself from various retrogressive cultural entanglements, could be read as metaphors for the challenges the country is facing. The challenges faced by the families are; divorce, death, infidelity, and retrogressive cultural practices.

Ogaga Okuyade (2009) brings in a new dimension to the understanding of the concept of bildungsroman by further contextualizing it to the female African texts. He adopts the traditional

definition of the genre as a narrative technique that tracks the development trajectories of the principal characters from childhood to maturation. He adds that it is meant to "lead the reader to the protagonist's greater personal enrichment as he or she journeys from youth to psychological or emotional maturity" (22).

Critics such as Marie Kruger while reading *Silent Patience* have explored the logic of sacrifice and to some extent the stoicism that the characters show during pain and suffering. She argues that the novel "frames its main narrative with an image of professional success and also familial harmony" (73). Though not entirely related to the arguments in this chapter this assertion by Kruger in *Women's Literature in Kenya and Uganda: The Trouble with Modernity* (2011), partially reflects the arguments that this chapter makes in trying to read Kaberuka as a narrator of familial and social relationships and a historian of Uganda while also extending the reading on *Silent Patience* to reflect the intrigues on the growth of the Ugandan nation. Kruger's argument resonates with the idea of narrating social relationships in Kaberuka's novel and how these harmonious relationships are tied to the success of the characters and the nation. The relationship between the family and the nation is seen throughout the fabric of the novel, and Kruger's reading of the novel as a narration of sacrifice and a novel that "follows the trajectory of the romance novel in its admiration for the bourgeois lifestyle…" (82) is crucial to the arguments in this chapter since it provides us with an avenue to read *Silent Patience* differently.

Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* narrates the Ugandan family life of the 60s as remarked by Agnes when she informs her mother that in her time people marry for love as opposed to her mother's time when people married because it was the right thing to do; "We are living in the sixties, people marry for love" (7) and the cultural challenges that accompany it. The novel also represents the feminine experiences in a patriarchal society and the pain the characters go

through as they evolve to maturity. Kaberuka omnisciently narrates the Ugandan family life using the character of Agnes Dumba Dronyi, the daughter of Stella and Michael. The novel starts with the swearing in of Agnes as the "first woman Minister of Health" (1) and then embarks on a flashback that introduces us to the cultural, familial, and political life of Uganda in the 1960s. The cultural life represented in the novel is a depiction of two generations, the first being occupied by Stella and the second being occupied by Agnes. The link between Stella and Agnes—mother and daughter—gives us a trajectory through which we can examine the development of the characters to the point where retrogressive cultural practices are not only questioned but also voiced and shunned. Stella and her generation who lived before the sixties represent a generation that learnt to live without questioning the established societal norms; they understood that the social practices were retrogressive but would not question them since what people thought was right for one was to be accepted (8), which meant that girls would never progress with their education once they reached a marriageable age, and a potential wealthy suitor came by. This became the fate of Stella who was married off to Michael since he belongs to a wealthy family and the boy she loved, David, came from a poor family and which is perceived to be banned from intermarriage with people from the family Stella came from as her mother asserts, "…we never exchange brides with the Agabas. Your father would never allow you to marry into a Hutu family" (10). So, school, and love for a husband, was secondary to the life of a girl**.**

Similarly, traditionally, many tribes in Uganda bore political and social grudges and conflicts against each other and never allowed tribal/ethnic intermarriages. For instance, among the Baganda, the fathers had an upper hand in the life and marriage of their daughters. They were always the ones to decide when and to whom their daughters would marry. This was mostly also

because of levying bride price on the daughters for they were always considered as sources of income. So, it was a principle that a Muganda would marry a Muganda. If you were not a Muganda, so you were a Munyoro (a foreigner) and there would be no marriage between the two. Otiso M.K. Kefa (2009) in *Culture and Customs* asserts that males and females in Uganda were taught specific roles that contributed to the formation of unique Ugandan cultures (89). Similar assertions on the marriage customs of the Baganda are also explained by Namirembe T. F. in *Portraits of Girl and Boy Children in Kiganda Tradition Deconstructed* (2014: 19-20).

2.2 Intrigues of Womanhood and Self-definition

As Kaberuka introduces us to the intrigues of womanhood and marriage she also introduces us to intercultural challenges between Stella's community and the Hutu's that dictated from which culture one got married into. First, Stella had no choice in the man she was going to marry and second the man was never going to come from the Hutu community since this would not be sanctioned by her father. It is notable that Stella's family were not descendants of Uganda but refugees. Her parents, seemingly Tutsi's, came to the country from Rwanda. The frustration of not belonging is borne by her mother who tells her that "Being a refugee hurts very much. One feels like he has no identity. You feel like you don't belong…And that is painful" (11). Through Stella and her mother, the author narrates not only the Ugandan social life but also the Rwandan life and how the conflicts and displacements that arose still haunted those who fled to Uganda. This longing for returning home is reflected not only in her mother's hopefulness that they will one day return to Rwanda but also in her desire that her daughter Stella would marry a Rwandese like them so that "their norms, values and culture...would remain intact" (11).

It would be right to argue that Stella and her mother in the narration occupy the same space as the refugees and are representations of women who seemed to have lost their identities within the patriarchal culture that they were growing and married into and thus embarking in a quest to establish their female identity. Patriarchy defined who a woman was and what she would and would not do which left the women alienated in their bodies and cultures and thus the longing for home. Though we do not get to see much of Stella's mother in the narration, her conversations with Stella reveal to us her beliefs which have been shaped by the culture in which she grew up. It is a culture that the life of a woman was dictated upon by the man and enforced by family members. This is evident when Stella narrates that her desire was to complete her education, but her father had other ideas. At seventeen years she says that "My father felt I had received enough education than a girl was supposed to. If the chief's son wanted me as a wife there was no way I would be allowed to stay in school" (5). This belief by Stella's father is reinforced by her mother who tells her that "You have enough education to enable you to look after your family. Do you want to become like those women who bury themselves in books forgetting everything else only to wake up in to a world without a man or a child? (9)" Education during Stella's time served the purpose of keeping girls engaged as they waited for potential suitors. While they might have become enlightened enough to question some of the beliefs their culture propagated, they could not free themselves from the cultural demands and to some extent they felt alienated from themselves. "My stubborn spirit convinced me that this custom like a few others, did not make sense" (13). She confesses later.

Furthermore, before her marriage Stella wishes she could just have seen Michael even if for a second. "But when will I meet him?" She asks. "When you are married to him" Her mother

answered. (8). He remains to her a stranger until the day of her wedding, and she relies on stories from her siblings to create a mental image of the man she was going to spend the rest of her life with. This portrays the double alienation a woman faces at marriage and confirms Florence Stratton's argument in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (1994), that marriage to a woman means permanent displacement. Stella's dilemma as she is forcefully betrothed and married to a man she did not know and love, parallels Grace Ogot's Nyapol's dilemma in *The Promised Land* (2000) when she must blindly follow her husband Ochola as he moves from Seme to Tanganyika a fertile agricultural land. Alluding to a similar situation Alex Wanjala, in *An Unsettled Hearth: Women's Voices in Postcolonial Kenyan Fiction* (2012) argues: "A woman must get married and leave her familiar surroundings to go and live with her husband; a woman faces exclusion from her own family, to go and join another family elsewhere" (85-86). The family in *Silent Patience* is structured as an institution that is there to enforce cultural norms however retrogressive they might have been. Aunty Flora, Stella's aunt, whose word was law and was respected in her family as the heir-apparent to leadership of the family is the one who gives the go ahead for Stella to be married off to the Chief's son (6). Even though the author elevates Flora to the position of the leader of the family after the death of their mother, her leadership does nothing to liberate the women from the retrogressive customs but instead enforces them unquestionably.

It seems that as Stella begins to question some of the practices that undermine women and have been sustained by the masculine traditions, it is the elderly women who are contracted to enforce the retrogressive practices. When Stella marries Michael even though prematurely and out of coercion, it is expected that he will force himself on her as custom dictated. Stella once again questions this custom calling it "absurd and illogical" (13) since sex was supposed to be an act of

love and not one that was dictated by custom. It also turns out that Michael shares the same view with Stella and promises not to touch her on her wedding night. The marriage between Stella and Michael becomes an opportunity to challenge some of the retrogressive patriarchal practices that characterized marriages in the past. The marriage is seen as a chance to redefine courtship in marriage. Kaberuka seems to bring to the center two characters who are victims of their cultures and out of this choose to construct a different narrative for their children and marriage. It is for this reason that Michael is not elated at the news that Stella is pregnant. He says that he had hoped that they would have waited for their love for each other to grow without having to share it with another and sees this as an opportunity that would have probably given each of them a chance to know each other and their expectations of each other.

On her part, Stella understands that pregnancy and motherhood would hasten the growth of their love to maturity, but this does not become the case. This offers distinct perceptions that each character had on love in marriage. For Michael, love could only have been shared between Stella and him but for Stella motherhood provided a more potent avenue to express love in marriage. The birth of Agnes and Pauline marks the beginning of Michael's philandering ways since he did not want to manage the strain that sexual abstinence caused. Fatherhood becomes a seeming impediment to love in marriage while motherhood is perceived a perfect chance for love in marriage to blossom. Michael is later rumored to be having an affair with Naome (32) and as though failing to live up to the author's moral expectations, and probably subscribe to Stella's ideology on parenting as a chance to love each other more and better, Michael dies due to a road accident together with Pauline. "He sustained internal injuries. Nobody could save him" (46). Michael's death seems to be the author's intention to give Stella sufficient room to grow as a

mother and make choices on the influences she would like her children to have without having to worry over a promiscuous husband.

Marital life does not prove to be what both Kaberuka and her protagonist, Stella expected or were told to expect. This instance creates a similarity between her autobiography and *Silent Patience* in the sense that after taking a year off her studies to focus on her marriage, Kaberuka narrates that it is not what she had thought she would experience because she spends most time focusing on giving birth. For Stella, marriage proves to be another source of resentment and discontent, especially when her husband begins to see other women outside their marriage. She keeps her silence hoping and working on ways of making their marriage work as her mother had instructed her, but this proves futile as Michael does not change his ways.

In what Okuyade refers to as the second phase in his typography of the female Bildungsroman, Stella begins the journey to self-awareness and contemplates leaving the marriage. Even though her move does not materialise, it opens another route as Michael finally realizes his mistake and apologizes. However, it is astounding that Stella still must take the blame for Michael's philandering with claims by Michael that if she cannot provide what he needs, Michael can get it from somewhere else. At this instance, Stella has begun exploring her femininity as she journeys to self-actualisation; she insists that they must observe family planning in their quest to grow the family. Her pursuit for self-actualization hits two obstacles at this stage; first, she gets pregnant when she did not plan. Secondly, she loses her husband and her younger daughter to an accident a few months before giving birth to Michael Junior.

This death further opens an avenue for the growth of Stella who takes over some of the responsibilities that Michael oversaw. In the death of Michael, the transfer of these responsibilities even though expected become somewhat a transfer of agency and freedom to

Stella since it is from then on that we get to see her grow and take charge of both her personal and love life. In doing so, Kaberuka allocates agency or voice to the character of Stella, and this evolves as she grows within the novel thus fulfilling the requirements of a bildungsroman kind of novel. Voice in the novel becomes a metaphor of agency as well as land; reason being that it is through speaking or airing their opinions that the characters—more so Stella—contest cultures that have been long used to confine women to subservience. I also consider land to be a metaphor of agency—not through the capitalistic lenses—but as a source that gives one the opportunity to nurture and produce for both the current and the next generation. Stella's voice is made to be heard speaking out against the patriarchal institutions that she is advised to abide by no matter how retrogressive they are. I will look at the agency that Stella is allowed in the novel and examine to what extent it is detrimental or beneficial to her character.

The agency allocated to Stella after the death of her husband further solidifies the changes in cultural norms and her identity. It is a moment that gives her the freedom to make her own choices as a woman and as a mother. As I look at how voice has been used as a tool of repression and freedom in the novel, it is seen that the voice elderly women held in the novel during Stella's early years was largely a repressive voice and a voice of anguish and regret. The repressiveness is evident in Stella's aunt who sanctions her marriage to Michael even though Stella herself was against this. Aunt Flora, who was respected even by Stella's father and whose word was law uses her word to push Stella into the retrogressive holes of patriarchy. Her voice however powerful operates against the women. Stella's mother, even though not as powerful as Aunt Flora, uses her voice to encourage her daughter to get married to a man she never loved. Mama has lost the desire to fight against these established patriarchal norms and the only thing her heart longs for is

the day they would return home. The nostalgia for home supersedes any desire for freedom for the women that Mama represents.

The trajectory of growth alluded to earlier between mother and daughter starts taking form when Kaberuka sets the tone for a girl (Agnes) who will rise above the clouds by narrating to us the words her father said when she was "five or six". Michael praises Agnes by saying "Leave Agnes to me Stella. That girl will rise above the clouds. She'll honor me!" (1). True to his words, Agnes rises above all possible clouds and becomes the first woman to head the Health Ministry in Uganda. Agnes becomes the character who grows in an environment where her voice is nurtured and is allowed to question certain norms unlike her mother's generation which was largely silenced. This voice is first expressed through the intimacy of a letter she writes her mother in which she complains that her brothers should help around the house and not reduce their mother to a servant (25-26). The use of letter writing as a narrative style has been alluded by Chinenye Ifeoma Okparanta in *Rewriting the Letter: Women and Epistolary Forms in Post-Independence African Fiction in English* (2013) wherein she argues that

> […] the epistolary novel in Africa is increasingly becoming an effective means for writers to represent the experiences of the marginalized figures and highlight their processes of self-definition as national […] and diasporic subjects" (1)

This argument by Okparanta is portrayed when Agnes writes to her mother regarding her relationship with her brothers and domestic chores. It is evident that the society in which they live has marginalized the women and letter writing not only becomes a mean of expressing intimate subjects but also orchestrating social revolutions as again observed by Okparanta where she notes that "Epistolarity in African fiction testifies to personal revolutions by the characters […] in the interest of imagining a more inclusive future for their post-colonial nations" (1).

Just like in Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter*, Agnes reveals her frustration with the society and seems to be calling for a social revolution in the interest of seeing a more inclusive future by writing to her mother that "You must train those boys to help you. You are their mother not their servant. You are not a donkey, Mama, you can't carry every burden for that house" (26). It is a letter that shows the frustration that Agnes had put up with in seeing her mother tirelessly carry every burden of the household to which Agnes wanted a change. The words "servant, donkey, and burden" describe what Stella and other women of her generation might have felt like through the treatment they received in their households, and this is what Agnes stands against. Agnes's voice takes root when her mother decides to heed to her advice, after reading the letter to Michael. She says that "I'm going to heed her advice; the boys must start helping me around the house" (28). The epistolary form is used as a communication tool between these women characters, and this might be seen as an element of female writing, a contribution of female writers to literature. Letter writing between Stella and her daughter Agnes indicates the motif of friendship and 'sister hood' that exists between mother and daughter. Agnes continues to communicate to her mother through letters and this cements their relationship in the narrative.

This moment in the life of Stella and Agnes narrates the changes that are taking part in all the families across the country. Agnes becomes a representation of young women who have come - of - age and are not just questioning retrogressive norms silently but confronting them openly. The fact that Michael did not object to Agnes's advice in the letter shows that he agrees with what she says. Michael and Stella questioned some of these norms propagated through the family, but they could not confront them since the structures around them were powerful and silencing. Agnes becomes their voice and as such they give her the space to confront the

retrogressive norms in the society and influence change. This coming - of - age of Agnes marks several pivotal moments in their lives.

The death of Michael in the novel invokes the idea of seeking and affirming female identity free from masculine definitions and oppositions. Michael's death gives room for Stella and Agnes to explore their emotional growth and maturation amid their pain and suffering. It is a death that gives the female characters room to explore their emotions and learn to manage and grow through them while also introducing us to Deborah who is a close friend of Agnes. Her mother, Monica, had her fair share of suffering after being involved in accident that left her in sorrow and pain. "You see, Mama was involved in an accident, and she survived. But since then, all she had known is sorrow and pain" (66). Through Deborah, Kaberuka seems to be introducing the reader to her own suffering after being involved in a road accident. She takes this chance to narrate her "silent patience in all her suffering" (38). The narration seems to bear semblance to the author's life as she narrates in her autobiography, *Has God Forgotten Me?A Cry for an Accident Victim* (1990) in which she narrates her painful experiences in her marriage and also after surviving a car accident that left her immoblised. Of her marriage and accident, Kaberuka whose experience in marriage is somewhat like that of Stella's, reveals the bitterness she felt when someone that she loved and gave up her dreams for, betrayed her when she needed him most. Her quest for self-actualization begins when she decides to separate from her husband. Of the separation, she says:

> Physical pain is not the only pain I have had to adjust to. The one man I loved and believed in could not cope with my disability. He has cut and run leaving me to cope alone. He has withdrawn all support, psychological, emotional and financial. Other than the accident, this has been one of the most traumatic experiences in my life. I have hurt and hurt, but finally, I am at peace, and God is in control" (141)

After extensive treatment, she can walk, despite the initial fears of permanent paralysis, and she feels God played a part in her healing. This incident and the aftermath are what led to writing the autobiography. Having been deserted by her husband at her greatest point of need, she reveals a sense of bitterness and disappointment that she felt. Further, she confesses how she resorted to Christianity and the Bible to help her recover from both her physical pain resulting from the accident and the psychological distress from her new identity and rejection by her husband (143). The pain as narrated by Kaberuka in her autobiography stems from both her family and her accident and these two incidences compound her narration in *Silent Patience.* Stella's and Agnes' voice in *Silent Patience* become the voices of Kaberuka in her autobiography. In her autobiography she focuses on her personal emotional struggles whereas in *Silent Patience* we see the struggles of the characters from a social and personal view.

The novel, through the political representations brought about by the state of being a refugee as seen by Stella and her mother, the struggle for female agency as characterized by the relationship between Agnes, Stella, and the antagonistic patriarchal cultures and the culmination of this struggle for agency with Agnes becoming the first woman Minister of Health, becomes a mirror to the society while the autobiography becomes a personal reflection. Kaberuka's pain and stoicism in her life also become points of narration in her novel wherein she takes the characters through moments of growth in the painful circumstances they face be it sickness, death of a family member and even severe bodily damage. This intersection between her autobiography and the novel brings out the difference in the treatment of gender in handling the bildungsroman genre. As Camilla Brandstrom observes, while the male bildungsroman begins from childhood, the fictions of female development mostly begin when the protagonist is older and has already married and even perhaps given birth. Feelings of frustrations with her life as it is, motivate her

self-development (12). These are evident in both Kaberuka's and Stella's journeys to self-actualization.

Another difference between the male and the female bildungsroman is that female protagonist, unlike the male, do not receive formal schooling. Even when they do, they do not have many options that can help them grow, but which only consolidate their 'female nurturing roles rather than take active roles in shaping the society" (12). For instance, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* (1986) reflects this desire of the female character, Paulina, to get an education as her growth parallels that of the nation. The female character and her quest for formal education in the African bildungsroman is also seen in Tsitsi Ndangaremba's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) in which the female protagonist, Tambudzai, struggles to get an education within patriarchal institutions that favour the male child. Thus, the major difference is observed in the desire to get formal education and the woman's position in the society. The heroine in a female bildungsroman remains at home; the attempt to overcome these obstacles become part of her journey to self-actualization as we see in Stella and Kaberuka. By bringing in Agnes' journey from birth, Kaberuka presents self-actualization as a never-ending quest that women have to attempt even if they will not make it themselves. They break the ground for the next generations of women to achieve what they have been clamoring for.

From Okuyade's perspective of the African Female Bildungsroman, the narrative presents the awakening of the female characters to their conditions of life, which limits their aspirations for the future. Stella, for instance, is forced to display tendencies of resentment and discontent for her situation and the desire to transcend them. Filled with hopes and dreams to complete her education, she feels it is not right for her family to decide for her when and whom to marry and begins to question the existing customs. However, despite her fights, she is married off to

Michael Dumba and must undergo the traditional marriage ceremonies, which she feels undermine and curtail her freedom. At the age of 17, she goes into a marriage and does not have a choice. She says:

> Like the woman who suckled me, carried me on her back, and sung me lullabies as she put me to sleep, I first saw my husband clearly on our wedding night. Surprising? Maybe to you. But to me and those of my generation, this was the norm. In those days, marriages were arranged. The family of the boy would approach that of the girl and ask for her hand in marriage. Michael's family approached mine this way (4).

She must stay indoors in a secluded room for almost four months without an opportunity to meet her friends. Despite her discontent, her quest is scuttled by the power of the customary laws, and she must settle down in marriage. The fact that Kaberuka, herself went through the ritual of early marriage and that she seems to suggest that this hindered her from enjoying her stay in campus, presents the author with a framework to advance her plot and speak out against customs that she feels rob young girls the opportunity of achieving their dreams.

In a manner that castigates the arranged marriages, Kaberuka takes a jibe at the model of arranged marriages by equating it to "the norm." An arranged marriage is presented as a ritualized custom that determines the power relations in marriage; the practice does not call for the woman's consent. From an early age, women are socialized into the culture that expects them to accept everything that is decided for them without questions. Stella says, "From the time I turned sixteen I had sensed that plans were being made for marriage. But nobody ever told me anything" (4). After a short period, her aunt Flora calls her and informs her that, "You are to be married by the end of the year to one of the chief's sons. His name is Michael. We have given the Chief's people the go-ahead for the usual bridal negotiations, including the exchange of gifts between our families (6). From this, we can deduce that the men in the society do not necessarily

perpetrate some of the limiting conditions that women seek to overcome in their quest for self-actualization. Aunty Flora, for instance, is an example of the women who have not only been socialized into the society's view of the place of the woman but has also been charged with the role of ensuring such customs are obeyed and passed on across generations.

The family as narrated in *Silent Patience* becomes a source of pain and comfort. For Stella, she must endure the pain of losing her husband to Naome, the mistress, and to death. She finds comfort in Agnes through whom the reader also gets to meet Deborah, Agnes' friend and school mate, whose family is also plagued by its fair share of painful experiences. The introduction of Deborah also brings about Monica, her mother, and Sam, Deborah's father who are married to each other and are representations of the evolution of the marital institution from a conservative one to a liberal one.

Monica, Deborah's mother, is set apart as Kaberuka's archetype in the narration of pain and growing through painful experiences in life. Other than Monica being rendered invalid by the road accident, she is also stricken by cancer, and it is through her final days that we get to see the journey she makes in coming to terms with her own impending mortality. Monica's growth through the painful experiences is seen even in her decline when she tries to plan out the life of her husband after she is dead. Monica realizes the grief her death will cause her family and tries to suggest to Sam that he marries Stella for the happiness of both her family and Stella's family. This is necessitated by the fact that Stella had also been widowed earlier on and both families had been close friends. Monica suggests to Sam that "You've seen how our children get on together so well. Now, all I ask of you both is to join families and look after them together" (158).

The journey Monica makes towards accepting her fate and imagining the future for her husband and her children becomes a representation of her liberal stance towards marriage. It becomes a journey that seems to represent changes in the institution of marriage with regards to suffering and impending death. When Monica suggests to Sam that he should join his family with Stella's upon her death, she seems to suggest that death should not be seen as an end but just the beginning of new relationships. Monica believes that it is upon her to do as much as she can to make sure that her death does not rob her family of the peace and joy that she wants them to have. This joy and peace, Monica seems to believe, is found in the female friendships she had formed with Stella and her daughter, Deborah, and as such should not be broken but sustained by them even in her death. The journey Monica makes towards her demise is surrounded by Stella, her friend, and Deborah who watches her mother as she stoically goes through her growth which ironically leads to her death somewhat signaling the attainment of perfection.

To honour Monica's wishes in her death and to sustain the bonds of friendship created by the families, Sam and Stella agree to get married and even settle on a date for it. However much Sam and Stella had agreed to join their families as per Monica's wishes, this does not happen because Sam gets killed by gunmen (237). This death seems to serve as an indicator that the society was probably not ready for the liberal ideas that Monica and Sam, together with Stella embodied. It could also have been occasioned by the fact that Sam did not see the point of getting married in a ceremony—Sam believed that love and respect in a relationship was more important than marriage. This seemingly goes against Kaberuka's moral code that places emphasis on marriage as she had presented through Monica and the fact that Sam does not subscribe fully to it then necessitates his death which happens unexpectedly.

Monica's battle with cancer and being an invalid creates an avenue for the examination of the changing perceptions of the family unit and the progress the family unit is making towards becoming more liberal and shedding some retrogressive patriarchal practices and even conservative tenets which were not of any value. While the family had initially been a source of pain, the author, through Monica's journey, now narrates and foresees the family as an avenue of comfort, peace, and joy and tries to maintain the characters that abide by this view. It is for this reason that Kaberuka seems to do away with Sam haphazardly since he seemed not to share the same perception on the institution of marriage which was what propagated familial relationships.

Kaberuka tries to rectify this notion of the family by narrating the lives of the younger characters such as Agnes. It is through these characters that we get to see which norms the author wants sustained in the society. At first, Agnes emerges as a character that helps her mother navigate through the fabrics of retrogressive patriarchal institutions until she begins to question some of the practices she sees in her time. Stella did not get married to David because he came from a poor family and due to tribal antagonism, a fact she had no control over, but Agnes comes to question her about this. Initially Stella wanted to marry because of love but the social forces were against this and as such she had to marry as a convenience and because of wealth. She tells Agnes "Love is not everything…Most of the time love surrounded by poverty inevitably gives birth to lots of bickering" (165). This is a contrast to the Stella who we met earlier on who would have given everything to marry for love.

2.3 Male-female double Bildungsroman

Charlotte Goodman's in *The Lost Twin: Women Novelists and the Male Female Bildungsroman* (1983) argues that "the double form of the bildungsroman, with its focus on the growth of the

male and female protagonists, appears to be congenial to the woman novelist who wishes to emphasize how the society that rigidly differentiates male and female gender roles limits men and women alike" (31). It dramatizes the limitations that the patriarchal society places on both David and Stella and Agnes and Jimmy/Steve making it difficult for them to realize fruitful relations without the limitations the society places on them. Even though the two do not come across as the psychological doubles that Goodman observes in her categorization, continuallybeing involved in the psychological life of the other, they are brought back together by their adventures and the desire to move on from their past. Even though they begin their relationship from childhood, the author presents their relationship as a radical move away from the societal norms. The narrative highlights their shared childhood with their love and the silent promise of belonging to each other. Agnes is presented as the character who is faced by the conflict of choosing a life partner between two men who represent different ideologies. Whereas Agnes and Steve represent the progressiveness and the liberal nature of their society, Jimmy is set apart as the young man who still holds on to the retrogressive patriarchal beliefs and insecurities which are revealed when he comes to learn of Steve Dronyi to whom Agnes is attracted. These insecurities by Jimmy come to maturation when he is reunited with Agnes and he rapes and impregnates her. This forces Agnes to recognize him as her husband for fear that the society would label her a fornicator which again shows that however progressive the society was becoming, it still held on to some retrogressive practices and it takes the actions of Jimmy for us to see this come into play.

This forced marriage between Jimmy and Agnes becomes a representation of the desertion Kaberuka faced in her personal life when she became an invalid. This abandonment is seen when Jimmy deserts Agnes after a fire accident that distorts her physical beauty. Thus, their reunion

does not bring them back to the solace of the childhood experience when they were together and thought would remain undivided. It is a brutal contrast to Agnes' childhood experiences and views of male-female relationship in marriage, which she shared with her mother whenever she had the opportunity.

Through Agnes and Jimmy, Kaberuka shows how the society transfers and still holds on to some conservative elements when it comes to marriage. While the two may have been in love in childhood, there is no guarantee that their marriage was bound to be a happy one. By employing the structure of the male-female double bildungsroman to narrate the experiences of Stella/David and Agnes/Jimmy, Kaberuka seemingly uses her own experiences as a woman to represent the fragmentation of male and female experiences in marriage and where gender roles have a rigid definition.

The Bildungsroman provides the necessary form and cultural mechanism that writers use to highlight societal and individual progression. In *Silent Patience*, Kaberuka also brings out the coexistence that such progression brings out; for instance, the growth of Uganda which parallels the growth of the significant female characters in the text. *Silent Patience* is a narrative that effectively centers the family in its narration of the nation. Stella is born to a family of Rwandan refugees in Uganda who long for home. The novel seemingly uses marriage and the family unit as a metaphor for political progression towards stability. Stella's marriage is replete with challenges of infidelity and being widowed. When the author moves from this marriage, she introduces us to Sam's and Monica's which offer a glimpse of progression but then again death curtails this promise when both Monica and Sam die. Steve, Jimmy, and Agnes become representations of the challenges the young nation is faced with. Inclusion of the nation and the

narration of the past reflect what Linda Hutcheon argues in *The Politics of Postmodernism* with regards to historiographic metafiction. She argues that:

> as we have traditionally known it: as we have been seeing in historiographic metafiction as well, we now get the histories (in the plural) of the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as the much sung few, and I might add, of women as well as men (66).

This argument goes to the core of *Silent Patience* which emerges as a narrative of breaking dominant perceptions long held within the family and reflecting the nation. It is a narrative that centers the women in the process of imagining the nation and in doing so narrates these women succeeding within spaces that have for a long time stifled their growth; thus, breaking the traditional silence.

Conclusion

Through the Bildungsroman, therefore, Kaberuka creatively weaves women's journeys of seeking self-actualization and the nation's quest for stability and development after the post-colonial disillusionment. She seeks to address the conflict between the ideal of self-determination and the demands of socialization. Thus, she presents the feminine quest for self-actualization not as opposing the social norms, but rather an attempt to internalize them and create a sense of unity between the two.

Kaberuka introduces the growth and the experiences of other female characters in the novel across three different generations, each facing a set of unique challenges, but all bound together with the underlying sense of marginalization. Although Marie Kruger identifies the women as suffering from the logic of sacrifice, Kaberuka through the first-person point of view selectively

picks on the subjectivities of each of the female characters in a manner that points to her the spirit that she espouses in her autobiography and personal life. For her, the female experiences seem to harden the female characters in the sense of spiritual purification that is necessary for the political positions they seek to hold. This borrows heavily from the tragedies in her life, out of which she gained the courage and confidence to make independent choices.

The three female protagonists, Stella's mother, Stella, and Agnes are depicted as women who find themselves in three different societies albeit in similar situations as regards to patriarchy within which they strive to break what is considered the norm. Kaberuka's adoption of the female bildungsroman alongside an autobiographical depiction of women who are not only fashioned in her own experiences but also make attempts to disrupt the social structures is her strategy of achieving what she says about her writings:

> My writing is educational; it is meant to give hope. I can say without fear that God is using my condition to reach so many others. Whatever wisdom I impart is given to me through Him, who is wisdom." (143)

From the analysis, the use of the autobiographical impulse, alongside the genre of the bildungsroman in fictional narratives, can be a useful tool for advocating female agency as they give the female writer space through which she can speak to the issues affecting women from her own experiences. The semblance between the two genres and their use by Kaberuka is reinforced using the first-person narrative voice, which is common in autobiographies. It helps the author to achieve closeness and immediacy with the readers. It is thus a useful way of narrating personal issues that one would ordinarily wish to keep private.

Summarily, Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* evokes the themes of growth in the family and the growth of the family as allegories for the nation. This is seen in the journeys the families in the

novel make towards attaining some level of stability. The journeys of the families' parallel those of the Ugandan nation as it strides towards democracy. These journeys – of the family and the nation – are filled with challenges through which those involved not only grow physically but also emotionally. The theme of women empowerment is also evoked in *Silent Patience* through the character of Agnes, the protagonist. Agnes is characterized as the voice against some of the retrogressive patriarchal cultures that have been sustained in her family. Key among these retrogressive cultures is that of male children not helping with household chores, a tradition Agnes vehemently opposes in her letters to her mother. Narrative styles such as allegory and linear plot are key to the narrations in the novel since it is through them that readers get to appreciate the journeys that individuals, families, and even the country are making towards stabilizing themselves.

Silent Patience reflects the centrality of the Ugandan family in the representation of the nation. The family is seen as an active participant in the affairs of the nation. What happens in the country affects what happens in households and vice versa, as such, the author seems to suggest that families should not sit in the sidelines when it comes to national matters but should instead take part in advancing the nation in the right direction. The novel is also an important representation of the strides the contemporary society is taking towards reversing traditions that perpetuate the denigration of women. The next chapter examines the woman's role in the formation of the Ugandan nation and the need for an inclusive participation of men and women in a developing the nation.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Narrating the Ugandan Nation: Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the concept of Nationhood in *The Invisible Weevil* and how the novelist—Mary Okurut—wrestles with the idea of what constitutes an ideal nation from a gendered perspective. The chapter further explores how the author centers women in her imagination of a new nation, thereby writing them into the history of Uganda. I lean on arguments by Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha and Janos Lazlo on what exactly constitutes a nation and how nations are formed. Benedict Anderson, in his popular text, "*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism"* considers a nation as "An imagined political community—imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign (1983: 3)." He views it as imagined because the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each, lives the image of their communion (5-7). Anderson further argues that terminologies like nation, nationality and nationalism have proved difficult to define or rather to analyse and calls them cultural artifacts of a particular kind (4).

Homi Bhabha (2013) in trying to contextualize a nation, in "*Nation and Narration*" argues that nations are complex organic entities in the sense that they are comprised of people who identify themselves with regards to a specific culture. It is this complex process of cultural identification that subsequently morphs to function as a nation or a people. A nation thus, it can be deduced from Bhabha's argument, is a cultural force. To quote him, Bhabha in *DissemiNation* puts it that

> What I am attempting to formulate in this chapter are the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of 'the nation' or 'the people' and make them subjects of a range of…literary narratives (140).

He looks at the concept "nation" as both historically determined and general. He reiterates that nation as such refers to the "modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous – the *natio* - a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging" (45). So he in a way avows that "the scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpolates a growing circle of national subjects" (297). Mary Okurut in her novel *The Invisible Weevil* narrates the Ugandan nation from the lived social, cultural and political experiences of its nationals.

The concerns of narrating the nation also permeate Odhiambo's (2017) examination of the role of memory in narrating the nation in Alex Mukulu's play *30 Years of Bananas* which traces Uganda's history from independence in 1962 to 1992 ("Memory, Dialogue and Reconstruction of the Nation" 45). Odhiambo argues that the play explores the importance of the past by revisiting, excavating, re-enacting, and interrogating Uganda's traumatic memory before seriously beginning the project of national reconstruction (45). I however lean on Odhiambo's reading of Mukulu's play, especially his conclusion that "Mukulu seems to suggest that for the nation to move on it must engage with its past in a sincere and open dialogue" (61).

This idea of nationhood and nationality has also been explored by Ernest Renan who in *What is a Nation?* argues that:

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a

> long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea (19).

The assertion by Renan implies that though a nation may be comprised of different entities in terms of the struggles to create and maintain it, it is at the end of the day, a single fabric. All these elements which are different contribute to the entirety of the nation itself. A factor that is evident in *The Invisible Weevil* whereby there are characters who fight actively on the political front while others are on the cultural front. None is more important than the other since with their labour they form part of the whole struggle.

While the critics leaned on so far give me a crucial contextual understanding and a background from which I can approach the issue of nationality, Gérald Genette and various proponents of the theory of narratology such as Seymour Chatman and Gunther Muller drive the analyses of the text under study for this chapter. Genette, while making his case for narratology, argues the case not on the story itself but how the story is told. This, he argues, is the principle basis of the structure of the novel. In his conceptualization of narratology, Genette focuses on aspects such as narrative time, narrative instance, and narrative order. The narrative instance is concerned with the perspective of the narration and the voice—which in the case of *The Invisible Weevil* is the omniscient narrator while the order considers temporal perspectives such as flashbacks and flash-forwards. My focus on the arguments by Genette is on how the issue of narrative time and instance manifest themselves in the narration of the novel.

3.2 The Political background of the Ugandan Nation in *The Invisible Weevil*

The Invisible Weevil borrows heavily from the monumental years of the political history of Uganda, especially during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Uganda became a fully independent nation in October 1962 and Sir Edward Mutesa became the first president of Uganda in 1963. Milton Obote abrogated the 1962 constitution in 1967 and declared that the country would have one central government as opposed to the Kabaka kingdoms which were incorporated into the governance structure upon attainment of independence. This, however, was not a voluntary transition since Obote unleashed military power upon the Kabaka kingdoms which led to the death of thousands. Idi Amin Dada, who led the operation against the Kabakas, deposed Obote in 1971 and in 1972 he expelled the Asians and unleashed terror upon intellectuals and symbols of intellectual status such as spectacles, books, and chess sets. During his regime, "[p]ublic order rapidly deteriorated, and murder, destruction, looting, and rape became the hallmarks of the regime" (Kyemba 1). Amin's invasion of Tanzania in 1978 became the trigger that led to his ousting. Tanzania retaliated and took over Kampala in 1979. After Amin's escape, Professor Yusuf Lule took over and was replaced by Godfrey Binaisa two months later. Binaisa was replaced by a military commission in 1980 which organized the elections that restored the reign of Obote in the same year amidst claims of widespread rigging. Leading the National Resistance Army (NRA), Yoweri Museveni launched the bush struggle in 1981 which contributed to the ousting of Obote by Tito Okello's Uganda National Liberation Army in 1985. Okello's rule was short-lived, however; in January 1986 Museveni's NRA invaded Kampala and dethroned Okello. Museveni has been Uganda's president ever since.

Uganda's history, especially the years of political upheavals and the consequences form the basis of Okurut's narration in *The Invisible Weevil*. Here, she engages most of these historical

moments in Uganda while centering women as people who endeavor to restore order in a country that was led into political and social confusion by male leaders. This is an observation corroborated by Simatei when he notes that Okurut writes in and of a period of great political promise and cultural renaissance where women did not only play secondary roles to men but also participated in the process of the formation of the nation (152). What we read in *The Invisible Weevil* is a narration that weaves the past into the present and the future imaginations of the nation as argued by Odhiambo ("Memory" 47) where he sees memories of the past as important instruments in the imaginations of the future. These memories become backdrops for revisiting and interrogating traumatic experiences before beginning any imaginations of national reconstruction.

Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* is narrated from an omniscient narrator's point of view. The narration of the novel introduces us to the protagonists—Kaaka, Genesis, and Nkwanzi. Kaaka, in the novel, is the mother of Genesis—a young man who grew up just after the colonialists had left Uganda. Together with his wife—Nkwanzi—it could be argued that they both were and are witnesses to the becoming of the nation of Uganda. This is so because they grew up and schooled—at all levels—together. Through their eyes and even feelings, we get to not only see a nation that is coming to terms with its identity but also the feelings that drive this process of cementing some sort of desirable national identity. Nkwanzi and Genesis are at the centre of the author's imagination of the somewhat new Uganda.

3.3 From the Margins to Centre: Women and the Narration of Uganda

Kaaka, who begins the narration in the novel, is seemingly at the peripheries of the new/evolving nation. I argue so because she assumes the role of a historian in the novel by retrospectively

narrating to Nkwanzi how life used to be during the colonial—and arguably so, the pre-colonial times. The perception herein is that Kaaka seems to be our point of contact with the history of Uganda before Genesis and Nkwanzi were born. Through her story we get to see and understand how the country came to be as it is in the novel. To some extent, Kaaka grounds our understanding of Uganda as it evolves as the author desires. What emerges as one reads the novel is that as the country evolves various characters occupy various positions in the history of the country. Kaaka, Genesis' mother, occupies the past.

Genesis and Nkwanzi are firm occupants of the present and central figures in the agitation for the new Uganda as earlier argued. Towards the end of the novel, we are introduced to Ihoreere—Nkwanzi's daughter whom the author seems to hint occupies the future of the country.

The past, which Kaaka occupies, is central in our understanding of the narrative temporalities argued for by Genette such as flashback (analepsis). This is so because our understanding of the nation of Uganda during her time is a recollection from her memories. The present, which Nkwanzi and Genesis occupy, is central to our understanding of the concept of time in narratology, especially as espoused by Gunther Muller in *The Significance of Time in Narrative Art.* The present is also central to our understanding of how Okurut conforms to Jean Paul Sartre's idea of a committed writer which I discuss later in this chapter.

Two crucial arguments drive my arguments in this part of the chapter. The first is the argument by Ernest Renan where he puts it that a nation is a soul and further still a spiritual principle where one lies in the past and the other in the present. The one in the past possesses a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. The second argument that

drives my arguments is Homi Bhabha's argument on the nation as a complex cultural entity and in which there exists some sort of power plays between the colonizer and the colonized other. This power play creates a new breed which occupies a somewhat liminal space and in turn gives rise to what Bhabha considers a hybrid. This, hybridity, subverts the narratives of dominant cultures.

Our introduction to Kaaka in *The Invisible Weevil* is one that conforms to Renan's argument of what a nation truly is. Kaaka in her introductory conversation with Nkwanzi takes us back to what used to be of the Ugandan nation. She gives us a backdrop to the identity of the nation. Seemingly, Kaaka introduces us to the soul of Uganda. It is through her memories that we get to see and experience not only the colonial Uganda but also the early pre-colonial Uganda. Kaaka seemingly realizes the importance of this part of her country and as such she somehow refuses to narrate to Nkwanzi Genesis's past before she lets her know the past of her country. It could be rightly argued at this point that to Kaaka, the nation bore absolute importance compared to Genesis who was dying. The nation and its culture would live on and as such she felt the importance of passing not only the memories of the past but also the lived experiences and lessons she picked from this past.

What comes out from Kaaka's narration is that she does not focus on the kingdoms that existed in the pre-colonial Uganda but instead speaks as though the entire nation was one since her days as a girl. She seems to concur with Renan's argument on the nation being a soul and a spiritual principle. This is so because the implication is that the soul and the spirit cannot be divided. Kaaka, in her wisdom, does not seem to point a finger to an imaginary other or even play victim. It could be deduced that the challenges that Kaaka faced were the same as the challenges faced

by women in other pre-colonial kingdoms, even though the narration does not divulge this to the reader.

What is evident from Kaaka's retrospective narration is that it gives her some sort of agency that comes with reflective narration and by also detaching herself from the events she can interpret these events and make judgment about herself and others. What is interesting is that this agency—power—is allocated to Kaaka. She is the custodian of the history of the country. Kaaka occupies a rather interesting position in the narrative of *The Invisible Weevil.* According to Bhabha's perspective, I argue that Kaaka occupies the liminal space in the sense that she is neither the colonized nor the colonized other. Kaaka, by taking us back to the history of Uganda, subverts the dominant narrative that women could not be part of history making—which is a preserve of Bhabha's hybrid. It is also worth noting that Kaaka herself was a victim of the dominant and retrogressive cultural practices. As such, she falls in the in-between space where she is neither one nor the other. I argue that this liminality in the character of Kaaka gives her some sort of objectivity in her narration since she seemingly doesn't appear to romanticize one side of the divide at the expense of the other.

Further still, it is through Kaaka's narration that we understand how the white man came to, his reception, and activities in Uganda. Arguably, it is Kaaka who first saw the first white man in her village. Kaaka recalls that "…I was going to the well. Then I saw a man without a skin" (11). This she says about the white man. Her story was dismissed by the elders saying it was "the story of a small girl who had been frightened maybe by a wild goat" (11). At this point, it could be easily deduced that most, if not none, of her villagers had ever encountered the white man and that is why they found it hard to believe her until they themselves had a similar encounter and reaction—fright—shortly after. Kaaka is arguably elevated to the level of a discoverer and this

further gives her credibility as the custodian of not only herstory but also the history of her community/ nation. Kaaka, a woman, in *The Invisible Weevil* is taken as the first person to have seen the white man in Uganda. This way, Okurut is rewriting history by narrating the Ugandan nation through the female perspective.

Kaaka's retrospective narration not only introduces us to the coming of the white man but also to the beginnings of economic activities in Buganda (12). This is seemingly the introduction of cash trading in Buganda and subsequently a switch from batter trade. It is through yet another flashback (analepsis) that we get to discover this. Kaaka, in narrating her story, recalls how people from her village would walk long miles to get salt from the lakes and thereafter trade it for skins. Later on people would trek the long miles to get iron and exchange it for the same skins. This iron, I believe and argue, was the first coin. The narrator—Kaaka— refers to them as Iron because she might not be aware of the proper name.

In Mary Okurut's imagined community, Kaaka is introduced and centred as the source of knowledge on the people of and from Buganda. This assertion is evidenced by the fact that it is through her that our questions are answered. It is further reinforced by the fact that it is she—Kaaka—who introduces us to the instances when the first weevil was noticed in Buganda and the probable causes to it. The first weevil was brought about by the cultural practice of wife sharing among brothers. This was done even though the women did not like or approve of it. As Kaaka puts it, "how could the wife refuse when it was her duty?" (13). Apart from the constant wars that took place then, Kaaka attributes the massive death of her people to the invisible weevil. She says "That's one reason why this weevil is killing many of our people" (13). The weevil is sustained in the community by customary practices of wife sharing and fathers-in-law sleeping with the brides of their sons to approve of the marriage. It is also sustained by beliefs that it is

some sort of witchcraft and to cure it, witchdoctors embark on a spree of cutting each family member of the infected with the same razor blade that he used to cut the infected. By doing this—cutting the family members—and filling the cuts with herbs, the witchdoctor believes that he has succeeded in getting rid of the weevil, unbeknown to him that he has just fanned the fire.

Kaaka continues her role as the custodian of history and knowledge of the people by narrating their ways of life and even at what stage a boy would be asked to move into his own house. The author gives Kaaka an authority that paints her as an observant and an acutely aware woman with a sharp memory. The fact that she recalls all this information about not only the past she knew of but also a past she was told about portrays her as a highly intelligent woman. This awareness would be discerned when the boys complained of mice eating maize at night or hearing the cat drinking milk at night (13). Through Kaaka's story we also get to understand the role women played in her society. As emerging from the narration and from Nkwanzi's reactions, this was often a surprise or an expression of disgust, it is deduced that women were subjected to oppressive ways of life which they had come to label as just the way of life. "It was the custom" (14).

Through this reflective and retrospective narration Kaaka reveals her frustrations and disillusionments with the custom in which she grew. While Kaaka, on the one hand, reflects the traditional way of life, Nkwanzi, on the other, is an optimization of the new generation. She cannot understand how Kaaka's generation went through what they did because she grew up in a rather "forgiving custom." This is not to say that Nkwanzi did not fight retrogressive patriarchal systems as she grew up. She had her own fair share of these practices but they were not as demeaning as those that Kaaka and her generation grew up under.

A reading of *The Invisible Weevil* reveals Okurut's stance in positioning women at the Centre of the national history. Okurut, it could be argued, engages in some sort of historiography—which is the writing, and in this case the narration, of the histories of individuals or places. This reflection goes against reflections by other scholars who have studied the novel focusing primarily on the national and gender politics, quite rightly so.

Renan's argument exemplifies not only the character of Kaaka but also that of Nkwanzi. It is through Kaaka's recollection that we get to see and appreciate what Renan refers to as "rich legacy of memories" and the soul and the spiritual principle. He further argues that the past and the present are two things which are one and are unified by the said soul or principle. This unification in Renan's argument is evident in the conversation between the two women at the start of the novel. Kaaka, it seems, passes age old knowledge to Nkwanzi who occupies the present; she acts as a conduit to information from the past and an exemplification of Renan's "rich legacy of memories" and further still "the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form". This heritage, I argue, is undivided because Kaaka's narration does not seem to malign one side—the patriarchal—but rather just tells the story as it is/was without any adulteration or ill motives.

One could argue that Kaaka had somehow accepted her fate and adopted a self-defeatist approach to her story but this, in my view, would not be so. She knows the power she wields and does not spend it speaking against the men of her generation but instead speaks of her nation. Seemingly, Okurut grants Kaaka the power to look at the bigger picture of her heritage and make sure that she propagates it in an undivided form. Kaaka thus emerges to be maintaining the soul and the spiritual principle of the nation, even in her liminal space. The long past made of sacrifices as espoused by Renan is evident in the life of Kaaka who bears it all in her youth and

adulthood without resistance or questioning. This idea of a nation being entrenched in the memory of a people and its cultural significance is further corroborated by Miroslav Hroch who in his essay *"From National Movement to the Fully Formed Nation: The Nation Building Process in Europe"* argues that a nation is created fundamentally upon three issues: "a memory of a common past" which is viewed as the "destiny of the group" (88). This memory of a common past is shared between Kaaka and Nkwanzi through whom we see the steps the nation has taken to be as it is.

3.4 Contesting the Centre: Women and their Quest for a Better Uganda

The present as one sees is occupied by Nkwanzi and her contemporaries—in which Genesis, her husband belongs. It is a present that contests Renan's idea of perpetuating the value of the heritage received in an undivided form. This is so because Nkwanzi and her contemporaries are aware of the sacrifices and endeavours of their forbearers and strive for more. They are aware not only of how their world is but also of how their world should be. While it is true that they consent to Renan's idea of living together, and the sacrifices of their ancestors who made them what they are, they contest the idea of accepting their oppressive state (perpetuating the value of the heritage received) and living in it that way.

What one realises from the narration is that the present which Nkwanzi occupies is a present not of silence but of strife. It is a present that contrasts that of Kaaka which as argued earlier took it all in the form of retrogressive patriarchal domination. Nkwanzi's present is marked also by questioning and seeking for solutions to the challenges that face not only the woman but also the nation. The strife and the questioning is brought about by the formal education which they receive. The first indication of this sense of strife and questioning in Nkwanzi's life is evident

when her friend Goora is isolated from the rest of her schoolmates when the Chemistry teacher, Equation, impregnated her. It is Nkwanzi who takes the risk to ensure that Goora is safe even while in isolation and ensuring that Equation is held into account—this does not happen since Goora is eventually expelled and accused of trying to solicit sexual favours from the school's guard.

This spirit of strife and questioning is not a preserve of Nkwanzi alone since later when she joins the University; get to see it in the friends she makes. Mama—who leads the underground revolution, Rex—who is part of this revolution though he falters once he tastes the trappings of power and ends up selling out his comrades in the struggle, and even lecturers at the University and fellow students. It is this lot that with the spirit of wanting a better Uganda agitates for change even while risking their lives. It is a lot that embodies Renan's argument on the sacrifices of our forbearers as the fabric that knits the spirit of nationalism.

Even as I examine the question of nationalism in *The Invisible Weevil* I find it important to consider the arguments of Timothy Brennan about the post-war novel. In *The Nation Longing for Form*, Timothy Brennan argues that there is uniqueness in the post-war novel due to the fact of the insurgent nationalism that occupies them. Further still, he argues that:

> The idea of nationhood is not only a political idea but a formal binding together of disparate elements. And out of the multiplicities of culture, race, and political structures, grows also a repeated dialectic of uniformity and specificity: of world culture and national culture, of family and of people (1989**:** 173).

Brennan's argument that nationhood is not exclusively a political idea but a unification of several elements goes at the core of *The Invisible Weevil*. While it is indeed true that the novel narrates the political history of Uganda, it also narrates the cultural history and which is rooted in the family unit as well as other social institutions. The political idea in Brennan's argument is seen

in the history of coups and counter coups that are evident in the novel which also calls for a narratological analysis due to their progression. The coups that take place become the points from which I point out the political idea of nationhood while also not ignoring the disparate elements that enable the reader to determine the identity of the nation that the author wants—what would be considered as an authorial ideal.

Ugandan coups can be understood in the light of Fanon's argument that fighting for national culture means "fighting for the liberation of the nation" (154) which is the material keystone upon which national culture is built. The first coup that takes place in the novel is the attainment of independence—I call it a coup ignoring, while at the same time acknowledging—the conventional definition of a coup which is "a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government" and take into consideration the concept behind coups which is achieving something that was somewhat initially deemed to be unattainable. The progression of these coups also suggests and conforms to Fanon's argument on the disenfranchisement of the people by their leaders. Fanon hold the view that the people put their trust on the leaders who fought for their independence and after independence; the said leaders turned their backs on the people. To quote him, Fanon rightly puts it that:

> The people who for years on end have seen this leader and heard him speak, who from a distance in a kind of dream have followed his contests with the colonial power, spontaneously put their trust in this patriot. Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie (157).

This argument by Fanon is a clear reflection of what fans the progression of the coups and even the relationship between the Ugandans in the novel and their leaders.

It is true that the Ugandans in the novel felt disenfranchised by the colonial master and this disenfranchisement is what necessitated the agitation for independence. This disenfranchisement is later substituted with a sense of a rather reckless euphoria at upon the attainment of independence which is evident when the narrator points out that:

> Meanwhile, reports were coming in from all parts of the country about how people had received independence. Some lay in the middle of the road and refused to move, declaring that they were independent. Quite a number of them were run over by cars and died shouting that they were independent. In Kampala, white men were made to carry bananas on their heads and Ugandans laughed at them (43).

First, what is evident from this narration is that the concept of independence was perceived differently by different people. The first lot—out of euphoria—thought that independence meant defying some rather common-sense laws such as giving way to vehicles. Independence it seems meant defiance to them and out of this defiance came their death. The second lot perceived independence to be a time of mocking the white man—who might have earlier mocked them—by making him carry bananas. Independence meant payback time to this group. Later in the narration, one discovers that President Opolo—who took over from the white man—leads an onslaught against the traditional rulers—Kabaka of Buganda. "Four years after independence… Opolo has fought with the Kabaka of Buganda…President Opolo has said that the kingdoms are no more" (44). In the first instance independence meant doing away with colonial leadership. Later on it morphs into doing away with any other form of subsidiary leadership other than the national one—arguably the second coup.

The progression of coups in the novel as the country evolves and creates its own identity is reminiscent of Genette's analysis of time usage in a novel. He distinguishes between "order, duration, and frequency." Focusing on the order and frequency, one notes that the coups in the novel are somewhat recurrent and follow each other in an almost quick succession. The concept

of time, as discussed by Alfonso de Toro (2011) in *Time Structure in the Contemporary Novel*, in narratology is further divided into external time, which is time outside the novel—empirical and historical time of the author—and internal time which time within the novel constituted within act time and text time (113). An evaluation of the external time in the novel reveals that Okurut borrows heavily from actual historical events to narrate her story. The narrated fictional time between the ascension to power of President Opolo and the attack on the Buganda Kingdoms is synonymous to the factual and historical ascension to power of President Milton Obote and his attack on the factual Kabaka Kingdoms. The parallel that exists between the fictional time and the factual historical time is reflected as such: Four years after independence, Opolo unleashes the military against the Kabaka kingdoms and similarly, four years after into Obote's reign, he unleashes the military against the Kabaka kingdom and revises the constitution to make himself the president:

> Dr. Obote became the country's first prime minister in 1962 at the head of an uneasy coalition between his own Uganda People's Congress and the Kabaka Yekka or King's party representing the Baganda tribe from the largest and richest province of the country. Sir Edward Mutesa, better known as "King Freddie", became president. Four years later Obote ousted the king and revised the constitution to make himself president. (BBC, 1)

Okurut further utilises the principle of external time and Peter Barry's (1994) idea of plot in narratology— "events as they are edited, ordered, packaged, and presented in what is recognised as a narrative" (22). This comes about when she narrates the second coup that defines the fictitious Uganda (94). Opolo, who had taken over from the colonial masters is ousted by Duduma—his trusted lieutenant. "But who is this Duduma?" They asked…Duduma is the army commander…Duduma entered the force and later Opolo used him to fight his battles" (97).

This deposition of Opolo by Duduma suggests the ousting of Milton Obote by Idi Amin Dada who served as a commander in Obote's army that removed the Kabaka kingdoms.

The reign of Duduma subsequently picks up from where the reign of Opolo left off. While Opolo shed the blood of those who paid allegiance to the Kabaka kingdoms, Duduma's reign heralds the widespread killing of all those who paid allegiance to Opolo, including fellow soldiers (101-102). Okurut disrupts the narration of the coups such that in between the attainment of independence and the ouster of Opolo by Duduma (45-94) the narrator takes us through the lives of Nkwanzi meeting Genesis, the experiences of Nkwanzi in high school, and her process of becoming a woman.

At the core of Brennan's argument is a paradox of finding unity in differences. It is an argument that seems to put it that it is the different elements of a nation that make up its fabric. A nation thus, cannot exist and define itself as a singular entity; ignoring the political and favouring the cultural. All these elements, though different, work together to create and sustain the fabric of nationhood. These disparate elements and the multiplicities of culture and political structures are evident where while the nation seeks to create a singular identity, to identify itself as democratic and free from corruption, the characters, concurrently, try to define themselves as individuals and not as communities. The omniscient narrator in the novel narrates the lives of Nkwanzi and Genesis both in the villages and in the city. It is a narration that brings to light the life of Nkwanzi as an individual while growing up and going to school—to the point where their paths intersect with Genesis' and they begin courting till marriage. The narrator adopts a simultaneous and a subsequent narration. In the simultaneous narration, he narrates events in the present and as they occur while in the subsequent narration, he narrates events from the past that have somehow shaped the present. This is evident when Nkwanzi seeks to know of the birth of Genesis, but

Kaaka insists that she cannot tell her—Nkwanzi—of Genesis until she tells her of her—Kaaka—own life as a girl.

> Kaaka, you've never told me of his birth. Why don't you tell me now that he's still asleep? Let us sit near where we can watch him while I tell you of the story of how I gave birth to him. But I cannot tell you of his birth without telling you about my own life as a girl and how I met your father-in-law (10).

The novel shifts between the present and the past as the narrator shifts between the two temporal positions thus inviting the reader to connect the two plot lines and actively participate in making sense out of the story. Okurut uses the past tense in narrating events that happened in the past and in doing so gives us a backdrop from where one can understand the historical and cultural standpoints that have influenced and defined not only the life of the country but also the lives of the characters; it is a narration that brings to light the genesis of the metaphorical weevil in the novel. The novel, while narrating the history of Uganda from the 1960s to early 1990s captures the metaphorical three 'weevils' that bedevil the country over that period: the AIDS pandemic, turbulent leadership, and the subjugation of the woman by a harsh patriarchal culture.

Narrating retrospectively gives Kaaka some sort of agency that comes with reflective narration and by also detaching herself from the events she can interpret these events and make judgment about herself and others. What is interesting is that this agency—power—is allocated to Kaaka. She is the custodian of the history of the country. It is through her eyes that we get to understand how the white man came to, his reception, and activities in Uganda

One cannot thus divorce the history from the identity and vice versa. The concept of external time in narratological analysis affirms this. *The Invisible Weevil* is a novel that takes us through the process of creating a sense of national identity.

The shift in the narration from the historical to the present is marked by Nkwanzi. It is through Nkwanzi that Okurut joins the dots to show the progression in the development of Uganda in the novel. Though the novel does not narrate Nkwanzi's life at the present, the narrator ropes the reader into the life of Nkwanzi to show the progress women are making not only in relation to the political future of Uganda but also the cultural future.

Our second point of reference in the narration of the nation of Uganda is through Nkwanzi. The character of Nkwanzi in *The Invisible Weevil* is one that shows the shift in the battle against retrogressive cultural practices to the battle against retrogressive political practices. This is not to say that Nkwanzi does not experience and contest the negative aspects of their culture. She does experience these aspects but much of her struggle is towards the liberation of Uganda and rectifying the political culture. It is largely through Nkwanzi and partly through Kaaka that Okurut flexes her muscles to show her concurrence with Jean Paul Sartre's idea on the commitment of a writer which is also a fact affirmed by Brennan when he notes that nationalism "is a trope for such things as 'belonging', 'bordering', and 'commitment' (170) and also Fanon in his argument on combat literature where he argues that it "moulds national consciousness" (155). This foundation on the philosophy of commitment is also further echoed and reinforced by Fanon when he says that the "native writer progressively takes on the habit of addressing his/her own people" (155) which is what Okurut does. She does this by continuing her narration by placing women at the centre of creating a new Uganda. The women are engaged in the agitation and creation of underground movements that push for leadership reforms and democratic institutions of governance. They are aware of their political as well as social responsibilities and remain focused on the task they have at hand. This depiction is largely in contrast with the arguments by Evan Mwangi and Abasi Kiyimba who largely focus on the political environments

and the victimhood of women ignoring the triumphs and the organization the women show in liberating Uganda. Evan Mwangi (2010), on the one hand, argues that the novel is a satirical account of women's dependency on men as well as a nation's blind belief in frauds as messiahs. Evan Mwangi further notes that Okurut captures Africa's regional politics in a manner that few writers have managed, bringing out the spirit of regionalism in coming together and toppling dictatorial regimes and the ascendancy of demagogues like the illiterate Duduma as reflecting the society's general moral rot. The Ugandan politics as brought out in the narrative, where despite Duduma's thuggery he still enjoys massive support, is akin to what is happening in various African countries.

On the other hand, Abasi Kiyimba in *Male Identity and Female Space in the Fiction of Ugandan Women Writer,* reads *The Invisible Weevil* as a comprehensive protest against various levels of violence and suffering by the woman. He argues that it is the same system that places the man on a higher ground that makes Genesis and Nkwanzi have different values regarding virginity. While Nkwanzi is determined in keeping herself intact for Genesis until their wedding night, Genesis feels that such sacrifices are unnecessary and loses his virginity to a prostitute selling illicit brew. Such a system, Kiyimba observes, allows Rex the feeling that he can get sex from any female easily without their consent and get away with the crime. He tries this with Nkwanzi once and fails. He however, succeeds on Nkwanzi's happiest day, raping her just before she steps out for her wedding and leaving her with the scar and trauma of rape (200). Moreover, it is also the system that makes Genesis feel neglected by Nkwanzi when she is appointed as a deputy minister in the new government while he remains holding a position that makes him common.

The fact that the novel does not have any female villain leads Kiyimba to the conclusion that while it is a protest against the system, it is also power bid for the women who represent the

section of the society that is dispossessed. Either the women in the novel are victims of the system, its accomplices or fighters against it (198-200).

While their points of focus in the criticism of the novel are justified, the deafening silence with which they treat these is what drives my interest in showing that women in the novel are not victims of a patriarchal society but drivers for social change. In fact, it could be argued that women strive to restore balance in the society while the men seek to disrupt the society. While women are diligent and united in their front, men are painted as self-destructive if not power hungry and reckless individuals. Arguably, it is a commitment to the self that ruins the men in the novel while the women's commitment to each other, the nation, and ideals larger than themselves becomes a way of ensuring their "self-preservation". By ensuring their self-preservation, women appear to be seemingly fighting for preservation of the nation. It is also worth noting that while female characters of high moral standing survive whichever situation they find themselves in, those of an arguably lower moral standing are eliminated. Women who sleep with wealthy soldiers of the repressive regimes are killed by the soldiers themselves while the likes of Nkwanzi survive any terrible ordeals they go through.

The women in the novel appear to be fighting the political confusion that is associated with their oppression in the novel; this political confusion leads to the oppression of women. It is indeed true that this political turmoil results in the suffering of many women under the hands of the brutal regimes—both the women who are not associated with the regimes and those who are associated with the regimes suffer. Pregnant women are killed while suckling their babies and the women who hang around the soldiers are killed for asking for golden ornaments so they could dazzle as they accompany the soldiers to the war fronts. The irony in this is that while the women who support the soldiers want to dazzle, those that fight for the underground movement

prefer simplicity as they fulfill their duties. Mama, the underground movement leader, informs the women in her team that:

> From now on you'll wear your hair short and natural. Never hot-comb it. The women of the struggle believe they should be natural and not waste money making artificial images of themselves. Our barber will do the needful now (147).

The author seems to imply that for the struggle for political order to be achieved, the women should focus on the task rather than beautifying themselves. Okurut delves in not only restoring social order by arguing the case for women but she also delves in the political spheres and centres the women as the driving forces for a free, and democratic society. She advocates for uniformity and unity among the soldiers of the underground movement through the character of Mama who informs her troops that: "As long as we remain fragmented, the struggle will take longer" (149). While the women are agitating through a united front the men, led by Duduma, appear to be a bunch of individuals making reckless decisions such as attacking Tanzania. This move eventually becomes the downfall of Duduma as he is deposed by Polle.

The preceding arguments in this chapter have illustrated how the space and time occupied by the characters of Kaaka and Nkwanzi demonstrate their efforts towards creating a Uganda that is much fairer to the Ugandan woman. As argued earlier, Kaaka seemingly passes the baton to Nkwanzi so that she—Nkwanzi, can understand how the social background from which she—Kaaka—emerged. It was largely a patriarchal society where the women were situated in the lower rungs of the society where they remained silent, passive, and subjugated by the dominant males. Nkwanzi, on the other hand, grows up at a time when women are beginning to make their voices heard and assert themselves both in the social and political spheres as represented by the characters of Nkwanzi and Mama respectively.

Okurut, towards the end of the novel, shows the reader that she is just not involved in the process of narrating the lives of two women but in the process of narrating a history, a present, and somehow leaves it to the reader to question what the future will be. Whereas the past is the preserve of Kaaka, the present is occupied by Nkwanzi, and the future is represented through Nkwanzi's daughter Ihoreere. It is a future that one cannot be certain of in terms of the challenges that Ihoreere will have to surmount, and this is indicated by the question that Nkwanzi asks herself wondering whether her daughter will stand the invisible weevils (203). Kaaka, as argued earlier, accepted her place in the society as a woman. She somehow accepts that a woman comes second to a man. It is through bearing the history of her nation and her community that she gets to redeem herself. This knowledge accords her an agency which the society had seemingly robbed her by denigrating women. Nkwanzi, who occupies the present, learns to question and fight for what she feels is rightfully hers. She is properly educated—a lawyer—and this in part drives struggle for a better society.

She faces the invisible weevil of a benevolent state that somehow gives women positions of authority but only as assistants to men who are in some cases less qualified. Nkwanzi also fights a spill-over of the retrogressive patriarchal practices from Kaaka's time such as the use of sex by men to dominate against women or to assert their masculine power. This is a fact that is visible when Rex, Genesis' best friend, rapes her on the morning of her wedding. This spill over is also evident in Genesis who cannot stomach the fact that his wife is travelling abroad on a work-related trip. Genesis assumes that this is the beginning of her infidelity and to somehow "tame" her demands for unprotected sex, yet he understands he is HIV positive. Nkwanzi does not give in on any occasion. With this generational backdrop, it is at this point that I argue that these women give us a representation of the Ugandan nation at various stages, and they offer a span of

the imagined Ugandan community of their pains, motives, dreams and aspirations towards the formation of a nation that is more accommodative of women.

When it comes to Ihoreere the reader, just like Nkwanzi, can only speculate about what the future would hold for her. Each preceding generation fought for a better future which is seen throughout the text. While the better future was achieved, it was not as ideal as the agitators would have wanted. There were still some undesirable elements from the previous generation that spilled over to the new. Most common amongst these spillovers is the fact that women found themselves at the undesirable end of an oppressive patriarchal society. Their struggles for a better society made some impact but still it was not entirely enough. Some invisible weevil still crept up to the next generation. It would be far-fetched to argue that Ihoreere would find a softer landing ground in the society. She, just like her grandmother and mother, must learn to fight and assert herself in the face of injustice. Just like Nkwanzi, one can only wonder what challenges Ihoreere will fight and hope that she overcomes them.

At this point, I get back to Sartre's understanding of literature. He argues that it would be impossible for a writer to write a novel that espouses the ideals of oppression of human beings and their freedom. The writer thence must be and is committed to human freedom. Sartre puts it that, "The art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy...Since the writer is "a free man addressing free men" (48). From the reader's perspectives, Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* is a simple yet profound example of these ideals espoused by Sartre—and especially the ideals of democracy and human freedom. Against these propositions by Sartre—and even Fanon, I can measure Okurut's commitment to the cause. On her commitment to democracy, she paints a picture of a country that is no longer at ease with itself—a country that aspires for more if not better. The coups and counter coups that

characterize the fictitious Uganda are a result of greed while some also result from the enlightened citizens who know that as a country they can dream for a better society. It is with this in mind that Okurut puts the intelligentsia at loggerheads with the oppressive regimes. University students and their professors at Makerere University in turn endure the most of Duduma's oppressive regime. The narrator puts it thus:

> There was no love lost between the Makerere University community and the government. The government viewed the University community as enemies and the trigger-happy soldiers were always itching for an opportunity to teach the we-know-it-all university students and lecturers a lesson they would never forget (136).

These unforgettable lessons often came in the form of brutal beatings or murders if not both. Where the lecturers could not be treated with violence, the profession was watered down and made to look unappealing by the government's decision to employ unqualified and uneducated individuals to prominent positions—the government sadly decides to fight education.

Finally, Duduma is deposed, and Professor Polle takes over the reins of the country. With this, Okurut implies that education and the intelligentsia can triumph over evil. However, this is not her ultimate revelation as the fight for a better country continues with the women at the centre. As she paints the growth of the woman she also, concurrently, depicts the growth of the country. Throughout the novel, Okurut depicts the fate and the place of the Ugandan women who took active roles in the struggles for the liberation of the country at different stages. This connection creates an important thematic concern for this study as it shows the journey of the woman alongside that of the nation, the gains she makes as well as the losses that come her way. At the beginning of the political tension during Duduma's failing leadership, women are presented as victims of the regime's atrocities. When Nkwanzi and her friends visit the town after the first

outburst of violence, they find a dead woman's body with a baby suckling from its lifeless breast (98).

Okurut also tries to advance the case for human freedom as espoused by Sartre in her narration of Uganda. Kaaka's narration gives the reader an opportunity to measure the progress made since the arrival of the white man to the independence of Uganda. The narration becomes some sort of comparative point of view when compared with that of Nkwanzi. Whereas Kaaka's generation did not question the practices that demeaned women—such as sleeping with fathers-in-law to be to prove their virginity—Nkwanzi's generation does not take such practices lightly. The generation questions and asserts itself against backward patriarchal cultures. Nkwanzi, for instance, does not lose her virginity to any man before marriage. She refuses and skirts all attempts that could jeopardize her resolve no matter how close she comes to slipping. She espouses Sartre's idea of propagating human freedom as being the purpose of a writer.

Throughout the narrative, she gets to hear of the journey the women have made since the colonial times to the time she becomes a grown woman and as such uses this as a backdrop in her decisions to stand firm for what she thinks is right not only for her but also the society. For this reason she decides to join and support the underground movement even if it meant that Genesis would be gone for long days and would be risking his life—she also risks her life to save Genesis and she succeeds in doing so and evading the murderous rage of Rex who had tried to sleep with her. It is for this reason also—the desire for human freedom—that she refuses to sleep with Genesis—her husband—without protection when he had contracted HIV/AIDS. Nkwanzi, it could be argued, felt that she had more responsibilities to fulfill both as a mother and as a deputy minister. This fits into the argument on political freedom and social freedom. By performing her tasks as a minister unfettered by health issues, she would be able to ensure that the country

remains on a steady cause and as such ensuring its political freedom. Further still, she would be able to perform her motherly duties without being absent from her daughter's life and as such she would pass on the lessons she has learnt to her just as Kaaka had told her about hers. This in a way passes as a full circle conclusion to the mother-daughter narrative. The three generations of women represented in the text pass on wisdom to each other that helps the next generation make more informed choices.

The fact that Okurut espouses Sartre's thoughts on commitment does not mean that some characters do not fail to do so. She presents a high moral standing such that the characters who do not match up to these expectations are punished. Okurut is seemingly of the view that for Uganda to progress in all its spheres, every player must uphold the moral standings that she communicates to the reader. As argued earlier, Genesis failed Okurut's moral test and eventually contracted the weevil that kills him. Similarly, although she advocates for the woman to have her space in the national struggle, she punishes the girls who fight alongside Duduma's soldiers and demand for flashy ornaments by having them killed and left to rot in the forest.

Nevertheless, this moral ideal does not spare the innocent Goora who is impregnated by her Chemistry teacher—Equation. She is expelled from school after the traumatic experience of being raped and being humiliated in front of other students. Even as Okurut is committed to the ideals of Sartre and Marxist feminists, her ideals suffer some sort of blind spot—Christianity. The irony of the novel is that it is the "born again" Christians who prey on young girls: Matayo, Zabulooni, and Equation all professed the Christian faith. Interestingly, they are spared from the previously argued moral code espoused by Okurut. One wonders if religion, that redeemed them from a life of sin also redeems them from the said moral code. My counter argument to this question would be that Okurut has higher expectations from the female characters than the male

characters. She sees them as the liberators of Uganda and expects them to act with simplicity and wisdom, as espoused by Mama, and assertiveness, as espoused by Nkwanzi. The male characters have always been beneficiaries of the retrogressive patriarchal cultures and she can do little about this other than warn and punish the incoming generation to which Genesis belonged. This takes us back to the three perspectives that one needs to adopt when understanding the concept of commitment. What I discuss in this section is only what I assume to be Okurut's commitment from our interpretation of the narrative. It is worth noting that the true position of the writer on the above matters require a more autobiographical narration. Thus, Sartre's idea of commitment in literature is fluid in analyzing any literary work

3.5 Conclusion

In *The Invisible Weevil*, Okurut details the significance of the past to map out the future. This is evident in how the author interrogates the theme of history in her narration of the Ugandan nation. The history that one encounters in the novel is one in which women take part in all significant moments of the country – from the pre-colonial days to the days of agitating for a stable democracy. The theme of history is intertwined with the theory of feminism so that at the end of the reading one can appreciate the place of women in the Ugandan society. The past cannot be forgotten in *The Invisible Weevil*. It forms a vital part of any meaningful imagination of the present and the future and this is aptly represented through the relation of Kaaka - the matriarch in the novel, Nkwanzi – the young woman involved in the daily struggles against retrogressive patriarchal cultures and a stable democracy, and Ihoreere – the narrator's imagination of the future; a young girl who will hopefully inherit a society which is more democratic and accommodating towards women. Narrative styles such as the metaphorical

deployment of the invisible weevil help in appreciating the artistic rigour of the novel and how meaning is layered within the novel and the process of deciphering the meanings. The use of flashback in the novel is key in advancing historical concerns being raised by the author in her bid to centre women in the Ugandan society at different stages.

Placed within the context of the Ugandan society, this novel acts as a motivation to the women who continually agitate for a fair society. It paints a picture of the past, the present and gives an impression of the future. In all these different time spans, women have been at the centre of the struggle and often they have succeeded, even though having encountered significant losses. The novel reflects on the importance of women to the Ugandan society. Women should thus not be looked down upon. The subsequent chapter presents the novel as a social chronicle and a depiction of the Ugandan woman's attempt to explore her identity in the contemporary society.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Ugandan Women's Experiences in Adapting to Contemporary Social Norms: Violet Barungi's *Cassandra*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the presentation of changes in social norms and the subversions that surround and support these changes in Violet Barungi's *Cassandra (1999).* It is a social chronicle of the Ugandan contemporary society through female perspectives. The changes in the social norms are presented from a woman writer's perspective by putting at the centre of the narration two female characters who represent different strands of Ugandan social norms. Mrs. Mutono is a representation of the traditional and conservative norms whereas Cassandra, and her contemporaries, is a representation of the contemporary and progressive norms. It is an analysis that is driven by the arguments of Stephen Greenblatt on New Historicism literary theory in *Practicing New Historicism* (2000) where he asserts that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of the history of the author and the critic. Greenblatt argues that to understand a literary piece, we need to understand the author's social background, ideas circulating at the time and the cultural milieu thus viewing a work of art with cultural effects and consequences. Again, New Historicists analyse the text with an eye of history involving the author's intentions, insisting that ideology manifests itself in literary productions and discourses, and interests itself in the interpretive constructions which the members of a society or culture apply to their lived experience. So, to be able to analyse Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* the chapter places it within the discourse of its time.

This chapter also leans on the arguments by George Lukacs and Lucien Goldmann on the novel as a "social chronicle" in the sense that it narrates, through representation, events that took place in the society at a specific point in history. Georg Lukacs argues in *Theory of the Novel* (1920) that the novel is the representative art form of our world since the structures of the novel coincide with the world as it is today. He further says that the novel tells of the adventure of the interiority of the characters and that the content of the novel is "the story of the soul that goes to find itself, that seeks adventures in order to be proved and be tested by them and by proving itself to find its own essence" (89). Goldmann in *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1963) makes an almost similar case after reviewing Lukac's argument. Goldmann notes that the novel is basically a "social chronicle" (4) and to understand our world we need to read the novel in context. He goes ahead to argue that:

> The novel form seems to me, in effect, to be the transposition on the literary plane of everyday life in the individualistic society created by market production. There is a rigorous homology between the literary form of the novel and the everyday relation between man and commodities in general, and by extension between men and other men, in a market society (7).

Cassandra (1999) is set in "1984" (145) Uganda which leads one to question why the author in contemporary times would take us back to a historical moment in Uganda. The author seems to point us to the genesis of the discourse on female agency in Uganda and more so an agency constructed within a multiplicity of relationships that influence the outcomes of not only the individual but also the society.

Mrs. Mutono—Mama—in Cassandra acts as the bridge between the older generations (60s) and the new generation (80s). It is through her that we get to have an image of the norms that her peers upheld and even the beliefs that held her society together. This of course is seen in her

disputes with the way the new generation goes on with its activities such as weddings, burials, and even engaging in relationships. Mama is not only a historian but also an embodiment of cultural beliefs and practices of her generation.

While studying *Cassandra,* Abaasi Kiyimba in *Male Identity and Female Space in the Fiction of Ugandan Women Writers* (2008) makes arguments that support the analysis in this chapter and even as he does this he largely glosses over the idea of presentation of changes in social norms in the novel. Kiyimba rightly mentions that the novel "confronts issues of inter-gender power struggles [...]" (215) and also the "[...] social and economic power relations between men and women" (217). Kiyimba further underscores that the many forces at play in Cassandra's life at times threaten to overwhelm her. The arguments place Barungi's *Cassandra* within a specific discourse and especially the discourse of granting agency to the female character.

4.2 Discourse Formation in *Cassandra*

The idea of discourse formation in literary pieces oftentimes comes across as a response to certain social phenomena at specific points in history. It is the discourse formed that becomes a sort of repository for the ideas that were circulating at the time and this resonates what Greenblatt says in *Practicing New Historicism* (2000), that "[…] ideology manifests itself in literary productions". It is then, for this reason that we can rely on literary texts to understand certain prevailing discourses and ideologies through the eye of history. So, like I will discuss later, Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* presents the conflicting ideologies on the plight of the women of the 1960s (Mrs. Mutono) and the woman of the 80s (Cassandra).

After the independence of Uganda in 1962 the country witnessed an enormous literary output which was largely due to the writing of men in Uganda. The result of this was that any imagination of a post-colonial Uganda came through the imagination of the male literary writers. It is also around this period—the 60s—that Makerere which was then arguably the literary capital of Africa hosted a conference on "Africa's Writers of English Expression" which gathered the fathers of African literature such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka among other male writers who at the time were at the forefront of painting a post-independence imagination of their countries and also continent.

It was in 1962 that Makerere University hosted the revolutionary conference on the status of African literature. At this point, Ngugi wa Thiong'o was a student at Makerere University and years later, while at the University of Nairobi, he spearheaded the move to abolish the Department of English in favour of what is now the Department of Literature (Mukoma wa Ngugi, 2018). In *Moving the Centre (1993)* Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that "knowing oneself and one's environment is the correct basis of absorbing the world" (9). What stands from this that relates to our arguments here is that the "knowing of oneself...and the world" in the 60s through literature was largely a construct of the male writers of then who in all respect contributed largely to the growth of literature as an art and a discipline in the region during the post-colonial times.

Yoweri Museveni overthrowing Obote in 1986 provided some sort of relative peace and stability that once again saw the growth of literature in Uganda and it is a decade after he took over power that FEMRITE was established out of a movement and debate on the plight of women in Uganda. The founders, Mary Okurut, Goretti Kyomuhendo, Susan Kiguli, among other women had noted a considerable silence of women during the formative years of a post-colonial Uganda.

This assertion should not however be misconstrued to be a blinding of the issues that have plagued Museveni's regime over the three decades that he has been ruling over Uganda. Some of the issues have had to do with the stifling of democratic spaces and even the silencing of opposing voices. What was once a hopeful moment for the future of Uganda has now become a grim image in the struggle for democracy and even proper governance.

Goretti Kyomuhendo in *FEMRITE and the Politics of Literature in Uganda* admits that many women had been writing concurrently with men but they lacked the courage to present their manuscripts because the field was largely dominated and controlled by men. She discloses that: "We were determined to turn Uganda's literary desert into a haven for women's voices, and realised that the only way we could achieve this was by establishing an outfit, managed by women, which would address some of the problems that had hitherto hindered the efforts and potential of Ugandan women writers" (3). In a way FEMRITE sought to move the centre and create a new kind of knowledge of the Ugandan women who were largely silenced in the early years of a post-colonial Uganda. Kyomuhendo also admits that part of FEMRITE's activities is to "help women writers to shed inhibitions imposed by society as well as ingrained cultural beliefs, and to think about themselves" (4).

FEMRITE still aims at promoting writing as a tool for national development. Marie Kruger in *Women's Literature in Kenya and Uganda: The Trouble with Modernity* (2011) makes the point that one of FEMRITE's aim is "to transform Ugandan Civic Society and [to] build confidence and the image of women as a way of changing society's negative image towards women" (4). It is important to acknowledge that the novel *Cassandra* is a publication of FEMRITE even as I seek to examine how it becomes part of discourse formation. As FEMRITE promotes the literature by women in contemporary Uganda it emerges as an organization that seeks to occupy

its space in the formulation of the female elite discourse in the society. This is seemingly tied to the organization's agenda of ensuring national development through writing and also promoting "the image of women" as a way of transforming society's negative image towards them. By churning out publications with positively constructed female characters, FEMRITE seeks to call on the society to look up to them and subsequently emulate them and this will assist in enforcing a new kind of distinctiveness in a nation that is struggling for its identity.

These objectives as evident seem to be conforming to a particular kind of taste and also propagating a specific concern which brings to mind the arguments by Terry Eagleton in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1976) where he argues that literature may be a "social artefact but it is also an industry" (59). With this assertion Eagleton seems to suggest that books often times bow to the demands of the prevailing taste when it comes to production. Doseline Kiguru in *Literary Prizes, Writer's Organisations and Canon Formation in Africa (2016)* makes a case for organisations such as FEMRITE and their role in the production of literature that conforms to a specific and prevailing taste in the society. FEMRITE further emerges as an organization that advances the cause of the female identity formation through *Cassandra* (1999) since this was seemingly the prevailing discourse within the Ugandan society at the time of its publication. As this happens, FEMRITE also seems to be an organisation that appears to be answering the question on whether the 'Subaltern can speak' by occupying the space where it becomes part of the channels through which feminist discourse is created in the society by the publications of novels which put women at the forefront and also giving them agency in an advancing society. Giyatri Spivak in *Can the Subaltern Speak* holds the argument that knowledge is not always innocent and it always bears the interests of its producers. In this case, the "knowledge" produced by women—in feminist discourse—is likely to bear the interests of women and as such

create discourse that subscribe to the same spirit. FEMRITE, which was founded by Mary Okurut, has one of its main goals being the promotion of the confidence and good image of women as a way of transforming the society and as such holds still to Spivak's belief on knowledge bearing the interests of its producers.

4.3 Changing Social Norms in Uganda as Depicted in *Cassandra*

Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* is a novel that narrates the social/ cultural history of Uganda. It is set in 1984 and has its presentation of Ugandan social history driven by Cassandra as the protagonist and other characters who represent different cultural views in the society. Marie, Cassandra's colleague at Lotus International, has learnt to balance her perception of men and the role they play in the lives of women and often times becomes Cassandra's voice of reason in her professional life and also in her personal life where she is driven by the view that "In my scheme of things, there is no place for a husband…" (186). Cassandra often sees men as enemies against the progress of women in the society. Mellinda, Cassandra's sister, also represents the modern woman in the Ugandan society who has found a balance between the traditional and the modern ways in the society. It is she who suggests that Cassandra procures an abortion and later on advises her against raising her son as a single parent since the boy would need both parents to grow up and develop fully. Mellinda is also married to Horace, who goes to the bush to fight for the political stability of Uganda but is killed and his death is marked with the mysteriousness of a politically motivated murder. Mrs. Mutono, Cassandra's mother, is the character who represents the traditional ways of the Ugandan society and is often times at loggerheads with her daughters—Cassandra and Melinda—over their choices and actions in life. Mrs. Mutono does not approve of Melinda's secret wedding to Horace and also Cassandra's affair with Raymond

Agutamba who was a married man. She sees this affair as an incident that will reduce Cassandra's chances of getting married. Mrs. Mutono also finds herself conflicted with how her children carried themselves after the burial of Horace, every one of them had gone back to their daily duties while she expected them to observe certain decencies when it comes to mourning the dead.

It is through Mrs. Mutono that we get to see how the changing norms are being opposed since she represents the traditional woman who wants to maintain the cultural status quo. Marie and Mellinda are representations of characters who have found a balance between both the traditional and modern ways while Cassandra is a representation of the character who sees herself as an embodiment of the modern woman. The Agutambas—Raymond and Bevis—are the male characters who are crucial in the plot of *Cassandra* and it is through them that we also get to see how the modern man in the Ugandan society is represented and the challenges he faces, including divorce which Raymond Agutamba was facing at the time he met with Cassandra. *Cassandra* is a novel that represents the Ugandan society during the 1980s and it is arguably a response to some of the contemporary moral issues of the time.

That I read Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* as a "social chronicle," part of a discourse and also a representative form of history requires us to engage not only with the political history of Uganda, but also the social history. It is from the social history of Uganda that we get a view into the norms that sustained the society and how the changes threaten the fabric that has for a time held the society together. The 80s in Ugandan history were a period of political turmoil as the country underwent periods of political transformations in its process of becoming a stable state. That Barungi chooses to mostly engage more with the social norms rather than the political norms is telling in itself. As the country was going through its own political metamorphosis the citizens

were also going through their own processes of identifying themselves within the society that they found themselves in: a society that was largely becoming modern and grappling with the issues of modernity. It is seemingly for this reason that Barungi addresses the issues of women in the workforce, divorce, HIV/AIDS, and also abortion in her novel. These issues may have been taboo subjects then and it needed her as a social chronicler and historian to write about what was happening in the society in 1984 even if through fiction since as Min-ha puts it "Storytelling as literature (narrative poetry) must then be truer than history." As historians largely focus (ed) on the political history of Uganda the social history risks being neglected however consequential it might have been, and this is largely the case since most accounts of Uganda in the 80s focus on the political scene and turn a blind eye to the social scene. Barungi as the chronicler of the society then emerges as a vital entry point towards our understanding of the society. *Cassanda* becomes our representation of a society that was grappling with its own identity as it modernizes in the midst of the political scene. Narrating the salient issues of the social structure thus, become of utmost importance to the author. The transitions the society faces and their effects are given prominence in the novel while the political transitions seemingly come across as afterthoughts in the novel.

For us to understand the changes in norms of the Ugandan society we need to understand which characters represent the norms that are at times presented as being on antagonistic ends and even the characters who somehow find a balance between the waning traditional values and the modern ones. The main character is Cassandra. Readers see her negotiating through the contemporary society and dealing with modern issues- issues of rape, marriage, divorce, breadwinning and issues of what society perceives to be adultery. These elements are intertwined in a linear plot which presents a consistent order in which events flow. The novel begins with a

young girl Cassandra who was committed to making something worthwhile of her life (3) and was not ready to compromise her principles (3).

Mrs. Mutono/Mama who is our window to the traditional norms often finds herself at logger heads with Cassandra and her age mates who occupy the "modern" Ugandan society. Mama finds herself as the lone figure who fights for what she believes to be the "common decencies" of the society which should never be ignored or done away with. The struggle between retaining these norms is presented through her conversation with her children and also the undertones of what she says. These struggles do not just come from personal beliefs but from the cultural milieu within which she grew. Changes in the norms do not thus just represent changes in the way the new age characters do things but also changes in the cultural fabrics, something that borders taboo to Mama.

One of the key moments that we get to witness the struggle between these norms is when Mama confronts Cassandra about her affair with Mr. Raymond Agutamba who was a married man with a child. According to Mama, this amounted to meddling with the marriage of other people and also reduced Cassandra's chances of ever getting married. While Cassandra's relationship with a married man conforms to what she perceives to be the behaviour of the modern woman, her mother's objection to this affair reveals to us not only her stance but also the position of women who might be of her age. Cassandra's mother is a representation of the traditional woman of the 60s, the one who saw the need to abide by the set social norms.

> Well, for one, I thought you had better sense than to get entangled with a married man… who'll want to marry you after that? (122).

This conversation is not merely an argument by a mother and her daughter on the subject of marriage—at the surface level it seems so—but it reflects perceptions the culture has about marriage and even the norms that govern relationships between men and women. It is a shifting of moral standards. Cassandra finds herself in between what she calls modern female behaviour and traditional beliefs that govern marriage and relationships. Mama, Cassandra's mother, has her sights set upon what we would call a "larger picture" that is bent on protecting the cultural practices and also the dignity of the woman and to an extent the family from which she comes from. To her, an ideal daughter should reflect these beliefs; she should not entangle herself with married men but should instead desire to live a "blameless" life—one where she finds herself a man and settles down with him. It is indeed true that Cassandra finds herself pitted against tradition which Ketu Katrak in *Politics of the Female Body: Post-Colonial Writers of the Third World (2006)* argues that:

> Traditions are used often to control female sexuality, and controls of the female body are mystified as being faithful to tradition. Tradition itself is a historicized and regarded as fixed, timeless, and unchanging. Women must pay severe costs for confronting tradition. Both within family and outside, tradition designates female roles within patriarchal frames and parameters: woman as wife and mother is valorised; single women, lesbians, and widows face prejudice (157).

A woman, in Mama's eyes, should not meddle in the relationships of married people which is what she thinks Cassandra is doing. To Cassandra, falling in love with a married man—Raymond Agutamba—is not something to be cringed upon just as is her eventual act of withholding the paternal identity of her child. Cassandra seems to refuse to be boxed in these traditional expectations of women by the society. The fact that she is up against this perception by her mother, reveals the culture in which her mother grew up in; a culture that defined the woman and who she should be and what she should aspire to. Cassandra, who embodies the local

rationalities of power—tactics—seeks to weaken or reverse this understanding. In fact as she sees it, marriage confines women. It limits them and makes them less happy than they ought to be. In the ensuing arguments after her mother questions her marriage prospects after getting entangled with a married man Cassandra posits that,

> Is marriage the only thing going for women, Mama? Why aren't you happy with Mellie then? …You have a couple of unmarried sisters yourself who look just fine to me, happier than the married women I know, as a matter of fact (122).

Mellie, who Cassandra brings up in this conversation, is her sister who got married in secret but her mother was not happy with this act. It emerges that Mama finds herself displeased with her two daughters primarily on the subject of marriage. Whereas one got married in secret, the other wants nothing to do with marriage. This occurrence does not only reveal a clash in perspectives in terms of the old versus the young but also a clash in cultural perspectives which occupy the larger systemic patterns of power. The two daughters find themselves on opposing ends with their mother on the subject of marriage. As Mama sees it, young girls should get married publicly and also not meddle with the marriages of other people. She is our window into the traditional perspectives on marriage and also family life. The portrayal of marriage and family life in the novel by the young women seems to have the connotation that the younger generation seems to want to chart its own path with regards to marriage. It is for this reason that the married characters happen to make choices that are easily detested by the older generation. It could be argued that it is because of the enlightenment that they have undergone through education or even a shift in the perceptions on marriage among the younger generation. For Mama, the ultimate fulfilment for a woman was "a husband, a home, and children" (125), this even meant giving up her job to become a fulltime housewife (125). Marriage, for the older generation

seemed to have been an almost sacred institution. This however is not so for the younger generation who largely do not see it as the ultimate fulfilment. Cassandra speaks of single women who are "happy and live meaningful lives" and even Mr. Agutamba himself was going through a separation with his wife at the time he met with Cassandra. It is Mama who is appalled by this and even confesses that she had "hoped for better things" for Cassandra (124). The novel itself indicates the coming of age of the African woman and even the African character as it seeks to explore issues that would have otherwise been considered taboo subjects in African fiction and more so Ugandan fiction. Kiyimba observes similar concerns in *Male Identity and Female Space in the Fiction of Ugandan Female Writers* (2008) and also goes further to note that "In *Cassandra,* Violet Barungi creates a character that has not been seen before on the pages of Ugandan literature" (216).

Grace Ogot in *The Role of Woman in African Literature* contends that in the initial works of East African literature—and especially novels after the period of colonialism—women found themselves at some sort of crossroads where they had to contend with the double-edged sword of oppression in the form of the colonial master and the patriarchal institutions in which they lived. Later on, after acquiring an education, the African woman found herself in a dilemma where she could not separate herself from the demands of her tradition and the trappings of western culture—which meant asserting oneself in the professional world and also being a breadwinner.

Ogot's argument ushers us into our analysis of the modern character in Ugandan literature that is presented alongside Cassandra. It is right to argue that most of the characters who belong to Cassandra's age group are beneficiaries of formal schooling and also formal employment. It is through this process as Ogot puts it that they find themselves in a dilemma where they are trapped between the demands of their traditional norms and the demands of the western culture

of even a modernizing society in our case. Violet Barungi succeeds in creating characters who are at the opposing ends of the cultural practices. Mrs. Mutono, as argued earlier, defends the traditional norms, and seeks to protect some societal decencies from being eroded by the wave of the changing norms. Cassandra becomes a representation of the character who chooses to fully identify herself as a modern woman in her "scheme of things" and this at times comes at the risk of her destruction. It is however noticeable that in Marie and Melinda (Mellie), we have somehow found a balance between the modern ways and the traditional ways. Barungi does not give us much into the character of Marie but from what she advices Cassandra one could deduce that she has somehow learnt how to strike a balance between the traditional and modern norms. This balance gives her some sort of insight that we rarely see in the character of Cassandra which is pitted against two aspects, her professional life, and her personal life. She seems to have a hold of her professional life and it is Marie her friend who helps her have a somewhat wholesome picture of the professional world as it is and not see men as enemies but as people who are there to complement their life. Marie is the complete opposite of Cassandra in terms of how they view relationships with men. It is Marie who offers Cassandra a more level-headed opinion on this kind of relationship. It is worth noting that she tells Cassandra that,

> ….men are not women's enemies, Cassandra, they're their allies. The two are meant to complement each other, not to collide or counteract each other's moves. We cook for them and bear their children and boost their ego (13).

This is a norm that Cassandra had detested and as such saw men as beings that were out to prey on women, hold them back professionally, and should not be viewed as allies. It could be argued that is a perception she picked from her mother's resignation from her job to become a fulltime housewife something she saw as "subservience to the men". Marie appreciates the

complementarity of the relationship and sees it as a means of mutual benefit to both sexes. Marie's levelheadedness is also evident when Cassandra talks with her about an Editorial team trip to Nairobi. Marie questions Cassandra's inclusion in the team by asking that "Doesn't it strike you as odd especially when you go as a replacement for Juliet. Hardly a replacement unless you think I don't qualify in my own right... But then merit has never been the criterion before and nobody is going to believe that it is now" (14-15).

As Marie offers her insights to Cassandra, she opens up a discussion on the norms in the professional spaces and more so at Lotus International which is the firm where Cassandra worked. Through her assertions, it is clear the merit had never been the standard at the organization and it would not be the case now. Cassandra is pitted against Juliet who is a representation of the women who bowed to sexual overtures from men in order to climb the professional ladder. In her description of Juliet, Barungi begins by hinting at the optimism that Cassandra had towards working with Juliet until she discovered who Juliet was.

> She—Cassandra—had been delighted and looked forward to a stimulating and pleasant relationship ...to Cassandra, Juliet appeared shallow, vulgar, and with no self-esteem at all. She gossiped incessantly and men seemed to be her only hobby...Juliet also discovered that Cassandra was extremely ambitious, the over achiever type (11).

These descriptions of both women occupying the same professional space paint women who are a stark contrast of each other. While one is "shallow" the other is an "over achiever." Juliet in this case occupies the superior position to Cassandra since for a long time she had been perceived to be the ideal woman in the professional space: a woman whose progress was bound to accepting sexual favours from men in the office. Cassandra is presented as the character who comes to correct this perception and this to some extent necessitates the authors' choice of words in describing both women. The one who represents change in the professional norms is almost

painted as light while the other is almost a representation of darkness. The character of Cassandra seeks to speak to the women who want to contribute to the development of the nation through their skills.

The novel, having been set in 1984 Uganda happens to be a representation of a country that was coming of age in many aspects. Socially, we see many women joining the workforce after having attained education. These are women who in many ways sought to leave a mark in the spaces they occupied for the sake of the women coming after them. Politically, this was also the time when the country was going through political turmoil that has gone to define the country to date. Every change at whichever level of the society seemed to have had far reaching and long-lasting implications. It is for this reason, I argue, that the author saw it fit to have a woman in the professional spaces who espoused ideals that could be looked upon by other women, her weaknesses notwithstanding.

Later on in her life Cassandra gets pregnant after being raped by Bevis Agutamba. It is a situation that she considers a minor setback and really not a threat to her ambitions in life. While still holding on to her views on single parenting the child, Cassandra refuses to play God (145) by aborting the child and instead seeks to take it upon herself to raise it without the help of the father "I am quite capable of taking care of my child single-handed" (147). Once again it is Mellie who gives Cassandra sound advice on parenting the child—that he will need both parents to grow up healthy in both body and mind" (147). This is an incidence that continues to show Cassandra's defiance against working with men. She seems to harbour an opinion she voiced earlier on with Marie that men are enemies of women and that … 'Men were the reason why majority of women were still lagging behind in social, economic and political development. Once you let a man into your life it was goodbye to ambitions of meaningful existence' (3).

The portrayal of Marie and Mellie as the opposites of Cassandra at various points reflects arguments by Michel Foucault on power and how power relations often permeate all levels of social existence. While power may at times be antagonistic, as represented by Mama and Cassandra, it may also be complementary as seen through the characters of Marie and Mellinda. On power, Foucault, adopts a pyramid like model and points out that the "kings" sit at the top of the pyramid, and pass down edicts to their "ministers" who then enforce these edicts upon the subjects—who are at the base of the pyramid. He argues further that power does not necessarily have to follow an up-down model since what is usually common is that there are various relations in the society that reveal the power relations that exist therein. He argues that:

> Power relations permeate all levels of social existence and are therefore to be found operating at every site of social life- in the private spheres of the family and sexuality as much as in the public spheres of politics, the economy and the law. (50)

Cassandra comes across as a character who is out to topple the "top down" model of power in a bid to assert her femininity and that of other women. While she finds herself grounded on her professional relationships in terms of standing for a merit based professional system, her personal life becomes a storm she cannot weather. It is evident that while her professional relationships seek to build and even challenge the growth of others, her personal life tears down not only her life but also the lives of others. This seems to be a struggle she cannot win and also the fatal flaw in her character. This agency allocated to Cassandra seems to be working for her in some aspects of her life and also not working out in others.

The agency that is allocated to Cassandra is one that presents a double-edged kind of sword to the woman of the 80s. She emerges as a woman who is at the front of imagining a new kind of woman in Ugandan society. When it comes to imagining a new kind of work environment for the

women Cassandra comes forth as the woman to be looked upon. She is also used by the author to voice contemporary moral issues such as abortion to which she refuses and decides to raise the child alone, the norm with women of her age in the society. Cassandra as presented in terms of her professional and personal personas comes out as the woman to be looked upon until Marie and Melinda come by and become the much needed voices of reason in Cassandra's "scheme of things." Cassandra's obsession with defining herself as a high-achiever and also an opinionated woman often times blinds her from the salient issues in the life of women. It is Marie who attempts showing Cassandra her blind spots especially when it comes to her perceptions of men and also life in the workplace. Marie somehow holds Cassandra's hand and becomes her teacher in "Natural Laws" something which Cassandra never seemed conversant with. On the other hand, it is Melinda who tries to voice reason to Cassandra when it comes to parenting. This instance also seems to have been the author voicing herself through Melinda especially on the issue of single parenting which might have been gaining ground in the Ugandan society at the time coupled with affairs with married men.

This agency is a double-edged sword since while it seems that Cassandra was notching up so many victories on her professional ground, she seemed to be conceding to so much defeat in her personal life and it is for this reason that characters such as Melinda, Marie, and also her mother are put alongside Cassandra just to voice some reason on what really matters in life other than seeing men as competitors and living a largely idealistic life focused on oneself. Left on her own, Cassandra would have been unable to cope with the forces she was contending against in the society. The maturity of the other female characters alongside her gives her a better perspective that somehow covers her faults which often times threaten to destroy her. She meditates: "That's two people who have ventured to advise me on my outlook on life in one day" (16). Cassandra

once admitted after having received counsel from Marie which goes a long way in showing how much she needed the support of her female friends even though she often acted as though she would have made it on her own.

4.4 Political Changes in Uganda as Presented in *Cassandra*

The political history of Uganda is one that has been marked by various struggles in its bid to attain a democratically stable nation-state. Milton Obote upon his ascension to power sought to establish a republic and centralize power at the presidency in a bid to unify the country and maintain it as a nation. To do this, he embarked on a mission led by his then confidante Idi Amin to destroy the Kabaka Kingdom. This act angered the Baganda and the subsequent fallout has been credited for the political turbulence that characterized Uganda in the 70s and the 80s. Later on, Obote was ousted by Idi Amin as observed by Garth Glentworth and Ian Hancock in *Obote and Amin: Change and Continuity in Modern Ugandan Politics.* The subsequent political struggles saw the return of Obote to the presidency and also later on his ouster once more. These political struggles led to what was popularly known as the "Bush War" which Violet Barungi alludes to in *Cassandra*. It is the war that led to the success of the Museveni led National Resistance Movement upon which he declared himself president in 1986 and was elected to the position in 1996. As with political changes, Museveni's presidency in the earlier years provided relative stability and promised democracy. These political struggles and the consequences provide the cultural or political backdrop against which Barungi narrates the political changes in *Cassandra* and especially the change that led to the ascension of Museveni to power. Arguably this could be stated to have been Uganda's most consequential political change which necessitated the author's choice to lean on this historical moment in her book.

Cassandra, though largely a narration on interpersonal and social relationships in contemporary Uganda, it also narrates the political challenges and turmoil that shaped the future of the country. We are first introduced to these challenges when Raymond takes Cassandra to an entertainment joint. Raymond, who is an architect himself, was working on the projected extension to All Souls Church (7) and was to meet with Jack Mwezi, the contractor. Cassandra's initial interaction with Mr. Mwezi is somewhat characteristic of her behaviour as the narrator informs us that "Cassandra rudely gave him the tips of her fingers..." (8). It is the conversations that ensue between Cassandra and Mr. Mwezi that introduce us to the political situation in Uganda and also the effects it had on the society, a situation that led to the fleeing of some of the best professionals in the country and also the death of innocent people in churches as Cassandra observes during her conversation with Mwezi.

> Cassandra felt strongly against the indiscriminate killings of innocent people whether by rebels or government soldiers...Mr. Mwezi, in spite of his bold appearance, was cautious and non - committal in his views. But in his defence, one could not be too careful. These were dangerous times and government agents were everywhere (9).

It is later on that Raymond informs Cassandra that Mr. Mwezi, who has a "very high reputation in his field and is quite reliable" (10) is just but a few of the remnants who fled Uganda in the exodus of the seventies. Historically, the seventies were a period that was characterised by the exodus of many Ugandan professionals who felt short-changed by the Idi Amin and Milton Obote regimes that were also equally brutal on any individuals who were considered dissidents. It is after Museveni forcefully took over from Obote in 1986 that relative peace was restored to Uganda and the country began witnessing a return of some of the professionals who had fled. This brain drain that is represented by Mr. Mwezi, the returnee, comes into play in the novel when Lotus International organises for training in Nairobi which implies that Uganda at the time

could not have been having the required facilities desired to train the employees of Lotus International. The training itself becomes a key event in Barungi's narration since it is during these events that men who were preying on women in the workplace would have them included in the list of those travelling and the women would be promised and granted promotions in exchange of sexual favours. The political tensions that characterised Uganda not only had an effect on the professionals of the seventies and later on the Asians but also on women who came to be part of the professional spaces in the 80s. Largely, these women became victims of sexual predators in the workplace and this could be argued to have been the cause of prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Uganda of the 80s (17), the rise in cases of abortion which the author uses Cassandra to voice against, and also the rise of single parents which Cassandra sees as the alternative to raising her child who came by as a "minor setback." The political turmoil had social implications that had far-reaching consequences on the future of Uganda.

This narration of the political tensions that characterised Uganda is also evident when Barungi introduces us to Marie and her boyfriend Dan Kizito who is said to have been a beneficiary of Idi Amin's expulsion of the Asians in the seventies. "Dan Kizito was a young man of about thirty whose family had benefitted a lot from the expulsion of the Asians...in the early seventies" (13). It is historically factual that Idi Amin in 1972 expelled Asians from Uganda and moved to grant the businesses which the Asian families had established to incompetent Ugandans who were in support of his regime. This move saw the decline of the Ugandan economy and also the uprising of the Yoweri Museveni's faction that led to the ouster of Amin in 1986. Museveni is referred to in *Cassandra* as "the man in the bush" since it is from this front that he led his resistance. This allusion to the Museveni led faction is made when the narrator continues her observations of the political tensions that riddled Uganda and also the effects. At this point, Horace Kalanzi, who

was engaged to Cassandra's sister, Mellinda had been brutally murdered by the ruling government for supporting "the man in the bush". Horace, it is said, was a man committed to the cause of improving Uganda (58) and it is this dedication that inevitably motivated his support for the man in the bush.

Several versions of the cause of his death were being peddled by the people who had gathered in his house to mourn him, with others suggesting that he was killed because of his fishy business deals. "With Horace it could have been anything, especially business …, it is a fact that most of his businesses could not stand up to scrutiny" (57). It is Cassandra who rightly alludes that the murder had been necessitated due to his political stance. It was in fact an irony that the murder was by the police who were just "puppets of the powers that be and will always be, as long as promotions and appointments are subject to political allegiances."

What is interesting about Barungi's creation of characters who subvert established norms within the society is that as Cassandra occupies the professional and social front, Horace occupies the political front. His murder seems to paint a grim picture of Barungi's belief in a politically stable country or it might be argued that Barungi is seemingly more interested in the creation of professional spaces that are more tolerant to women than the creation of a stable country since the character that spearheads this vision is brutally murdered. It could also be argued that the author seemingly sees Horace as a man who does not subscribe to her moral code of men who do not treat women as commodities but instead idolize them. Horace, we see earlier on, is presented as a "beast" and a man who held the opinion that "if you can have one girl, you can have them all or as many as you can handle" (19).

The political norms that Barungi presents are largely left uncontested as she glosses over the issue and at times seems to be mentioning the political state in the 1980s Uganda rather than engaging in a substantial representation of the political atmosphere of the country at the time. To put together the pieces, one has to read through the history of Uganda since this is where she largely borrows from to narrate the country's political history. It is also clear that *Cassandra* is characterised by silences on the conflicts with the political front since the death of Horace does not even usher an investigation. One of those who had gathered to mourn him says that "They investigate and make reports but... (58). The character is then interrupted and we never get to know what happens after the reports are made but it is implied that the police do not make any arrests or even convictions. Horace's death, and the country's political situation, is suspense just like the statement regarding the investigations and reports.

What we get to learn after the death of Horace is how the society perceives death and the traditions that accompany the death of a person and also how these traditions are changing. This is a representation that is fronted with Mama, Cassandra, and Melinda's mother, who represents the older generation that observes the formalities of mourning and also Cassandra and her contemporaries who are not so much invested in the traditional formalities of mourning.

A few days after the burial of Horace, Mrs. Mutono, Cassandra's mother, visits them and she is shocked to find that everyone had embarked on their businesses after the burial. To her disgust, she laments that the house in which they live in does not look like a mourning house to her. "This doesn't look like a house in mourning to me…. I at least expected to find Mellie and Gavin here. Certain decencies must be upheld even in your ultra-modern society' (120) … to which Cassandra responds sarcastically and also seemingly painting an image of the traditional ways of mourning that her mother hoped she could find. Cassandra responds by asking "...what did you

expect to find? A log of fire in the compound and wailing women inside the house?" (120). While this may come across as an offhanded remark it bears with it the connotations of how people used to be mourned after their burial during Mama's time. Cassandra's age is a representation of the young who choose to do things their way.

The question that begs to be answered is why Barungi would seemingly treat Horace as an individual that was of no consequence not only to the lives of those around him but also to the political future of Uganda. This presentation of Horace goes further in speaking of the silences Barungi accords those who fight for the liberation of the country, and especially the male characters. Horace is in fact presented as a mysterious character, one whom no one knows much about and many resort to rumours when describing him including Mrs. Mutono who calls him a "gangster". It is wanting that such a vital character in the political front of Uganda is presented as someone who nothing or little is known about and even his memory in death is painted with tales of "who he might have been" and not who he actually was.

4.5 Conclusion

The arguments in this chapter have been constructed alongside reading Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* as a novel that represents the Ugandan society at a historical moment where it was going through changes not only politically but also socially. What clearly comes out from the study is that the 80s in Uganda were largely eras of political turmoil that defined the country to date. These years and the political challenges have also influenced the public understanding of Uganda since most information available focuses on the politics of the nation, rightly so. While these political changes were happening in the society, the country was also going through various social and cultural challenges that have for some time remained silent since the focus

was on the political situations in the country. Barungi uses *Cassandra* as a social chronicle and creates characters who represent the cultural changes that were happening in the society. She seems to be telling the readers that as the country was evolving politically, it was also evolving culturally and it is on these cultural evolutions that she centres her representation of the Ugandan society. Her engagement with the political changes is minimal in comparison to her engagement with the cultural changes. This could be because much has been said and written about the political changes and little about the cultural changes which have been significant in defining the country across various spheres.

Barungi also centres women in the advancement of her representation of the society at the 80s. In doing this, she reveals the challenges women were facing in the society then and also introduces us to subjects that would have been considered taboo then. Through *Cassandra* we get to see a society whose cultures and norms were evolving hand in hand with the political changes. It is right to argue that Barungi shows us the salient details of the society and its cultural fabric as it changes and the tensions around it and it is also for this reason that she does not engage much with the political representations in her novel.

As with the previously studied novels, the themes explored in *Cassandra* focus on the centrality of women in the Ugandan society. *Cassandra* is unique in comparison to the studied novels in that it interrogates contemporary themes such us contemporary moral issues of divorce, abortion, and single parentage. The narrator in this novel expresses these themes through the female characters who find themselves in situations where they have to deal with either of the contemporary moral issues and also what they think of them. The author, through the characters, detests the issue of abortion by indicating that the choice to terminate a life is the work of God, a privilege that has not been extended to human beings. On single parenting, the author again

through the female characters indicates that it is indeed possible to raise healthy children even as a single parent. Elements of style such as diction and tone are crucial in narrating the changes in social norms in *Cassandra*. It is through these styles that readers get to see the tension that emerges from adopting new social norms at the expense of the old. The younger generation adopts a demeaning tone when addressing the older generation as if to suggest that those who represent the older generation are representatives of times that are long gone and should thus not be listened to. The diction also reveals the antagonism of the young towards the old and also the frustration of the old by the young. The frustration is evident when the older generation wants to be part of the younger generation's life but they are left out.

Cassandra reflects a Ugandan society that is coming to terms not only with the place of women in the work force but also a Ugandan society that is gradually evolving and has to accommodate both women who are assertive and also some issues which had previously been considered a taboo. In a way, the novel reflects a Ugandan society in which the centre no longer holds. Some of the cherished values of the past are contested by the younger generation. Values such as marriage which held a premium for the older generation are no longer looked upon by the younger generation. Values such as coming together to grieve with mourning families after the burial of their loved ones are also contested in the novel. Community as a value seems to be on shaky ground in the novel and it is the older generation that fights for these common decencies. Decencies that held their generation together. This text brings a social chronicle that represents conflicting generations in Ugandan society and this act as a social novel that is chronicling the contemporary period in Uganda's history. The ensuing chapter reiterates the centrality of history in the representation of the Ugandan society by the selected contemporary female novelists.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS UNDER STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is anchored on the questions of a possibility of female writers viewing similar issues in a similar way and also the possibilities of a universality of opinion, thought and perception. The questions are critical to this chapter's examination of the issues of history and style in the selected novels. The chapter pays attention to the centrality of history in the selected novels and its subsequent significance not just to the literary critic but also the Ugandan woman. The assumption herein is that the female novelists of the studied works are conversant with the history of Uganda and also the position women have occupied in Ugandan society over time. It is for this reason or assumption that there is a similarity in the reflection and representation of the female identities through different times in the history of Uganda. This chapter embarks on a comparative study of the novels treating them as chronicles of Ugandan history through a universal approach in the strategies of representing issues regarding the female question.

The argument that literary works mirror society could be said to be as old as literary works themselves and still as relevant today as when the argument arose. This is especially true when we consider works that relive and represent certain historical moments in their setting. Through these works, readers and literary critics get to understand the society at a specific point through the imaginations of the writers. Theoreticians such as Georg Lukacs and Lucien Goldmann have corroborated the arguments on the historical aspects of the novel by stating that novels can be read as social chronicles since through representation, they do narrate events that took place in the society at a specific point in history. It is an argument that seems to suggest that we cannot

dissociate the novel from the society, if at all we are to have a meaningful appreciation of the novel within its context as a work of art and also a chronicle of the society.

Georg Lukacs in *Theory of the Novel (1969)* argues that the novel is the representative art form of our world since the structures of the novel coincide with our world as it is today (89). Goldmann also holds a similar perception, to Lukacs, of the novel as a work of art steeped in history and should be read in the context within which it was written. In *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1963), Goldmann argues that the novel is a "[…] transposition on the literary plane of everyday life […]" (7) meaning the novel is a record of the society. These arguments on the historicity of the novel have also been propounded and expanded by New Historicists who call for an interpretation of literary works within the historical context of the author and the critic. Stephen Greenbalt, a major proponent of new historicism, in *Practicing New Historicism* (2000) argues for the critical analysis of literary works through the understanding of the writers' social background and also reading the works of art within the cultural lenses of ideas that may have been prevalent at the time of its publication.

5.2 The Centrality of History in the Ugandan Society by the Contemporary Female Novelists

Christopher Odhiambo in *Memory, Dialogue and Reconstruction of the Nation* (2017) makes an important observation that in part will drive my arguments in this Chapter on the presentation of a history of Uganda through contemporary women's fiction. While examining the role of memory in narrating the Ugandan nation in Alex Mukulu's play *30 Years of Bananas* (1992) which traces "[…] Uganda's history from independence in 1962 to 1992" (43) Odhiambo argues that the play explores the importance of the past before plunging into the future by revisiting,

excavating, and interrogating Uganda's traumatic memory before seriously beginning the project of national reconstruction […]" (45). What we see in the novels selected for this study is that there is a common trend in the authors trying to somehow engage in a utopian presentation of Uganda as a more accommodating society not bent towards harsh patriarchal stances that lead to death due to diseases, corruption and political upheavals as is the case in Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil;* and a society that is at peace with the ever changing norms of the society especially with regards to contemporary moral issues such as divorce, abortion, and also the perception of women in the workforce as is seen in Violet Barungi's *Cassandra;* and also the place of family in a more liberal society where both the men and women work towards brushing off retrogressive residues of patriarchal cultures and handing over a society where both the women and the men have an equal say in what happens in marriage and even beyond marriage as is seen in Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience.*

This utopian representation of Uganda by the authors is not narrated in a haphazard manner but the authors take their time in setting the ground for the past nation. History becomes the foundation upon which the future is set and it is for this reason that we find Odhiambo's argument critical to this section since he looks at the importance of the past in a play by Alex Mukulu, a male Ugandan writer, before any imagining of the future is constructed. Abasi Kiyimba also notes this in *Male Identity and Female Space in the Fiction of Ugandan Women Writers* (2008) when he points out that:

> The last fifteen years or so have seen the emergence of new writing in English by Ugandan women considerably altering the picture of a hitherto male-dominated Ugandan literary landscape. Because of this increased activity the Ugandan literary landscape is now richer…Apart from enabling Ugandan literature to contribute meaningfully to the contemporary gender debate, women writers have enriched the discussion on subjects that had been tackled by men earlier (3).

The contemporary female authors addressed in this study go against the set precedence of men narrating the nation and somewhat the public affairs of Uganda. The precedence of exclusion of women from the historical processes of nations/public affairs is clearly observed by Molara Ogundipe-Leslie in *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformations* (1987) where she argues that

> Women are 'naturally' excluded from public affairs; they are viewed as unable to hold positions of responsibility, rule men or even be visible when serious matters of state and society are being discussed. Women are viewed to need tutelage before they can be politically active; politics is considered the absolute realm of men; women are not considered fit for political positions in modern African nation-states, though their enthusiasm and campaign work are exploited by their various political parties. (133)

Okurut, Barungi, and Kaberuka emerge as writers who contest these established norms in the narration of the history of Uganda and take it upon themselves to write women into the history of the country. Through their works they hold the idea that women are responsible citizens of Uganda who contribute just as much as men do to its development. They not only weave women into the history of Uganda but also the political affairs of the country where the women work side by side and at times perform even better than the men. Whereas Ogundipe-Leslie comments on the exclusion of women from the public affairs of African literature, Gina Wisker in *Post-Colonial and African American Women's Writing: A Critical Introduction* (2000) makes the argument that "…writing by some African women concentrates on imparting cultural values and considers the kinds of roles women traditionally perform. One contemporary issue is the negotiation of different responses to tradition and change" (132). Holding the arguments by Ogundipe-Leslie and Wisker side by side one sees that Mary Okurut, Violet Barungi, and Jane Kaberuka, in their novels selected for this study, weave some kind of double-edged sword in fiction in the sense that they not only rope in women into the public spaces of contemporary

Ugandan fiction, something which had been lacking before, but also narrate what we would consider the private affairs that preoccupy writing by women—cultural values and the roles performed by women.

The public affairs—what we consider and history and politics of Uganda—as well as the private affairs are evidently seen in Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* where she brings in Kaaka, the woman representing the oldest generation within the novel, and mother-in-law to Nkwanzi, to narrate the pre-colonial history of Uganda as well as the cultural history of Uganda. Through Kaaka we get to see when the white man came to Uganda and how he was received. Colonialism being an important moment in the history of Uganda, Okurut seems to bestow the honour of this knowledge to a woman. It is also Kaaka who introduces us to the cultural practices of her community, and probably most communities in Uganda in her time. These practices included wife inheritance by male relatives and the practice of a traditional doctor cutting members of a family that had been stricken with the "invisible weevil" with the same razor blade to protect them from the calamity. These retrogressive cultural practices only fanned the spread of HIV/AIDS, one of the invisible weevils, in communities. Kaaka bears the double-edged sword indicated earlier since she speaks of both the "public nature" and "private nature" of Uganda. What Kaaka does with Nkwanzi—narrating to her the history of Uganda—is done to somehow equip Nkwanzi with knowledge of who they are as a people and impart cultural values upon her. It is also noteworthy that Genesis, Kaaka's son, was not privy to the information Kaaka gives to Nkwanzi.

This engagement with the history and culture of communities in Uganda is also evident in Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* and Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience.* In *Cassandra,* the involvement of women in the historical and cultural spaces is represented through Mrs. Mutono who at times

cuts a lonely figure in the cultural space when she fights to retain some of what she calls common decencies as observed by her generation. Though Mrs. Mutono is not seen explicitly engaging in the historical moments her presence in the novel seems to be an indicator that she is the reader's link between the past and the present. The past that she represents seems to be detested by Cassandra's generation who stand for the present and want to be left alone to chart their own paths to the future. The present as we see through Cassandra and the Agutamba's is marked with struggles such as political assassinations which led to the murder of Melinda's husband and even issues such as divorce which becomes a protracted issue in Raymond Agutamba's marriage. Within this generation, we also get to see women being included in the work force and it is here that we encounter the patriarchal practices that dominate the work environment. This includes women being overlooked when it comes to leadership positions in favour of men. This happened to Cassandra while working at Lotus International when Collin Kiiza, who was the Senior Editor, is promoted to the position of Chief Editor after Mr. Wakilo leaves for further studies. Cassandra and members of Lotus International are further surprised when a man is recruited from outside the firm to take over as the Senior Editor, above Cassandra who was in line for that promotion. Cassandra and her colleague Marie therefore quit in order to start their own publishing firm. This is an incident that brings to mind Ogundipe-Leslie's argument when she says that women are excluded from positions of responsibility. These patriarchal practices also become an influence in the selection of who gets to go for professional training and the criteria is that the women who are chosen get to sleep with their bosses for promotion, as seen by the amorous Mr. Wakilo who successfully preys on Juliet.

As Cassandra fights these practices, she does so with the mantra that she does not want to be 'beholden to men" (13). Cassandra largely sees men as the enemies of women especially in the

work place a perception that Marie, her colleague tries to counter by telling her that "Men are not women's enemies…they are their allies. The two are meant to complement each other, not collide or counteract each other's moves" (13). While we see Mrs. Mutono fighting to retain some cultural decencies in her family we also see Cassandra fighting to ensure that some norms in the workforce, especially those that rely on the preying of women by men, are challenged. Mrs. Mutono wants weddings done publicly in line with traditions, but this was not the case with her daughter Melinda who got married in a rather private manner, she also wants mourning periods observed which did not happen after Melinda lost Horace, her husband. Mrs. Mutono also desires that Cassandra, her daughter, get married and stop being involved in affairs with married men as she was doing with Raymond Agutamba. Mrs. Mutono sees this as an act that would reduce her daughter's eligibility for marriage. Cassandra on her part does not see the point her mother is making and counters this argument by noting that she has seen happy women who are unmarried, including her own aunty.

In *Cassandra,* Violet Barungi takes us through the changes that the country was undergoing not only politically but also socially and also how these changes affect most of the characters. This approach of narrating the historical as well as the cultural norms and their changes brings a fresher perspective in our understanding of the Ugandan society not just through the angle of political turmoil but also through social and cultural upheavals that if left untold would have gone unnoticed. Barungi thus points us to a specific point in Uganda's history from where we could begin our tracing of the changes in the cultural norms.

The history of Uganda is also evident in Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* albeit in a more covert manner than the previously mentioned texts. Kaberuka weaves in the history of Uganda using the

family unit as its metaphor. As she does this, Kaberuka narrates the pain different families go through and the attempts they make to shield each other from the pains.

Kaberuka takes it upon herself to narrate the plight of refugees in Uganda which is brought about by Stella's mother who laments of her state and desire to return home. This alienation from home also plays as a metaphor for womanhood when we see that women even though they belong to the communities within which they are born are largely alienated from critical decisions that affect them such as marriage. This is evident when Stella is married off to Michael despite having never met him before. The only saving grace is that Michael does not harbour some of the retrogressive patriarchal practices surrounding marriage such as marital rape and desires instead to court Stella first—something the culture had denied them. Michael thus becomes a representation of what we would consider a modern man, although he still falls short when considered through the lenses of parenting. Stella becomes pregnant with their first child—Agnes—and while she is overjoyed at the opportunity motherhood presents them, as a family, to nurture their love, Michael is not as happy and begins philandering habits. Michael eventually dies as a result of injuries sustained from a road accident and this seemingly becomes the author's communication to the reader of her regard for the institution of marriage and also family. The author seems to lean towards Stella's perception of pregnancy and family life as a progression that will contribute to the growth of their love but Michael does not seem to share in this view. To protect the institution of marriage and family, the author seems to eliminate Michael from the narrative. Family and marriage life as the author perceives it should be devoid of conflicts due to one partner cheating.

Literary works have always mirrored the society. Through them readers and critics are able to interrogate several developments in the society. This section of the chapter has focused on how

the selected novels by female authors engage in the practice of narrating the history of Uganda through fiction. In the studied works, literary critics can trace the development of Uganda from the pre-colonial periods to the period after the independence of Uganda and the challenges that existed in the Ugandan society, especially challenges that women faced from patriarchal cultures, and how the female characters circumvented these challenges to assert themselves not as victims in the society but as active agents of change. The novels also narrate the changes in some norms in the society due to modernisation and also the social perceptions to the changes. This stated, it is also clear that literary works cannot be analysed based on their sociological merit only but also based on their literary merit. The next section of this chapter thus focuses on the literary merit of the texts by comparatively analysing the literary styles that cut across the selected novels for this study.

5.3 Stylistic Devices at Play in the Narration of Uganda's History

Metaphors have long been used in works of African literature to represent different elements of the society. Laura T. Murphy in *Metaphor and the Slave Trade in West African Literature* examines the role of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade played in shaping the literary works of West Africa. Murphy states that "The [metaphor of] slave trade hides in the proverbial bush of ghosts, a past always alive in the present, though sometimes unnoticed or obscured. Although Murphy's argument is centred around the economic, demographic, political, and social impacts of slave trade on West African societies and literatures, her approach on the role of metaphors could be juxtaposed into an understanding of the metaphorical representations of Uganda using the metaphor of the invisible weevil. This is because, the invisible weevil is something that is hidden within society and always goes unnoticed, yet it has a noticeable impact.

An example would be the invisible weevil of HIV/AIDS in *The Invisible Weevil*. This is a weevil that one would not notice at all unless they are told about. It lurks in the proverbial darkness and its effects silently eat away the individual just as they eat away the country through corruption and retrogressive cultural practices that denigrate women. The demographic, social, political, and economic effects of the invisible weevil in Ugandan literature parallel the effects of trans-Atlantic slave trade in West African literature. Murphy also argues on the subtlety of the metaphor in literature by observing that "memories of slave trade are overlooked in African literature because they are not revealed in overt narrativization […] African texts do not merely remember the slave trade […] they *represent* it as well" (3). Murphy's postulation on the place of metaphor in African texts is also key to understanding the role metaphors play in the Ugandan texts read in this section. The metaphor of the invisible weevil not only represents Ugandan society; it also remembers it. It would not be farfetched to state that metaphor in Ugandan literature is tied to memory. The invisible weevil in contemporary Ugandan literature is not just tied to the history of Uganda but is also a representation of the Ugandan society through the years.

The narrator in *The Invisible Weevil* remembers Ugandan history primarily through the character of Kaaka. Being the eldest female in the novel, Kaaka becomes the reader's gateway to the Ugandan past. This is evident in Kaaka's conversation with Nkwanzi, her daughter-in-law, as they nurse Genesis, her son. It is through Kaaka's memory that we get to understand the pre-colonial Uganda's history with regards to the arrival of the white man and also the cultural practices that often denigrated women. Kaaka seemingly was the first woman to see the white man in her village but her report to other villagers was not believed until corroborated by men. Kaaka passes vital information to Nkwanzi on how women have been marginalised by

patriarchal cultures within the Uganda society since the pre-colonial times. This historical knowledge passed to Nkwanzi helps her in contextualising the struggle by women for a more just and balanced society. Nkwanzi and her contemporaries engage in the struggle for a more democratic Uganda after being educated on the place of women in the Ugandan society by Kaaka.

Mary Okurut's metaphor of the invisible weevil remembers and also represents Uganda. While in *The Invisible Weevil* the metaphor represents various invisible yet retrogressive weevils in the society such as corruption, retrogressive patriarchal cultures, and even HIV/AIDS**,** the reader sees how this weevil has shaped the perception of women in the society. Kaaka is a victim of the negative perceptions brought about by the invisible weevil of retrogressive patriarchal cultures. No one believes her when she reports to the village that she saw a white man, and this has to be confirmed by a male figure. It is a perception that deemed women as not trustworthy until their information, however vital and true, was corroborated by a male figure. This weevil that would easily go unnoticed hinders the progression and growth of women in the society since history is viewed through the lenses of men, however faulty their perception may have been. The weevil also stalks Nkwanzi when she is married to Genesis. Nkwanzi plays second fiddle to men at her workplace when she is appointed as an Assistant Minister when she was more qualified than her immediate supervisor who was a man. This seems to have been the norm since women were seen as assistants to men. In her marriage to Genesis she also has to bow to his whims when he feels threatened by Nkwanzi's position in the society. When Nkwanzi has to travel outside the country for work engagements, Genesis believes that she would not remain faithful to him and cheats on her. His philandering ways are the subsequent cause of him contracting the invisible weevil of the HIV/AIDS virus.

Whereas in *The Invisible Weevil* the weevil is used as metaphor that represents the struggles the nation of Uganda faces as it seeks to liberate itself, in *Cassandra* the reader sees the family unit used as an allegory for change and put at the centre of the struggle for the Ugandan nation. Set in 1984, the novel introduces us to the rapid changes that are happening in the society through the eyes of the family. It is through the family set up that we get to see how older cultural norms are challenged by the new cultural norms which are being pushed for by the younger generation. In *Cassandra*, we are introduced to two families: The Agutamba family from which Raymond and Bevin come from and the Mutono family from where Gavin, Cassandra, and Melinda come from. These two families are a microcosm of the Ugandan family and to a large extent, a presentation of the nation itself. Through the character of Cassandra, the author introduces the readers to the dynamics of Ugandan professional life and also the aspirations of the new generation of women in the workforce.

The reader is introduced to Cassandra in the novel as she works as an editor in Lotus International. She is characterised as a highly ambitious woman who seeks to chart her way to the top of the professional world without seeking the patronage of men. Cassandra, in a conversation with her friend and colleague Marie, states that "There are a number of more elevating subjects, in my opinion, which don't always revolve around men […] Work goals, ambitions, things like t that" (14). Cassandra's view of her world is a stark contrast to her antagonist, Juliet, whom she considers as "cheap and vulgar" (14). The representations of the characters of Cassandra and Juliet are depictions of the women who occupied the Ugandan workforce and the new breed of women. Juliet is largely a representation of the older generation whereas Cassandra is characterised as representation of the new breed of women entering the workforce. Cassandra seems to occupy no middle ground in her view of the world. Seemingly, it

is either one is highly ambitious and focused in the workplace or they are lazy and seekers of masculine patronage to progress. It is Marie who acts as Cassandra's sounding board, the voice she so desperately needs so as to adapt to the changing society. Marie, while being ambitious in her own way, seems to have found a balance between the realities that face women in the workplace and defining herself as a woman who knows what she wants. Marie tries to get Cassandra off her "high horse" (15) and help her come to terms with the reality when Cassandra thinks that she was included for the training trip to Nairobi on grounds of merit. When Cassandra is selected as a replacement for Juliet for the Editorial seminar in Nairobi, Marie warns her that her inclusion was not on merit she tells her that "[…] merit has never been the criterion before […]" and she should heed her advice before she is made to choose between "your job and your integrity" (15).

This conversation between Marie and Cassandra is a depiction of the new women in the Ugandan workforce. Whereas both women are ambitious and full of integrity, Marie seems to have found her balance and is able to correctly perceive the world around her and make sound judgements regarding tricky situations. Cassandra on the other hand, seems to have been blinded to the subtle facts at hand to correctly perceive her world. Through such characterisations in the workplace Barungi gives the reader that which she thinks should be done away with through the character of Juliet and also seems to be leaving her readers to choose between Marie and Cassandra.

This conflict between the old norms and the new norms taking root in the Ugandan society is once again evident when Cassandra is pitted against her mother, Mrs. Mutono, after the death of Horace Agutamba due to an assassination. Mrs. Mutono finds herself conflicted with her daughter on two subjects: funeral rites and marriage. After the burial of Horace, Mrs. Mutono

visits the grieving family, probably in the hope of condoling with them, only to find that everyone had left and gone back to their day-to-day activities. Upon inquiry on where everyone is, Tonia, the widow, informs her that

> The party broke up as soon as you left. Alex has gone back to college of course and Gavin […] has gone to meet with his associate over this business of the will. And Mellie, believe it or not has gone back to the hospital to work (122)

Tonia's tone while speaking to Mrs. Mutono reveals not just her disappointment at being left by her husband but also being abandoned by friends during her moments of grief. The tone also reveals her anger. It is not surprising that Mrs. Mutono, while looking around bewildered, reproaches Cassandra and those gathered by telling them that "Certain decencies must be upheld even in your ultra-modern society" (122). Mrs. Mutono seems to hold the view that it was imperative to stay with the grieving family even after the burial of their loved ones. This was so as to help them through the grieving process, something the younger generation seems to be ignoring and much to the pain of the bereaved. Cassandra in fact dryly responds to her mother, when she stated that the house did not look like a house in mourning, by telling her "What did you expect to find? A log fire in the compound and wailing women inside the house?" and adds to it by telling her mother that she was sorry they couldn't go on mourning Horace forever, as though talking "to a half-witted child" (122). However rude and sarcastic Cassandra's comment may have been, that seemed to have been the tradition that the younger generation is now abandoning. The common decencies are now becoming a thing of the past in the "ultra-modern" Ugandan society, where everyone seems to be minding their own businesses. Violate Barungi employs dialogue to show that the conflicts evident within the Mutono family reveal that the respect that was once accorded to the older generation is now but a gone thing. That Cassandra

could actually be bold enough to talk back to her mother was something that seemingly was unheard of in the days gone by.

Cassandra's differences with her mother on the issue of marriage are further in evidence when she is confronted about her having an affair with a married man—Mr. Raymond Agutamba. Mama tells her that "Well, for one, I had thought you had better sense than to get entangled with a married man" (124). This entanglement worries Mama but to Cassandra that is just the norm and it is nothing to be bothered about. Cassandra replies to her mother by telling her that the man in question was separated from his wife. The norm, it now seems, is that the younger generation do not value the sacredness of the institution of marriage. Mama sees this affair as something that will ruin the chances of Cassandra getting married since Mr. Raymond Agutamba would not marry Cassandra. The changing perceptions towards marriage are evident when Cassandra tells her mother that marriage is not the only thing for women and compares herself with Mellinda, who was married but Mama was not happy with the privacy that characterised the wedding, she had seemingly anticipated a colourful wedding with all the pomp. The way marriage was characterised and perceived in the past is not the way it is perceived in Cassandra's time. Theirs is a generation that seems to find satisfaction in career progression as opposed to marrying and settling down. It is no wonder that the author introduces the issue of single parenting when Cassandra gets pregnant and Mellie suggests to her the option of procuring an abortion (145). This is a generation that seems to question and destabilise long held notions within the society. To them, the centre no longer holds. It is no wonder that they talk back to their parents, however rude it seems, disregard long cherished funeral rites and also see marriage as an impediment of sorts.

After the burial of Horace, the author also introduces the reader to legal matters and how they often enforced the negative perception of women in the society. The reader witnesses how Tonia, Horace's widow, was denigrated by the laws that governed inheritance of property left behind by the husband. Raymond informs Cassandra that according to the law, wives were entitled to 15% of the wealth while children were entitled to 75% and the remainder to the other dependents. These discrepancies, Raymond observes, "[…] allow for the exploitation and improper grabbing of property often leaving the immediate family almost destitute" (120). These laws as Raymond reveals to Cassandra were inherited from the customary practices of the years before and have now been affixed and enforced by the civil laws governing inheritance.

Having been set in 1984, 22 years after the independence of Uganda, *Cassandra* seems to be a continuation of the conversation *The Invisible Weevil* began. Whereas the former through the use of metaphor took us back to the pre-colonial Uganda and the struggle for independence to the struggle against retrogressive patriarchal cultures through the characters of Kaaka and Nkwanzi and an imagination of the future through the character of Ihoreere, the latter, *Cassandra* using the family unit as an allegory in narrating Ugandan history brings us to a moment in the then present day when the issues that bring about strife have changed and the characters are now engaged in the fight against norms that they deem retrogressive. It would not be farfetched to argue that Cassandra is an embodiment of Ihoreere as a grown up in the post-independent Ugandan society. Having not been part of the fight for independence, this generation inherits the fight against retrogressive patriarchal cultures from their parents and also begins a new fight against norms that their parents upheld. It is a generation that tries to define itself as distinct from the generation that came before it.

This continuity in the representation of the family as an allegory for narrating Uganda's history is also evident in Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* which is also set within a family. Unlike Barungi's *Cassandra* in which the family unit seems to be threatened by the liberal nature of the characters, Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* seems to be advocating for the unity of the family in spite of the liberal nature of her characters in an 'ultra-modern' Uganda. In Silent *Patience* the female characters are also engaged in a battle against retrogressive patriarchal cultures just like the female characters in the two novels analysed in this chapter. The struggle against retrogressive patriarchal cultures is represented as the battle that unites women of different generations in Uganda.

Using narratology, especially flashback, as a narrative technique Kaberuka in *Silent Patience* seems to be indicating that the fight against retrogressive patriarchal cultures is almost won. The narrator begins the narration with Agnes—the protagonist—being sworn in as the first woman Minister of Health in independence Uganda. Symbolically, Agnes seems to be cast as the woman who will lead the treatment of the ills that have characterised the Ugandan society with regards to retrogressive cultural practices that denigrate women. The appointment of Agnes does not come without its own struggles. This is seen when the narrator, after introducing us to this high moment in the history of post-independence Uganda, embarks on a flashback through which we get to see the struggles that the women who came before her went through, and also the men who believed that women got a raw deal and worked together with the women to make sure that their liberation is realised.

The narrator in *Silent Patience* introduces us to the life of Stella, the mother of Agnes, through a flashback. Their family came to Uganda as refugees fleeing the conflict in their country, Rwanda, in which the Hutus were warring against the Tutsis. Stella's mother, a representation of

other refugee mothers in Uganda, grieves and longs for the home she was forced out of. She tells her daughter, Stella, that "Being a refugee hurts very much. One feels like he has no identity. You feel like you don't belong […] it is as if no one wants you. And that its painful" (11). This feeling of lacking identity and to some extent lacking agency is a feeling that stalks the women in the novel. Stella is forcefully withdrawn from school and married off to Michael, a man she had barely met until the day of their wedding (9). This is done with the backing of her aunt whose word was law in the family. It is ironical that she uses her power in the family to propagate the oppression of a fellow woman which seems to have been the practice in the then Uganda. Once married to Stella, Michael refuses to engage in the cultural practice of sleeping with the wife on the night of their wedding for he seems to understand the trauma of sleeping with someone Stella just met. Michael promises Stella that he would not touch her on the night of their wedding. He tells her "Listen, Stella, I promised you that I wouldn't touch you tonight. It's my first promise to you. Do you think I can break it?" (16).

The narrator characterises Michael as the new breed of men, men who are willing to be humiliated for not following some of the sustained cultural practices. Michael, having been denied the chance to court Stella before their marriage, sees this as the opportunity to begin their courtship. He expresses this to Stella on the day Stella tells him that she is pregnant. Michael says that "I wanted us to grow first. I wanted our love for each other to grow without having to share it with another" (21). Becoming a parent at an early stage of their marriage seems to have been a hindrance to the love Michael had intended to cultivate with Stella. It is at this point that Michael begins his decline. He is engaged in an extra-marital affair with Naome (34) and he eventually dies following injuries sustained from a road accident (54). With the death of Michael after the affair, the author seems to suggest her reverence for marriage. This is unlike in

Cassandra where the protagonist uses an extra-marital affair to assert her womanhood and her liberalness and thrives while at it *Silent Patience* seems to parallel *The Invisible Weevil* where Genesis dies after contracting HIV/AIDS from his philandering ways and eventually dies. Mary Okurut and Jane Kaberuka seem to share the same vision on the family unit within the contemporary Ugandan society through their studied works.

After the death of Michael and Pauline, Stella takes charge of the farm that Michael left so as to keep herself focused. It is through her daughter Agnes that we get to meet Deborah, her schoolmate, and her family. Monica, Deborah's mother, undergoes her own share of painful experiences that shape her view of life. Monica, we come to learn, was diagnosed with cancer (151-156) and after realising that she does not have enough time left tries encourage her husband, Sam, to marry Stella so that their families can be joined together and become one. Whereas Sam loved Stella and wanted to settle down with her, he seems not to have shared Stella's idea on marriage which involved having a wedding. Sam expresses his thoughts on a wedding to Stella by stating that "Oh. You want the piece of paper? Women and marriage certificates!" (236)). To Sam, marriage was well off so long as there was love and respect. Seemingly, he favoured the idea of cohabitation as opposed to a formal wedding to start off a marriage. The author seems not to have shared this idea of marriage with Sam since he is killed a week to his wedding and we, like Stella, get to learn of his death from a radio broadcast. "[…] I was listening to the radio when I heard an announcement. The announcement was for me especially, informing me of Sam's sudden death" (236).

The author's insistence on the unity of families albeit being different is also seen in the younger generation represented by Agnes, Jimmy, and Steve. Just as the older generation had to work a way out to ensure that fabric of the family was sustained, the younger generation also goes

through the same motions. As Agnes comes of age and begins to understand how money ad love influence the choice of a marriage partner, she is forced to choose between two men she loved though differently. While Steve loved Agnes, Agnes loved Jimmy (113) and could only love Steven as a man. Jimmy however was jealous of the love that existed between Agnes and Steve and it is out this jealousy and insecurity that Agnes drops him. She states that "[…] Steve doesn't want to compete with Jimmy. But he won't believe that […] I won't be seeing him again unless he apologises and stops insulting me […]" (169). Out of the jealousy and insecurity, Jimmy rapes Agnes and impregnates her. Following cultural demands, Agnes marries Jimmy and defies the tradition by naming the child Stefan, in honour of Steven-the man she loved. The 'love' between Jimmy and Agnes is shaken when Agnes suffers a burn that changes her physical appearance and Jimmy disappears from her life. It is Steve who comes in and reassures Agnes of her inner beauty that was not scarred by the fire helping her find her footing and purpose in life even through her pain. Steve constructs Agnes hospital through which they honour Pauline, her sister who died when young, by naming it Pauline's Memorial Hospital. It is this hospital that comes to serve as a treatment centre for soldiers fighting in the bush for democracy in Uganda.

The challenges that families face in *Silent Patience* and the efforts they put to remain united are metaphorical representations of the struggles the country faces. It is for this reason that the author seems to be for the unity of the families of both the older generations as represented by Stella and Michael and later on Sam and also the unity of the families of the younger generations as represented by Stella and Jimmy and later on Steve. The author seems to suggest that just as the couples learn to love each other in marriage so can the refugees learn to love the countries that host them. These may have been circumstantial marriages but the characters can make something out of them and the breaking of one bond of marriage should not be left without being

united with another if the opportunity is available. It is no wonder that after Agnes and Steve give birth to their first child and name her Stephanie (245) Ugandans flee the conflict in their country to Kenya where they are welcomed whereas Agnes and Steve flee to Tanzania (246) after they were discovered treating the rebel fighters.

The narrator ends the painful and tumultuous events of the novel once Steve and Agnes find their footing in Uganda by narrating to us the rise of a democratic government in Uganda. Whereas the struggle for democracy seems to have ended then, Agnes, who was then being sworn in as the first woman minister of Health in Uganda reminds Steve that:

> But while for some the struggle seems to have ended, I think it's just the beginning for me. The enemy we now have is more difficult to deal with […] I'm talking about the moral decay of our people. We have to try and find a way to win back people's trust in our country's leadership. (248)

It is no coincidence that as the families finds their peace and footing, so does the nation. In Agnes, Kaberuka seems to have completed what Okurut had imagined through the character of Ihoreere. The author envisions a country that has now come of age and the battles seems to be shifting from bullet riddled battles to battles for the moral redemption of the Ugandan nation. It is a battle that pits women at the forefront as agents of change and not victims of retrogressive cultural forces.

5.4 Conclusion

The novels analysed in this section narrate Ugandan history at various moments, be it the pre-colonial history or even in contemporary times. The authors achieve all this by using different literary styles such as the metaphor that speaks of the unseen factors that contribute to the

denigration of women in Uganda, the family as an allegory of the nation and the changes happening within the Ugandan society, and also narratological styles that give a fuller impression of the challenges women have gone through to gain some of the excesses and privileges that were a preserve of men in previous societies.

Additionally, it would not be farfetched to argue that *The Invisible Weevil* and *Silent Patience* counter the vision of the Ugandan society represented in *Cassandra*. By pitting families at the centre of nationalistic imaginations, the latter novels seem to advocate for a more harmonious Uganda where challenges are faced and consensus found even in the midst of chaos in the country while the former seems to advocate for a unitary approach to solutions in the society; an approach where only one side is heard and the other shunned causing more pain to innocent ones in the society. The subsequent chapter situates the three novels within the corpus of women's writing in Africa and reads Ugandan literature as key component of African feminist literature. The chapter further gives the conclusion and findings of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 Situating the Novels under Study within the Corpus of Contemporary Women's Writing in Africa

6.1 Introduction

In our previous chapters I highlighted the various ways in which the novels that I have studied in this thesis can be examined as part of the corpus of contemporary African literature. I therefore saw Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* (1999) as a novel that forms part of the African female bildungsroman, Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* (1998) as a text that narrates the nations, and I examined the changing social norms in Ugandan society through our reading of Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* (1999).

The selected Ugandan novels contribute to existing debates in African literature along the said thematic lines and in this chapter I interrogate how Ugandan female writers represent the concerns of the Ugandan women taking into consideration writers from other parts of Africa who write about similar thematic concerns. In doing so I examine on how the selected Ugandan novels become part of and join a broader and more diverse conversation on the African novel by female writers.

Abiola Irele in *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel* (2009) argues that,

> It is now customary to place the origins of the African novel firmly within the colonial experience - to consider its emergence as a direct consequence of the encounter with Europe, with historical implications and the social and cultural factors that have conditioned the emergence and evolution of the novel as a literary genre on the continent (2).

Irele's argument holds true regarding the tradition of the African novel and the formative debates around African literature which focused more upon the impact of the colonial contact on the African. This is a concern clearly captured in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) which explores the impact of colonisation to the Umuofia community and in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* (1983) which grapples with the subject of the struggle for independence in the early African nations. In these and many other works of art, debates on African literature were largely constructed around masculine imaginations of Africa (Stratton, 1994:1). The colonial experience in African literature was documented by both the male and female writers of the time but it is the critical reception of works by male writers that largely influenced discourses on the impact of colonialism on African nations and even discourse on national formation.

The process of nation formation as well as the growth of the nation in literary texts was seemingly a masculine imagination and the entry of women into this area equally gave literary critics a fresh opportunity to re-examine depiction of nations within literary works. Flora Nwapa, who was arguably the first Anglophone female writer in Africa, in *Efuru* (1966) tried to depict the Igbo tradition and the place of an independent woman within the colonial African society. Like many of the female African writers who came after her, Nwapa tied the colonial experiences to the family experiences by not just narrating the family at the surface level but delving on the nuances of African family life and how it is affected by the factors such as colonialism. The focus on the works by the male African writers influenced the interpretation of the African society especially on subjects such as nationalism and subsequently underrepresented or even misrepresented the role women writers played in the society.

6.2 Approaches used by Contemporary African Women Writers in their Creative Fiction.

I read Jane Kaberuka's novel *Silent Patience* as a bildungsroman, a coming-of-age narrative of a young girl of 17 years given in marriage to a chief's son Michael, a man she comes to meet on the eve of their marriage. The novel follows Stella and her daughter's development trajectory to maturity and self-realization with autobiographical hints and compares rightly well with other female African authored novels. Our understanding of the bildungsroman genre in Africa is informed through a comparative analysis of *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Zimbabwean writer Tsitsi Ndangaremba's *Nervous Conditions* (1988). The bildungsroman as a literary genre traces its roots from the early 19th century Europe where it was predominantly received as a white and masculine genre. It underwent transformation into a female genre also in the 20th century. For instance, a Caribbean writer Zhang Xiuxia presents Caribbean female authors like Jamaica Kincaid, Merle Hodge, and Michelle Cliff as the first Caribbean women to write about the female bildungsroman. He says: The traditional bildungsroman was male-biased; but the twentieth Century saw a boom in the novels of female development by women writers, (Zhang 2008, 10). In its nature the bildungsroman is characterised as a novel of growth and education that traces the development of the protagonist's mind and character through varied moral and emotional crises. The African female bildungsroman contests the formative perceptions of the genre as being male, white, and a bourgeoisie genre. This is done by the black or African female writers to take it upon themselves to represent the struggles of the African woman as she develops through her own moral crises and the recognition of their identity and their place in the society.

Franco Morretti in *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (1987) reads the bildungsroman as "the symbolic form of modernity" and a genre that has epitomised the

features of youth in "mobility and interiority." These two perceptions of the bildungsroman by Moretti are crucial to my comparative analysis of the female African bildungsroman by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus,* Tsitsi Ndangarembga in *Nervous Conditions* and Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience.* The selected novels are representative of modernity not just due to their contemporary form, but also through their protagonists' quest for growth in a contemporary society riddled with its own challenges such as retrogressive patriarchal cultures and the emergence of women who are economically liberated and the challenges this liberation brings their way. Growth in these novels is seen in the mobility of the female protagonists which exposes them to different and transformative societies and in the exploration of the characters' interiority and the crises they face as they come-of-age in their societies. The gist of these stories is a woman's struggle and ultimate triumph in a patriarchal world that tries to silence women's voices.

Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) adopts the bildungsroman form of narration by narrating the life of the Achike family. The reading of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* as a bildungsroman has been undertaken by Ogaga Okuyade in *Narrating Growth in the Nigerian Female Bildungsroman* where he demonstrates how the novel belongs to the bildungsroman genre having borrowed a plot structure that reflects the growth of the protagonist from the western tradition of the genre. In this critical reading of *Purple Hibiscus* Okuyade argues that the bildungsroman has been domesticated in Nigeria by the female writers within a post-colonial context to "offer a model of resistance to women's oppression" (1). The Nigerian variant of the bildungsroman, Okuyade continues, has succeeded in representing the struggles for "individuation and the negotiations of the feminine subjectivity" while at the same time portraying the challenges women face in a society plagued by retrogressive patriarchal practices.

Through the eyes of Kambili, the protagonist, the reader gets to see not only the growth of Kambili but also the factors that influence her growth such as education and exposure to different social-cultural contexts. The growth of Kambili, and the Achike ` family, could be equated to the growth of the nation. The Achike family in *Purple Hibiscus* is seen to be under the harsh rule of Papa Eugene Achike who is an unforgivably religious man and expects his family to abide by his rule and religious beliefs. The family is expected to cast not even a glance at the traditional practices that the old in the society abide by. Jaja, who is Kambili's brother, and a representative of a breed of men who suffer under patriarchy and attempt to dismantle it, sets the tone for defiance against this tyrannical regime at home by not going for Holy Communion, a decision that infuriates his father. Later, Papa Eugene scalds the feet of Jaja and Kambili for going to the festival of the traditional spirits. Papa Eugene, being a devout Christian, considered attending the festival of the spirits as engaging in acts amounting to witchcraft and as such had to 'cleanse the feet of his children' while punishing them at the same time to deter them from such acts in the future.

Like a true protagonist of a female bildungsroman, Kambili begins her growth trajectory when she visits her aunt Ifeoma. At the home of Aunt Ifeoma, Kambili learns how to use make-up and learns that women do have a voice in the society by seeing the relationship between her cousins, Amaka and Obiora, and her aunt. Kambili also comes to see the organic unity between religion and traditionalism as depicted by Father Amadi who is a representation of a new generation of priests and religious leaders. Father Amadi is attracted to Kambili but cannot pursue a relationship with her due to his religious vows. Whereas Kambili represents the possibility of the female character to grow and voice herself even during a repressive regime, her mother, Beatrice has somehow learnt how to suffer silently and patiently. As Kambili represents the growth

possible to the African woman, she also represents the need for spaces of growth to be availed since she could not defy her father out of fear and the need to maintain peace thus hindering her growth. Papa Eugene breaks Beatrices' *etagere* but she still takes pleasure in wiping them. Papa Eugene also subjects her to beatings leading to a miscarriage but for years she does nothing to react to her husband's brutality towards her and her children. It is only at the end of the novel that after seeming to be resigned to her fate, she suddenly reacts by poisoning her husband, leading to his death. Her actions are however not discovered, with her son Jaja taking the blame for the murder to save his mother from prison.

The growth of Kambili as a character in the novel is not simply limited to biological growth but also to ideological growth. It takes a departure from her home in Lagos, to Nsukka, for a visit to her Aunt Ifeoma to open her eyes to the oppression they are subjected to back home in Lagos by their father. Ifeoma's house is a metaphor for the spaces that facilitate the growth of African women; this is unlike the Achike household which is a metaphor for the restrictive patriarchal spaces. The death of Papa Eugene seems to mark the continuation of this growth for Kambili and the liberation of Beatrice Achike, who is a representation of other women who may have learnt how to suffer silently under the rule of their husbands. Adichie also continues a conversation of national growth that is depicted through the family as well as the character of Kambili, the protagonist, who grows through various phases in the novel. The continued contribution by female writers to subjects such as nationalism through the lenses of the bildungsroman tradition created a revisionist approach to the analysis of such novels and even a comparative analysis.

Tsitsi Ndangarembga in *Nervous Conditions* (1988), a semi-autobiographical novel, told in the perspective of a young girl Tambudzai, who is determined to escape subservience by getting education, focuses on the story of a Shona family in post-colonial Rhodesia. It contributes to the

discourse on the female African bildungsroman by narrating the life of Tambudzai whose path to education is made possible after the death of her brother Nhamo. This becomes possible when Babamukuru and his wife Maiguru return from overseas with their children—Nyasha and Chido. Babamukuru decides to sponsor Tambu who was born to Jeremiah, Babamukuru's elder brother, and Ma'Shingayi. Jeremiah's house was the poorest family. Coming from a patriarchal society, Tambu's education was put on hold in favour of her brother's due to their poverty. As an alternative to her education Tambu resorts to farming and selling her vegetables and the reprieve comes when Doris, a white woman, decides to pay part of her school fees through her teacher. Tambu's education at the mission school opens a world she had previously no idea of. Whereas Tambu grew up knowing that women played second fiddle to men, it is on moving to Babamukuru's house that she gets to learn that women could assert themselves against retrogressive patriarchal cultures. Tambu's movement to Maiguru's house is reminiscent of Kambili's move to Ifeoma's house in *Purple Hibiscus*. These movements allow both protagonists to have their eyes opened to worlds different from which they grew; worlds where women played second fiddle to men.

Maiguru who was highly educated and financially endowed than her husband financed some of her husband's engagements including his demand that Tambu's parents get a Christian wedding. Often Tambu would get into fights with Nhamo when he stole her farm produce, but it is in the Babamukuru household that she gets to have her views on patriarchy shattered. This shattering of the views Tambu had is seen when Nyasha gets into a physical fight with her father, Babamukuru, after they came from a night dance to which her father was opposed to, but Maiguru was not and the fact that Nyasha was talking to Andy, her boyfriend. During the fight Babamukuru calls Nyasha a "whore" and threatens to kill her. It takes the intervention of the

entire family to stop him. Tambu who had until then venerated Babamukuru reconsiders her perception of him.

It would also be right to argue that in as much as Tambu gets to learn that women could assert themselves in the patriarchal society that they lived in, their liberation was far from over. Maiguru's level of education proves this. It did not matter how much she was educated and her economic contribution to the family, she was still expected to labour for all the families that lived in her home. Bowing to the whims of Babamukuru was what was expected of all women who lived in his house. Tambu also comes to learn this the hard way when she is punished for skipping her parents wedding. Nyasha is reduced to a "whore" for dressing as she chose and talking to a boy. These incidences seemed to challenge Babamukuru's authority, a sign of change in society. Tambu and Nyasha learn to navigate the nervous conditions imposed by their father. Whereas Tambu seeks to maintain the peace by pleasing Babamukuru, Nyasha is the more confrontational one but still whichever position both girls occupy in the household they are bound to struggle with the stranglehold of patriarchy which reduces them to subservience and threatens to kill them regardless of how enlightened they become. Nyasha's confrontational character reflects Jaja's in *Purple* Hibiscus. Jaja chooses to speak his mind and be himself by refusing to go for communion and talking back at him; an action that infuriates Papa Eugene. In Tambu and the women of her family, African women are portrayed as doing daily battle with the changing world whether at home or displaced and there is a triumph of will characteristic of the female bildungsroman.

The journey of Tambu from a girl trying to grow corn to finance her own education to a young woman who has been enlightened that education has not brought happiness or stability to several other women in her life is a lesson Tambu comes to learn after the death of Nhamo which

seemed to have opened a door for "liberation". Gabrielle Lazzari in *Peripheral Realism and the Bildungsroman in Tsitsi Ndangarembga's Nervous Conditions* (2018) echoes this reading of *Nervous Conditions* as a contemporary female bildungsroman by focusing on the peripheral realism of the novel. Lazzari argues that Ndangarembga appropriates the realist bildungsroman from a peripheral perspective subsequently framing the tense relationships between a self-reflecting individual and her social totality. Meridy Harris in *Review* (1989) also reflects a similar reading of *Nervous Condition* as a novel of growth in her review where she observes that "Within this classic framework of the bildungsroman—a novel dealing with formative years of a youthful protagonist—Dangarembga's penetrating analysis of gender relations in the traditional Shona patriarchy and her uncompromising expose of injustices and absurdities of the system makes her a boldly feminist enterprise" (55).

The Ugandan female writers who have joined the debates on the African bildungsroman suggest the challenges as well as the gains female writers have experienced in their bid to create representations of women who live in Uganda and the visions the writers have for the country.

The vision of the authors of the African female bildungsroman that I have studied above is one that seems to suggest the struggle with the retrogressive nature of patriarchy is far from over and this is seen in the struggles engaged by characters like Tambudzai, Nyasha, Kambili, and Agnes. Though attaining some level of liberation through education, culture still demands that these teenage girls should bow to the demands of the remaining patriarchal constructs. This however does not mean that the fight against patriarchy is lost since the authors seem to cast a hopeful perception of this fight. In *Purple Hibiscus* the death of Eugene Achike, Kambili's father, seems to suggest that the women can hope for a better future. The character of Father Amadi also seems to suggest that there are men who believe in the liberation of women and are working towards it.

A similar motif is evident in *Silent Patience* whereby Michael who held repressive patriarchal beliefs dies, which paves the way for the liberation of his wife from their marriage, and in the resulting relationship between Steve and Agnes. Steve is the author's representation of men who believe in supporting the liberation of women and helps Agnes achieve this by building a hospital and naming it after Agnes's sister Pauline, who died from the same road accident that claimed the life of Michael. This places Agnes and Pauline posthumously, at the nerve centre of creating healthy societies through medical intervention. The contribution of the hospital in medical intervention is heightened when it becomes a treatment centre for soldiers fighting in the bush. *Nervous Conditions* however does not offer this respite to the struggle against patriarchy since Babamukuru's reign of terror against the women is not resolved. When separated Maiguru goes to live with her son. It thus remains that the women in the novel must navigate the nervous conditions occasioned by patriarchy.

Throughout the narration in *Silent Patience* Kaberuka uses the family as anallegory for the nation. The allegorical use of the family could be compared to other novels of the female bildungsroman in Africa, especially Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* which uses the Kambili family as an allegory for the growth of Nigeria, a characteristic of the African female bildungsroman. A nuanced reading of *Silent Patience* demonstrates that the author is narrating the challenges faced in the development of the nation of Uganda through focusing on how the civil war affects the families of Agnes and Steve. Agnes and Steve are forced to transform the hospital which they had built in memory of Pauline, their sister, into a treatment centre for the injured militia. Seemingly, it is at this moment that we get to witness the history of Uganda unfolding through fiction. The author seems to suggest that the challenges the family unit was going through parallels the challenges the nation is going through.

Thus, the African female novel-of-education interweaves the narrative of the growth of the nation within its fabric. This is arguably because the female writers believe that the family unit best reflects the larger nation, and they thus use the form to take a revisionist approach in narrating the stories of their nations. This approach involves the centering of women and their contributions in the narration of the nation and leaning on factual history to imagine the fictitious nations. Whereas the male authors may have focused on the political turmoil and the grandeur that characterised the independence struggle in their narrations of the nation, Female writers focus on a detailed growth process and as such select young female characters with whom we journey through the process of the growth of the nation as they grow together. Oftentimes what is evident in the female bildungsroman in Africa is how women suffer within retrogressive patriarchal cultures that silence them. The family and fellow women in the novels become sources of solace, where women get to express their feelings which may have been repressed due to the cultural practices that had silenced them. The female bildungsroman then becomes an avenue to giving women the agency and voice that had been ripped from them or even underrepresented in literary works by male writers.

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye is one such author from East Africa who narrates the nation through a novel. In doing this Macgoye became one of the leading African women writers who sought to insert women's voices in the narratives of their nations. In narrating the nation, *Coming to Birth,* she embarks on a process of representing Kenya's history from the later days of colonisation to the early days of Kenyan independence. This history is marked with significant events such as the declaration of a state of emergency 1952. It is also worth noting that the novel begins in 1956, a few years after the declaration of the state of emergency, and proceeds to narrate historical events that characterised the Kenyatta regime such as the detention of firebrand writers

such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o in 1977. The history we encounter in *Coming to Birth* is represented through the eyes of Paulina whose challenges are used to mirror the challenges Kenya was facing at the time. Paulina comes to Nairobi at the height of the State of Emergency as a young bride to Martin Were who partly embodies the brutality of the colonial regime in the novel. Were and Paulina cannot bear children due to the violence Martin metes upon Paulina which leads to a series of miscarriages. Were's violence could be attributed to the frustrations he faces in the city during the Emergency period. In a desire to pursue her freedom, Paulina separates from Martin Were and returns to Nyanza where she has an affair that leads to the birth of Okeyo who is eventually killed by a stray bullet during riots that ensued when Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's founding president was visiting Kisumu. What is actually evident in the lives of Paulina and Were is that Paulina's freedom is not tied to the actual independence of the country, which might symbolise her freedom from the abusive Were, but it is tied to her economic independence. The successful pregnancy in Kisumu comes in a season in which Paulina gets a job and attains some form of stability. Her return to Nairobi is also marked by this sought of pursuit for financial stability that even gives her some level of assertiveness when it comes to negotiating her reunion with Martin Were, and subsequently hopefully successful pregnancy.

With these incidences around the life of Paulina, the author seems to suggest that the liberation of women is somehow directly tied to their ability to meet their financial needs. This is an observation that has been corroborated by Simatei Tirop in *The Novel and the Politics of Nation Building in East Africa* (2001) where he argues that

> Macgoye goes ahead to demonstrate that economic self-reliance extended to women by capitalist disruption of the traditional setup is what brings social freedom to them. Women are now empowered to take charge of personal matters and can make independent decisions concerning their sexuality and social interactions (141).

Tirop seems to be formulating this argument from the capitalist benefits of colonialism which he reads as an aid to the independence women seek. The independence of women is not just tied, as a metaphor, to the independence of the nation but also to their economic independence. Women can also benefit from the colonial experience. The adoption of histories of nations in fictional narratives is a common feature in African texts, by female writers, that narrate nations other than the centering of women in these narratives. Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu,* the novel incorporates history in a narration of present day lives of its characters showing how the people of Uganda express their sense of national identity in a country which gained independence in 1961 and suffered military coups and dictatorial rule. The novel rings with a sense of deep history of a people's legacy leaping from the past to the present and integrating the past in the present.

This is an observation also evident in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun* (2007) which narrates the effects of the Biafran war on the lives of Nigerians. The Biafran war, or the Nigerian Civil War, took place between 1967 and 1970. The war was occasioned by the demand for the Igbo community to secede and form the Republic of Biafra, but this did not materialise. In *Half of a Yellow Sun,* Adichie tries to explore what this war means not only to her as an individual but also to many other Nigerians of Igbo descent who grew up with the effects of this war. Unlike other novels by female authors that narrate the nation while centering a female protagonist, *Half of a Yellow Sun* helps us to understand the failed dream of the establishment of the nation of Biafra through presenting us with characters such as Ugwu, Odenigbo, also known as "The Revolutionary", and Olanna together with her twin sister Kainene. Odengibo and Olanna other than being lovers are also young academics at the University of Nsukka and their home oftentimes become a place for heated ideological discussions regarding nationalistic policies

such as communism, socialism, and capitalism. Odenigbo does not hide his preference for socialism and even tribalism.

Even though the novel has its core in the history of the nation of Biafra, it also narrates the cultural conflicts that existed in pre-colonial times. This is seen when Olanna moves in with Odenigbo, but his mother is opposed to this because of cultural differences and through treachery makes Odenigbo sleep with Amala. Together they have a child that Amala refuses and Olanna together with Odenigbo decide to adopt. The reader gets to know the child only as "Baby". Ugwu and Baby occupy metaphorical spaces in the lives of Olanna and Odenigbo. Whereas both are not children or dependents they had planned for, they live with them and nurture them as their own. Ogwu comes to live with Odenigbo as a semi-literate boy but grows up to be a literate man who is forcefully conscripted into the Biafran military. One could therefore state that Biafra was a child Nigeria had not planned for, but they must live together despite the trauma and pain that both caused each other. Biafra became a history that the Nigeria wanted to forget as quickly as possible and subsequently sanctioned the 'No Victor, No Vanquished" policy that sought to silence this past. The history of Biafra and the trauma that the war caused seems to be a past that Adichie, and even Chinua Achebe in *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (2012), refuse to forget. This engagement with the past in the history of nations is a motif in novels written by female African authors as seen in Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* and Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun.* Adichie, who is one of the most respected contemporary female African writers, seems to indicate that there is much in the history of Africa that should not be buried and instead should be exposed through the writing of fictional accounts.

Like the previously discussed novels that rely on factual history to narrate the nations of Kenya and Nigeria, if not Biafra, respectively, in *The Invisible Weevil* Mary Okurut embarks on the

narration of the Ugandan nation through the time of the rule by Kabaka through the years of decolonisation and independence, and the struggles engaged in the post-independence period in pursuit of a stable democracy. This history is represented in the novel by narrating the bloody massacre that took place in Kabaka kingdoms during the Mengo Crisis of 1966 under the leadership of the then Prime Minister Milton Obote (Kyemba, 1977). The years of coups and counter coups and the expulsion of the Asian community from Uganda by the Idi Amin administration are also related in the novel. Nkwanzi and Genesis, just like Odenigbo and Olanna in *Half of A yellow Sun* and Paulina and Martin in *Coming to Birth* become witnesses and actors in the process of narrating the nation. They are not just mere observers but are also directly affected by the changes their respective countries go through in the post-independence period. Nkwanzi and Genesis are active participants in the narration of the nation as they join the fight against brutal regimes through Mama's underground movement. This is synonymous to Odenigbo and Olanna's contribution to the Manpower Directorate in Adichie's *Half of A Yellow Sun*.

The periods of national conflict in the novels mirror periods of marital conflict as represented through the married couples in the various novels. Just as Paulina and Martin, Olanna and Odenigbo, and Nkwanzi and Genesis try to figure out what marriage means and how it can best work out for them, the nation also goes through certain periods where the citizens try to understand what their countries mean and what the future has in store for them. This desire to find out what the nation means, read through these marriages is reflected in the work that the various characters put in by working on forgiving each other and find their balance within their respective marriages. Olanna gains her footing by accepting that Odenigbo slept with Amala and gets back at him by sleeping with Richard, Kainene's white boyfriend. Paulina gets a job that

gives her economic freedom and a say in her marriage with Martin, while Nkwanzi works on deflecting Genesis' accusations of infidelity and handling insecurity when she is made an Assistant Minister and must spend days travelling overseas.

The authors seem to suggest that for the nations to have meaningful progress the women need to be firmly rooted in their social spaces and not be tossed back and forth by the demands of retrogressive patriarchal practices. The trend of narrating the nation by the female authors is one that pits the younger generation against the histories of their countries. This trend seems to be creating a common understanding that the younger generation can achieve much if they have a sense of their history and while at it, create social spaces and cultures that liberate the women from the strangleholds of patriarchal cultures.

As nations moved from the struggles with their colonial past and what independence meant to a younger and more vibrant generation that was highly optimistic about the future, it seemed that there was a shift in some of the cultural norms that had been cherished and passed down from one generation to the other. Whereas some norms may have been cherished, others were seen as retrogressive and thus the need to fight or change them.

Cassandra, which is read in this section alongside Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah,* is a novel that narrates the changes in social norms and their effects on the lives of the characters. Grace Ogot, who was arguably one of the founding female writers in Africa, explores this conflict that the changing norms attract, especially in a society where women are beginning to assert themselves. In *The Strange Bride,* Ogot battles the dominant orthodoxies of male literature which left women outside history. Nyawir, the strange bride, who is a representative of the progressive woman, breaks one of Were Nyakalaga's

ordinances. The ordinances were perceived to be the bonds that held the community together as Owiny the heir apparent articulated "…when we alter our customs, we are breaking the commandments of Were Nyakalaga; and we are destroying the earth" (122). Nyawir's act of defiance permanently changes the destiny of humankind as human labour now becomes a requirement for growing crops. She sets in motion developments that force the people of Got Owaga into history by changing the community's source of wealth through gainful employment (Stratton 2002, 65). As Stratton says in *Contemporary African Literature,* Ogot counters the myth of the traditional woman and identifies Nyawir with "change and development and also grants her historical agency" (65). Alex Wanjala in *Historiography or Imagination? The Documentation of Traditional Luo Cultural Memory in Kenyan Fiction* also reiterates a similar reading of *The Strange Bride* by arguing that:

> By demonstrating that the central character in the novel; Nyawir, is an advocate for change, while at the same time acting as a custodian of Luo culture by conserving the communities Language, history and traditions through the novel form, Grace Ogot demonstrates to us that women, though hardly ever celebrated in historic legends, are major players in African history and the conservation of Africa's indigenous culture (23).

This is an affirmation that the novel is a very important contribution in demonstrating that the emerging literary female tradition has thematically and stylistically been taken as subjects of change that put women on a pedestal as advocates for change and are indeed the ones behind major changes in society.

Adichie in *Americanah* narrates the lives of Ifemelu and Obinze, two young Nigerians and lovers, who try to find their identity in a largely cosmopolitan world. Ifemelu's cosmopolitan sojourn begins when the perpetual lecturers' strike in Nigerian Universities threatens to derail her studies upon which Aunty Uju and Obinze, her boyfriend, encourage her to apply for a

scholarship to study in an American University. Life in America is not what Ifemelu had in mind, or even subject to the norms which she had grown abiding by. The American visa Ifemelu gets does not allow her to work, but she somehow manages to get a job as a relaxation assistant to a tennis coach to survive. Her employer abuses their relationship by subjecting Ifemelu to sexual abuse. The guilt from this affects Ifemelu psychologically such that she cannot continue her long-distance relationship with her boyfriend Obinze who she had left behind in Nigeria.

Obinze on his part eventually finds his way to Britain, where he is also affected by financial struggles of immigrants to the West. He tries various ways to survive, such as using false papers to work, and this eventually catches up with him when a fellow Nigerian who charges him for the use of the papers becomes greedy and asks for a larger percentage of wages as compensation. When Obinze fails to agree to these demands, Vincent, the Nigerian, reports him to the authorities and he is deported back to Nigeria.

Obinze manages to get a hold of his life while in Nigeria and becomes a successful man in Lagos. He meets a new girlfriend Kosi, whom he eventually marries and together they have a daughter, but the marriage becomes unfulfilling since the emotional connection that existed between himself and Ifemelu lacks in Kosi. Later while Ifemelu is in Nigeria after Aunt Uju's son tries to kill himself, Obinze and Ifemelu reunite albeit reluctantly and manage to rekindle their romance. This leads to the separation between Kosi and Obinze after Ifemelu calls him a "coward" for refusing to divorce Kosi. The changing norms narrated in *Americanah* introduce us not only to a world of cosmopolitanism but also a world where the young people try to make sense of their lives both within their national boundaries and by getting to discover what the outside world looks like and the meaning it holds.

This assertion is validated through the lives of Ifemelu and Obinze who try to identify themselves not only within Nigeria but also outside Nigeria, which has constructed their norms from childhood. It is however ironical that the author seems to suggest that meaning and the fullness of life can only be found within the national boundaries of Nigeria through the fact that Obinze makes it in Nigeria after failing in the UK as an illegal immigrant and through the fullness that Obinze and Ifemelu find in the rekindling of their romance, back in Nigeria. Dustin Crowley in *How Did They Come to This?: Afropolitanism, Migration, and Displacement* echoes the interrogation of this new "African diaspora" and continues to explore how the divergent experiences with the global space shape the lives of the characters and also as "an emerging space of African agency" in *Americanah*.

In *The Joys of Motherhood,* Emecheta narrates the life of Nnu Ego and the ironical joys of motherhood that accompany her even unto death. Nnu Ego is characterised as a woman who is initially unable to give birth and longs for motherhood with the ideal belief that this would bring her joy. Little does she know that with the changes in the society a woman with many children would face a lonely life in old age and die a miserable death just like a barren woman. The Life of Nnu Ego is different to that of Adaku who easily adapts to the changes in the society brought about by colonialism and as such she can maintain her ties with the community while Nnu Ego, being static, refuses to change and is gradually isolated from the community.

Whereas Adichie and Emecheta in *Americanah* and *The Joys of Motherhood* narrate changes in norms by imagining the African character within the social contexts of cosmopolitan and colonial society respectively, Violet Barungi in *Cassandra* imagines what Uganda means for her characters in an independent country, which though it has moved on from colonisation, still must deal with the effects of patriarchy in society. *Cassandra* explores the changing norms in Uganda

and how every character seeks to fit into the changing society. This is like what is addressed by Adichie and Emecheta in their novels. Ifemelu manages to survive in the United States through blogging and making ends meet from the jobs she gets, however demeaning some were. Nnu Ego on the other hand finds it difficult to adapt to the changing society and this leads to her isolation till her death. Violet Barungi's protagonist in *Cassandra* is imagined in a society that is coming to terms with both political changes and socio-cultural changes and how she fights to erase some of these norms while establishing new ones.

Cassandra, the protagonist, is imagined in a society that is beginning to include women in the workforce and this inclusion comes with its own challenges such as the objectification of women in the workplace and women being overlooked in favour of men when it comes to being promoted. Ifemelu and Cassandra suffer seemingly similar fates such as fighting off sexual advances from amorous men. The women who fight off these sexual advances seek to be identified in the labour market through merit rather than being seen as sex objects by men. The author, in an interview with *African Writers* admits of the need to talk about this issue by noting that *Cassandra* was motivated by the need to "highlight social issues affecting women and… to encourage them to throw their shackles and live full lives…as equal citizens of the world" (*African Writer*, 2010). Like Nnu Ego who dies isolated in *The Joys of Motherhood* because her children abandoned her, Mrs. Mutono in *Cassandra* is also alienated by her children who embrace modern lifestyles, but she survives not because she fights every change represented by her children and their generation but because she seeks to retain some 'common decencies' in the society that risk being wiped away by the younger generation**.**

The desire to narrate changing social norms and the conflict that ensued seems to have influenced the production process of various fictional works by African women writers. The

older generation accepted a change in some retrogressive norms but there are norms that were seen to be “common decencies”. These decencies which governed ceremonies such as marriage and funerals were not to be erased from the society. The narration of the changes in social norms subsequently embarks on revealing the salient fabrics that held the society together and the genesis of some controversial contemporary moral issues such as divorce, abortion, and even single parenting. While we can read some of these novels as reflections of the African female bildungsroman, we can also read others as novels whose concern and production process is to enlighten the reader on the plight of women in their society, taking note of both their challenges and triumphs. The parallels between the selected Ugandan novels and novels by other African writers reflect a unity in thematic concerns when it comes to a specific genre and issue in the novels. The novels do not stand in isolation but rather join and contribute to a specific discourse on African literature.

6.3 CONCLUSION

Literature is the mirror of society. Through representations in literary works, we can point out specific moments in the history of societies and various concerns among cultures that have been represented in literary works. The study set out to interrogate the female question and how women write themselves into Ugandan history to highlight the representation of women in Ugandan literature. It further focused on examining the representations of Ugandan history in contemporary works of fiction by selected female writers. The objectives for this research demonstrate that the contemporary Ugandan female writers analysed in this study represent Ugandan history through its various facets such as the pre-colonial Uganda and the challenges faced to the contemporary Ugandan society and the challenges the society is still facing. The novels studied in this research provide a rich account of Ugandan history especially from the

perspective of women writers. While pitting women at the centre of narrating Ugandan history, the novels engage the nationalistic themes as well as the salient themes of Ugandan life and history such as marriage and family life as well as contemporary moral issues such as divorce and abortion.

An analysis of the novels revealed that the family in Uganda literature has been deployed as a metaphor for the Ugandan nation and its development as seen in Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* which also utilizes the bildungsroman tradition of narration. The centering of Ugandan women in the pre-independence and post-independence Ugandan society has clearly been represented in Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* which engages in the history of Uganda from up to the pre-colonial period. In Cassandra, Barungi provides a social chronicle and testament to the changes in social norms that were witnessed in Uganda. All the concerns raised in these novels taken into consideration, it is evident that they provide a wholesome understanding of Ugandan history as represented in contemporary fiction by female writers.

The novels in this study have been analysed using feminist theories and the theory of narratology. The theories provided the best way to understand writing from the perspective of women and the concerns that drive their work. The theory of narratology was critical to this study since it helped in the analysis of narrative techniques deployed by the female authors as they voice their concerns. The theoretical choices are closely linked to the methodology whereby the study adopts textual analysis as a way of appreciating literary texts aesthetically and the concerns they raise. Ragin's Case Oriented methodology was also critical in textual analysis since the study looked at each text as a work of art on its own and raised several questions specific to the text. The approach to understanding the texts was also utilized alongside the theoretical choices for this research.

The first chapter of this research provided the framework for which the study was to be conducted. Here, the chapter gave a background for the study as well as outlining key issues in the study of feminist writing in Africa and in Uganda. The chapter also provided the theoretical framework upon which this research was conducted, the justification for the research, the scope and limitations, definition of terms, as well as the chapter outline which was guided by the hypotheses and the objectives for the research.

Several objectives provided pillars upon which the driving concern of this research stood. The first objective is to examine Ugandan women writers' concerns to the development of the Ugandan family/society in Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience*. The themes examined in the selected novels revealed the author's preoccupation with paralleling the growth of the nation with the growth of the family in *Silent Patience*. In *The Invisible Weevil* the author engages in narrating the growth of the nation and the challenges faced in this process, and in *Cassandra* the author narrates the changes in social norms in the Ugandan society and introduces subjects which were previously considered a taboo. In all the three novels studied, a thematic concern of centering women in the imagination of the Ugandan society is evident together with the theme of history in contemporary Ugandan female writing.

The narration of the growth of the nation alongside that of the family in *Silent Patience* is done using the bildungsroman tradition of narration and using the family as an allegory for the nation. The pains experienced by the family in the novel parallel the pains experienced by the nation as it strives towards a stable democracy. Women and children are represented as the key drivers of the growth of the Ugandan democracy. The allegorical deployment of the family in the novel helps with the narration of the growth of the female characters through the stifling demands of

the culture. The allegorical deployment of the family in the novel also facilitated the narration of the growth of the nation past the post-colonial disillusionment to the demand for stability.

The theme of historicizing and narrating the growth of the nation is evident Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* in which women are central to the narration of the Ugandan nation. From our reading, it was clear that the author imagines Ugandan history with women at the centre of it and as active participants in the representation of the Ugandan nation. The author narrates Ugandan history from the pre-colonial times to the contemporary times while using women as catalysts for change amidst restrictive patriarchal cultural practices.

Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* shifted the focus of this study from the historicity of the Ugandan female novel to engagements with concerns of the contemporary Ugandan society. The novel is a social chronicle of Ugandan social norms in that it is created as part of a larger discourse that tries to represent the Ugandan society and the norms changing within it. The novel not only narrates the changes in social norms but also the changes in political norms during the 80s and once again puts women at the centre of the changes as active participants to any meaningful changes and the disruption of long held norms. These changes continue to define the perception of Ugandan society to date.

The literary strategies deployed in the selected novels enrich the narratives in various ways. First, the deployment of the family as an allegory of the nation in *Silent Patience* anchors the family as a central unit of the nation. The essence of this is to show that the smallest unit of belonging in the Ugandan society is directly linked to the largest unit of belonging in the country. The linkage shows that the family is not an invisible entity in Uganda. This allegorical deployment of the family also shows that what happens in the family also shapes the future of the country. Agnes in

Silent Patience has most of her worldviews shaped in the family and she ends up rising to one of the most senior positions of administration in Uganda. The bildungsroman style of narration takes the readers through a systematic narration of both the growth of the protagonist, Agnes, and that of the nation.

In *The Invisible Weevil* readers get to see how the metaphor of the weevil is utilized in the narration and how individuals and communities battle the invisible weevil. The invisible weevil in the novel is represented through the HIV/AIDS disease and retrogressive patriarchal and political practices that are slowly killing the nation. Okurut also uses flashback as a narrative strategy in the novel and this becomes useful in enriching the place of memory and history in the novel. It is key to note that this strategy is important since readers get to understand the place women occupied in pre-colonial Ugandan societies and how they navigated the challenges they faced. The use of flashback in the novel becomes a key strategy to making sense of the present and the role women are playing in agitating for a society that is more tolerant towards women.

The narration in *Cassandra* involves the utilization of a linear plot that follows the protagonist – Cassandra – as she tries to make her mark in the contemporary Ugandan society. The linear plot in the novel is also used to introduce some of the contemporary issues that are a source of tension between the younger generation and older generation. Tensions coming from the younger generation's desire to fight against social norms they deem retrogressive and the older generation's desire to retain some of the norms that held the social fabric together – common decencies.

The literary strategies in the studied novels present the female writers' contribution to the growth of the Ugandan novel since through various strategies readers can appreciate the struggle women

put to achieve the gains in the contemporary society. Flashback and historicity in the novels help in getting women from the margins and placing them at the centre of the representation of Uganda. This creates an impression that helps both the characters, and the readers appreciate the progress made and give impetus to the struggles that lie ahead. The strategies also paint a wholesome picture of Uganda since readers can identify the trajectory taken to get where the Ugandan society it is today.

The thematic concerns in the studied novels respond to the challenges in the contemporary Ugandan society by narrating social issues. The novels become social chronicles and even archives of Ugandan history. From the study, it emerges that the novels become pieces of a puzzle which when joined together paint a fuller picture of Uganda through the years. While it is true that we have women as the principal characters in the novels and that any meaningful understanding of Uganda is derived from their narrated experiences, it is also true that history becomes the focal point upon which these narratives are built. A closer analysis of the novels reveals the history of the nation with its political struggles as it goes through a metamorphosis. The analysis also paints a social and cultural history from where we can see the genesis of some retrogressive cultural practices which denigrated women and how women rose to challenge the retrogressive practices while also working side by side with likeminded men who saw women as equals. It is from this comparative analysis that the study can fully subject the novels not just to their social and cultural merits but also to an analysis of their literary merits from which we see the successful deployment and utilization of literary styles such as metaphor and allegory in the representation of the Ugandan society.

The idea of narrating the nation in the Ugandan novel *Silent Patience* is compared with novels by other African female novelists such as Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and also Marjorie Oludhe

Macgoye's *Coming to Birth*. The three novels help in understanding the female perspective in using history as a narrative perspective in the narration of African nations. Finally, the chapter interrogates the changes in social norms in *Cassandra* alongside *Americanah* by Adichie and *Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta. These novels provide a position from which the chapter interrogates how social norms have evolved as depicted by African female novelists and also the consequences of the changes in social norms.

The study discovered that the deployment of the bildungsroman tradition of writing as a narrative technique parallels the growth of the nation alongside that of the family in *Silent Patience* and uses the family as an allegory for the nation. The pains experienced by the family in the novel parallel the pains experienced by the nation as it strives towards a stable democracy. Women and children are represented as the key drivers of the growth of the Ugandan society.

It further established that the female voice is predominantly evident in *The Invisible Weevil* where the theme of historicizing and narrating the growth of the nation is evident and women are central to the narration of the Ugandan nation. From our reading, it was clear that the author imagines Ugandan history with women at the centre of it and as active participants in the representation of the Ugandan nation. The author narrates Ugandan history from the pre-colonial times to the contemporary times while using women as catalysts for change amidst restrictive patriarchal cultural practices, thus bringing them into visibility.

A close look at Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* shows that the novel is a social chronicle of Ugandan society. As the society evolves, so do the norms and the conflicts that arise represent the social conflicts between the old and the new generations, that of the sixties (60s) and that of the eighties (80s). The novel not only narrates the changes in social norms but also the changes

in political norms during the 80s and once again puts women at the centre of the changes as active participants to any meaningful changes and the disruption of long held norms. These changes continue to define the perception of Ugandan society to date.

In all the three texts under study the theme of history and the centering of women are pivotal and a comparative study of the novels with history and literary styles as a focal point revealed the authors' preoccupation with paralleling the growth of the nation with the growth of the family and the development of the woman. In general, in contemporary Ugandan female writing the novels become social chronicles and even archives of Ugandan history.

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A closer analysis of the novels reveals the history of the nation with its political struggles as it goes through a metamorphosis. The analysis also paints a social and cultural history from where we can see the genesis of some retrogressive cultural practices which denigrated women and how women rose to challenge the retrogressive practices while also working side by side with likeminded men who saw women as equals. It is from this comparative analysis that the study can fully subject the novels not just to their social and cultural merits but also to an analysis of their literary merits from which we see the successful deployment and utilization of literary styles such as metaphor and allegory in the representation of the Ugandan society.

The literary strategies deployed in the selected novels enrich the narratives in various ways. First, the deployment of the family as an allegory of the nation in *Silent Patience* anchors the family as a central unit of the nation. The essence of this is to show that the smallest unit of belonging in the Ugandan society is directly linked to the largest unit of belonging in the country. The linkage shows that the family is not an invisible entity in Uganda. This allegorical deployment of the family also shows that what happens in the family also shapes the future of the country. Agnes in *Silent Patience* has most of her worldviews shaped in the family and she ends up rising to one of the most senior positions of administration in Uganda.

The allegorical deployment of the family in the novel helps with the narration of the growth of the female characters through the stifling demands of the culture. It also facilitated the narration of the growth of the nation past the post-colonial disillusionment to the demand for stability. The bildungsroman style of narration takes the readers through a systematic narration of both the growth of the protagonist, Agnes, and that of the nation.

The use of metaphors, flashback and other narrative strategies in the novels, enriches the place of memory and history in the respective texts, and it is key to note that these strategies are important since readers get to understand the place women occupied in pre-colonial Ugandan societies and how they navigated the challenges they faced. The use of flashback in the novel becomes a key strategy to making sense of the present and the role women are playing in agitating for a society that is more tolerant towards women.

The utilization of a linear plot that follows the protagonist (as in *Cassandra)* introduces some of the contemporary issues that are a source of tension between the younger generation and older generation. Tensions coming from the younger generation's desire to fight against social norms

they deem retrogressive and the older generation's desire to retain some of the norms that held the social fabric together – common decencies. The strategies also paint a wholesome picture of Uganda since readers can identify the trajectory taken to get where the Ugandan society is today.

From the analysis it is evident that there is a universal concern in the writing of women regarding how social institutions in contemporary times still bear the weight of patriarchy. The women writers therefore attempt to imagine a society where women are free from the chains of retrogressive patriarchy. The study revealed that women writers in Africa are aware of the changes in social norms and their impacts on the female characters who represent different generations. For this reason, the women writers represent societies where these changes are contested by the characters in a bid to create a harmonious imagination of the society

Ugandan literature continues to grow and adapt to the societal demands on literature. As this happens, writers may choose to engage with themes that either reflect the contemporary society or even a futuristic kind of Ugandan society. The novels studied in this research provide a crucial underpinning of Ugandan feminist literature which is seen in the authors' choice to primarily engage with Uganda's history and the changes witnessed – not forgetting the challenges thereof – from a female perspective. As Ugandan literature continues to grow, these novels will be crucial resources on the development of the Ugandan society.

The novels studied in this research have provided not only an understanding of the contemporary Ugandan female writing and the concerns behind them but also an understanding of Ugandan history. By being social chronicles, the novels are also literary archives of Ugandan history. The archival role that these novels play immensely improve the Ugandan literary landscape since the

political and the social history of Uganda is given a fresh perspective with the entry of female writers who choose to interrogate these subjects.

The writers under study do not shy away from delving into areas that were previously perceived to be a preserve of the male writers, and this therefore warrants a comparative study that would further enrich the critical interpretation of Ugandan literature from both female and male perspectives.

There are also new novels that have been published by Ugandan writers since the time that I began writing this thesis. There could be studies undertaken on them to compare the critical perspectives evoked in this study, with what may emerge from an analysis of such texts in future studies of contemporary Ugandan literature.

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Appendix 1: Guiding Questions for Each Chapter Using Charles Ragin's Case-Oriented Methodology.

Chapter Two: Bildungsroman and the rapture of Silence in *Silent Patience*

1. How does the bildungsroman tradition of narration aid in the development of female characters to the point where they voice themselves in a society that has silenced them for long?
2. What impact do the women who were silenced before have in the society?
3. What impact has Kaberuka's quest for belonging made on the state of the contemporary women writers?
4. What female perspectives do the author of *Silent Patience* put to sharper focus as tools for social change?

Chapter Three: Narration of the Nation in *The Invisible Weevil*

1. What is the intention of Okurut's narrative?
2. How successful is Okurut's narrative in relaying the female question?
3. To what extent is the narration a solution to the woman question?
4. How are women centered in the narration of Uganda and what is their impact in the centre?

Chapter 4: Changes in Social Norms in *Cassandra*

1. Which salient concerns does Violet Barungi front in the contemporary Ugandan society?

2. What are the evident differences in perspectives between the conservative traditional norms and the contemporary progressive norms? Who are the characters that drive these perspectives and what is their place in the novel?
3. Does the transformation of social changes in the Ugandan society aid the state of women writers on the Ugandan literary landscape?
4. How do the literary concerns in Barungi's Cassandra respond to the challenges of the Ugandan contemporary society?