

**ART AND GENDER: IMAG[IN]ING THE *NEW*
WOMAN IN CONTEMPORARY UGANDAN ART**

BOOK 1

by

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Declaration:

I declare that Art and gender: imag[in]ing the *new woman* in contemporary Ugandan art is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

 5th April 2012

Amanda Evassy Tumusiime

Title:

Art and gender: imag[i]ning the *new woman* in contemporary Ugandan art

Summary:

This thesis is based on the belief that representations of women in contemporary Ugandan art serve cultural and political purposes. The premise is that the autonomous woman (seen as the *new woman* in this study), emerging in Uganda in the mid-1980s, agitated for the social, economic and political emancipation of women in Uganda. It has been demonstrated that the patriarchy attempted to subordinate, confine and regulate this *new woman*. The press, drama, music and film became powerful tools to force her into silence. This study posits that contemporary Ugandan art was part of this cultural discourse. Adopting a feminist art historical stance, it examines and assesses the gendered content of Uganda's contemporary art masked as aesthetics. On the one hand, the study exposes the view that some men artists in Uganda use their works to construct men's power and superiority as the necessary ingredients of gender difference. I demonstrate that some artists have engaged themes through which they have constructed women as being materialistic, gold-diggers, erotic and domesticated. I argue that this has been a strategy to tame Uganda's *new woman*. On the other hand, the thesis attempts to show that some women artists have used visual discourse to challenge their marginalisation and to reclaim their 'agency' while revising some negative stereotypes about the *new woman*. This study makes an interdisciplinary contribution to Uganda's art history, cultural studies and gender studies.

List of key terms:

Art and gender; Contemporary Ugandan art; Domesticity; Representations of women; Eroticism; New woman; Makerere Art School; Women's emancipation in Uganda.

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PREFACE

The research for this study is based on the premise that in the period 1986 to 2009, the Ugandan *new woman* negotiated her way into the public domain and challenged established conventions and beliefs about masculinity and femininity. It is my belief that formally trained Ugandan artists responded to the emergence of this *new woman*. This statement is based on the knowledge that representations of women in contemporary Ugandan art serve cultural and political purposes.

The intention is to demonstrate that representations of women are not merely aesthetic statements but that they are also used as tools to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes held by society. As such they are implicated in the battle of the sexes and to this extent they are gendered.

The methodology is grounded in a feminist perspective to address various aims pertinent to representations of women created by male and female artists. These aims are discussed in relation to the imaginations of the country's visual artists. As the research progressed, I analysed the myths, objects, traditions, stereotypes, conventions, ideologies and the politics which artists have invested into a complex visual vocabulary which they have invented to image shared perceptions of, fears for and expectations about the *new woman* in Uganda.

Although I am particularly interested in the post-1986 *new woman*, I have traced the debate back to the pre-colonial period of Uganda's history. Such an account, discussed in two chapters, is important because it traces the links between current views about non-conforming women and art production to

precedents which existed at the very beginning of the modern state and formal art education in Uganda.

The research is presented in two parts: Part I contains the text in which I establish the history in which Uganda's women joined the public sphere and became the *new woman* unrestrained by traditional mores and patriarchal control. I present and interrogate the shifts and discussions they have provoked and how these have shaped the country's cultural discourse. Endnotes appear at the end of each chapter commencing with new numbering. The bibliography is given at the end of Part I.

Part II contains the catalogue which presents illustrations of the artworks done by male and female Ugandan artists. Some images by non-Ugandans are also included to clarify or strengthen the claims and argument I make in the text. The catalogue is arranged according to the different themes discussed in the text. Images from the print media and photographs are also supplied to strengthen the argument arranged in themes. The catalogue also contains a list of illustrations and empirical data of the artworks.

The thesis contributes to art and gender studies in Uganda. For this investigation to succeed, I received consistent support and encouragement from individuals and institutions whose contributions I need to acknowledge and appreciate. It is not possible to cite all of them but the following need specific mentioning:

My special thanks and appreciation go to my promoter Professor Bernadette Van Haute who read and guided several drafts which culminated in this thesis. I acknowledge the input I received from the following artists: Dr Angelo Kakande, Dr George Kyeyune, Dr Kizito Maria Kasule, Dr Lilian Nabulime, Dr Venny Nakazibwe, Mrs Alex Baine Byaruhanga, Mrs Maria Alawua, Mrs

Maria Naita Mrs Mary Mukasa Wilson and Ms Tereza Musoke, Ms Rebecca Bisaso, Mr Bruno Serunkuruma, Mr Francis Ifee, Mr Fred Kakinda, Mr Fred Mutebi, Mr Godfrey Banadda, Mr John Bosco Kanuge, Mr Mathias Muwonge Kyazze, Mr Nathan Kiwere, Mr Paul Lubowa, Mr Peter Oloya, Mr Robert Ssewanyana, Mr Stephen Gwoktcho and Mr Stephen Mubita. They granted me access to artworks, dissertations and interviews which have enriched my thesis and supported my arguments and conclusions. I thank Mr Raymond Nsereko for a powerful and creative catalogue design while Ms Ilze Holtzhausen de Beer did a tremendous job on the editing of the thesis.

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A particular debt of gratitude goes to the following musicians: Ms Jennifer Muwanguzi (also called Full Figure), Ms Zaina Namawa, Mrs Sophie Gombya, Ms Tendo Tabel (also known as Titie), Ms Winnie Muyenga, Mr Amos Kigeyi (also known as Mega Dee), Mr Haruna Mubiru, Mr Ronnie Ndawura (also called Papa Ronie) and Mr Kyagulanyi Ssentamu (also known as Bobi Wine). These musicians helped me to understand how music can be used as a tool to undermine women, mainly the *new woman*.

Material on Uganda's politics, art and art history is often scattered and requires dedication and hard work to find them. Due to the long hours I spent in the archive searching through old stuffy newspapers, I contracted an allergic infection which almost cost me my life. I therefore had to access the

library archive through two kind ladies working with Makerere University's Main Library. I thank Ms Medius Tumuhamyie and Ms Maria Gyezaho who made my life easier and healthier.

I would also like to thank staff at the UNISA library. Although some of the books went missing on their way 'up north', the library staff at UNISA were always expeditious in handling my requests. Gratitude of a different kind is owed to Mr Dawie Malan who made sure I received all the relevant reading material I needed from the UNISA library. I also thank Mrs Elena Swanepoel who often helped with the process of registration.

It is expensive to do research of this nature. I therefore acknowledge and am thankful for the generous contribution I received from Makerere University Staff Development Fund and SIDA-SAREC who funded my study in South Africa and field research in Uganda. I specifically need to mention Ms Roy Twinomucunguzi, Ms Kevin, Mr Ngobi, Mr Stephen Kateega and Mr Agara (RIP).

Once again I owe a debt of gratitude to my family and friends for their assistance and encouragement.

Photo credits

Photo-documentation in this research is drawn from artists' private studios, galleries and catalogues.

List of abbreviations

ACFODE	Action for Development Advancement of Women Associations
BIFA	Bachelors of Industrial and Fine Arts
CMS	Church Missionary Society of the Church of England.
FIDA	Uganda Association of Women Lawyers
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MTS	Maternity Training School
MTSIFA	Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts
NAWOU	National Association of Women's Organisations of Uganda
	NCW National Council of Women
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
TASO	The AIDS Support Organisation
UN	United Nations
UAUW	Uganda Association of University Women
UAWO	Uganda Association of Women's organisations
UCW	Uganda Council of Women
UPC	Uganda Peoples Congress
UWEAL	Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Ltd
UWESO	Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans
UWFT	Uganda Women's Finance Trust
UWONET	Uganda Women's Organisations Network, founded in 1993
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this research on art and gender rests on the need to find meaningful ways in which formally trained artists are imag[in]ing the *new woman*. The nature of the investigation could be said to be gendered in as far as it tends to highlight gender difference. In analysing these differences the study conjoins cultural, social and political theories to better apprehend the layered cultural, social and political texts that Ugandan artists draw on in order to image the female body in their works. Throughout this thesis I close-read and cross-reference various scholars who wrote about culture, art history, politics, law, gender, media and social science in order to support my claims and argument. I draw on Foucauldian feminist thought to demonstrate that the social/cultural differentiation, imaged in Uganda's contemporary art, in which women must submit to the more powerful men is not a 'neutral mechanism enabling meaning through the play of alternative choices... [rather, it] involves the performance of power' (Beasley 1999: 91) through visual discourse. Contemporary art is a form of gendered expression in Uganda. Admitting that there is always resistance to patriarchal oppression, I show that women have not submitted to their fate: contemporary women artists have challenged the view held by their male counterparts and used art as a voice for the *new woman*.

The term gender is defined as the cultural construction of femininity and masculinity as opposed to the biological male or female sexes with which we are born. It refers to 'the socially constructed protocol for how certain bodies should behave. The term insists that male bodies should be in the public sphere, while the female should be in the private or that male bodies should be active and aggressive while the female body should be passive and subservient' (Hatt & Klonk 2006:148). Seen as a cultural construct, the notion of gender gains new, and problematic, meaning in which stereotypes,

mythologies, assumptions and prejudices can, according to Gill Perry (1999:8), affect the conception, production and interpretation of artworks. This is because they are usually seen as essential, and thus conflated with the sexual characteristics of the woman, when in fact they are social conventions. This thesis is based on the above understanding of the term gender.

Silverblatt (1987:1-212) argues that gender masks the control over others and creates the relations of domination. The research pursues this argument to see how parody and artistic innovation have been explored in many of the works analysed in this thesis to mask gender biases of some formally trained artists in Uganda. It raises the following question: During the period 1986 to date in which Uganda's *new woman* has challenged established conventions and beliefs about masculinity and femininity, how has art made by formally trained artists responded to the emergence of this *new woman*?

In order to specifically attend to this question, the study follows an interdisciplinary approach while contributing to Uganda's cultural studies, art history, art practice, gender and political studies. It is based on the premise that during the 1980s, a new generation of Ugandan women negotiated their way into the public domain and this prompted the patriarchy to silence the *new woman*. It is also based on the proposition that representations of women in contemporary Ugandan art serve cultural and political purposes through the artists' engagement with gender issues.

I have selected artists on the basis of their role as artists, art instructors and the fact that they have exhibited works constructing the *new woman*. One of the main aims of this research is to critically evaluate selected works done purposively to eroticise, domesticate and depict women as dangerous, materialistic gold-diggers. Studies in art history, gender, law, culture and

political science cannot identify and critique such themes on their own. Some art critics such as Peggy Brand, Carol Duncan, Rozsika Parker, Edwin Mullins, Lynda Nead, Griselda Pollock and Linda Nochlin have argued that a feminist¹ reading of the images of women creates a better understanding of the gendered undertones which inform such images. It is the purpose of this study to pursue this argument in a bid to reframe various fields and propose an alternative collaborative inquiry within which mainstream art history, art and art practice are redefined through feminist art history. Such an inquiry allows one to read, and expose, the gender issues that are veiled in some representations of women in contemporary Ugandan art.

Because the study examines the period 1986 to the present day I use the term 'contemporary Ugandan art' in the title. In Western discourse 'contemporary' is usually taken to mean 'postmodern'. In an African context, however, the term raises a number of controversial concerns. More specifically in the context of art produced by formally trained artists in Uganda, the debate over these terms has been complicated. To demonstrate, the Uganda Germany Cultural Society (UGCS) is, in addition to the Alliance Française, a major contributor to the development of Uganda's visual arts. It hosts exhibitions and discussions on art in Uganda. During the late nineties UGCS hosted a discussion in which the following question was raised: do we speak of 'Uganda's modern art' or is it safer to refer to 'modern art in Uganda'? At the heart of the discussion was not mere semantics. Rather, participants raised heated arguments for and against the form and authenticity of art produced by formally trained artists in Uganda. Is Uganda's art produced by formally trained artists, which is largely informed by western materials and visual vocabulary, authentic? Are artists in Uganda players on the global art circuit or are they mere agents of Western cultural imperialism? Is the use of modern materials sufficient to qualify Uganda's art as modern?

These questions have often been asked (see Kakande 2008:8). They invite a discussion which is as old as the history of formal art education in Uganda itself. For example, Margaret Trowell who founded the Makerere Art School in 1937 encouraged her students to use Western materials and visual vocabulary to create Uganda's 'African art'². In doing so Trowell did not impose a Eurocentric view of modernism. As Kasfir (1999:142) rightly observed, 'Trowell's teaching strategy was a conscious rejection of the model put forward by European modernism and set Makerere on a course which, while later redirected, earned it an early reputation among outsiders as' a late-colonial institution of formal art education. Failing to recognise this ingenuity, Jean Kennedy (1992:143) dismissed Trowell's pedagogy insisting that her instruction inhibited the development of modern art in Uganda. Kakande (2008) has rejected this view exposing its inadequacy in representing art in Uganda; Trowell's extensive literature would support Kakande's view. Furthermore, modern art in Uganda was not intended to be a national genre. Its scope and sources have been regional, continental and global although it is for these reasons that its authenticity has been disputed by some conservative scholars.

Secondly, like Sunanda Sanyal (2000), Kasule (2002:xiv) maintains that 'contemporary Ugandan art' is art produced by graduates of Makerere art school. However, unlike Sanyal who emphasises issues of formal art instruction and awareness of global art history as being key determinants of the form and content of contemporary Ugandan art, Kasule insists on cultural consciousness. That way, like Aloysius Lugira (1970) who criticised the Makerere Art School for training the Baganda (one of the ethnic groups in Uganda) to mimic Western religious art, Kasule insists that contemporary Ugandan art must be culturally conscious in order to avoid mimicry and lack of authenticity. Kivubiro Tabawebbula (1998) agrees; currently two doctoral

students – Pilkington Ssengendo (Cecil Todd's former student) and Stephen Kasumba (Ssengendo's student who graduated in 1991) – are extending the positive role of cultural African consciousness in the production of painting at Makerere Art School. Thus recent scholarship asserts that contemporary Ugandan art is informed by formal education, awareness of world art history and African cultural consciousness.

Thirdly, Kyeyune (2003:108) defines 'art in Uganda' as that art which is produced by 'contemporary artists' meaning those artists who have lived and practiced art in Uganda recently and now. Venny Nakazibwe (2005: 13, 170, 220, 393) and Kakande (2008:1, 2, 4) agree while insisting that the terms contemporary and modern overlap. Smith (2009:1) argues that for the last two decades this understanding of contemporary art has overwhelmed art history. Hence artists, critics, curators, galleries, auctioneers, collectors and the public have all found contemporary art impossible to define. They have instead given generalised definitions about contemporary art as the art that is made now, or art of the moment and of its time.

It is not my intention to resolve this debate on the 'contemporary', 'modern' and the link between the two in modern art in Uganda. Instead I have benefitted from it in the following ways. First, in this study 'contemporary Ugandan art' refers to art produced by graduates of the Makerere Art School and more specifically to art that has been created between 1986 and now to respond to the emergence of the *new woman* in Uganda. Secondly, if issues of cultural consciousness have shaped the production of art at Makerere and Uganda then it follows that Uganda's contemporary art is part of a cultural superstructure whose role in restricting women to the private space is interrogated in this thesis. Thirdly, the above debate confirms that the modern and the contemporary are fused when it comes to Uganda's art produced by formally trained artists. Although much of the work discussed is 'modern' in

style, it is 'contemporary' at the same time. Lastly, the 'postmodern' also features in this study due to the engagement with narrative in the selected works which raises significant postmodern concerns.

Another term which requires extensive definition is the *new woman* in Uganda's context. The debate on the connection between art and gender in contemporary Ugandan art is a new dimension in Uganda's art history. Due to colonisation it is important to briefly consider the British Suffragette movement and France's *femme nouvelle*. Although distant in space and time, they touch on relevant aspects which indirectly pertain to Uganda's *new woman*. Although the British colonised Uganda, the education system remained largely in the hands of the Church Missionary Society (based in England) and the French White Fathers (with origins in France) both of whom influenced the behaviour and identity of Ugandans. For example, missionary activities divided the Baganda into two rival feuding camps: the Protestant *Abangereza* (a Luganda meaning the British) and the Catholic *Abafalansa* (a Luganda meaning the French). Secondly, former mission schools³ are still in the hands of church establishments. They have produced the elites who have dominated Uganda's political, economic and social spheres since colonialism. The artists whose works I have examined attended these schools.

Thus it can be argued that the visualisation of the *new woman* in Uganda can be traced back to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Victorian England and the activities of the *Suffragette* movement. This was a feminist movement formed by a coalition of women activists, but mainly the Women's Social and Political Union, to campaign for women's rights to vote. Given its militancy and radical views, the movement was feared in England. All resources – legal, mass media, art, novels, etc – were mobilised to weaken the movement.

Sally Ledger (1997) writes that Victorian Britain defined the *new woman* as a feminist activist, a social reformer, popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet, a fiction construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women's movement. Ledger argues that the *new woman* became a journalistic phenomenon and a cultural icon. She was represented with multiple identities: the wild woman, the glorified spinster, the advanced woman, the odd woman, the modern woman and the revolting daughter. These tropes, and the campaign in which they were used, were necessary to control women who had claimed their reproductive rights, financial independence, participation in political discussion and decision-making and generally defied conventions and social norms in order to create a better world for themselves (Ledger 1997:1). An ideological discourse was mobilised in order to ridicule and control the reneged woman (Latham 2000).

The situation in France was no different. Debora Silverman highlights the conditions that created the *new woman* in Europe: women's activism, access to higher education, careers and family planning (Silverman 1991:148-149). Intriguingly, these attributes turned the *new woman* of the late nineteenth century into a threat to male authority; they informed what Silverman calls a 'public preoccupation with the menace of the *femme nouvelle*' (Silverman 1991:150) that pervaded the Parisian press between 1889 and 1896. The gargantuan *Amazone* or an emaciated frock-coated she-man – the *hommesse* – became the representation of the inversion of traditional sexual roles and was identified as a purveyor of a threatening dislocation of the essential divisions ordering bourgeois life. Critics ranging from academics to the press, to caricatures of illustration, projected the *femme nouvelle* as the woman who rejected home and family for a career, thereby disrupting the position of the woman as the anchor of bourgeois domesticity.

These sentiments received visual representations. For example, in *Le grelot* (1) (1896), a caricaturist pictured a female virago abandoning the traditional roles of a mother and housewife to take up a career in the activist movement. She pushes a bicycle in her right hand – a powerful gesture which allows her to step out of a messy household and gain mobility and access to opportunities outside the home. In addition to the bloomers, straw hat and shoes she is wearing, she smokes a cigarette. As a symbol of masculinity, this attribute maps and marks the radical distance between the *femme nouvelle*, or *new woman*, in *Le grelot* and the ideal housewife. She turns to the left wagging her index finger to instruct a heavily burdened male figure – her husband. She announces that she is going to attend a feminists' congress meeting and instructs the man to mind the home and assume her responsibilities. Unable to do anything to stop the *new woman*, the exhausted husband looks on as the children in the background cry for motherly care, all of which she ignores. Through this visual strategy, the caricaturist reflected the mainstream view against the *new woman* in France. Silverman argues that the caricature in *Le grelot* presented the fear that the *new woman* posed to the traditional family unit and French society. In short, it symbolised the menace of the *new woman*.

The menace of the *new woman* in France provoked an active campaign for the restoration of the traditional roles of a woman in society. Doctors and lawyers, philosophers, politicians and artists converged to defend the home. They emphasised the maternal and domestic role of the bourgeois woman in France. They insisted that the French woman was born an upholsterer, a seamstress, a refined decorator of the intimate space and an inexhaustible orchestrator of the world of elegance (Silverman 1991:152). They re-read the sexist patronising writings of De Fourcaud⁴ to urge elite women to abandon their careers, which they insisted were masculine, and to return to the home.

Located in this milieu, the Central Union of the Decorative Arts – a group which ‘brought together artists, republican politicians, and some neuropsychiatrists’ (Silverman 1991:147) – glorified women as creators of the private space and sought to redirect women’s new energies away from the public professionalism towards the productive artistry of the ‘maternal decorator’. It emphasised the futility of women’s career aspiration, arguing that:

... “to struggle categorically with men” ... “violated a woman’s nature and diminished her ... only a fool would give herself such trouble, only to be defeated.” Woman could better win over “the sons of Adam” by remaining her inspirational and enchanting self (Silverman 1991:152).

This statement mapped a vicious campaign to undermine the *new woman*. In the process, ‘the threat of the unattractive, careerist *Amazone* or *hommesse* was partly diffused’ (Silverman 1991:152).

Male painters joined the debate. For instance, Gustav Klimt, Eugene Carrière and Jean Dampt rallied together to paint maternal images which became a celebration of female fecundity and domestic intimacy of the *fin de siècle*. Ultimately, visual discourse became the very site on which the battle against France’s *new woman* was fought and resolved, albeit symbolically.

When referring to these European precedents, I am not suggesting that women in Uganda (the natives in colonial lingua) and women in Victorian Britain had equal and similar rights. As Chief Justice Hamilton found in the often criticised court case of *Rex v Amkeyo [1917] 7 EALR 14*, unlike women in Britain, women in Uganda were men’s property, ‘chattels’. Rather, as argued in Chapter One, I suggest that the notion of the *new woman* as used in Uganda has colonial origins. It has been here since 1900 to define women

who abandoned their normative positions as a result of the creation of the modern state of Uganda and of colonial education. They lived a life different from that of a traditional woman and pushed the boundaries of 'acceptable behaviour', demonstrating the permeability of these boundaries and sometimes producing changes in gendered relations of power (Hodgson & McCurdy 2001:2; Musisi 2001:171-184).

Most specifically, however, I use the notion of the *new woman* as a generic term in reference to a new breed of women who emerged in Uganda during the mid-1980s. This generation has been called the 'new generation of autonomous women' (Tripp & Kwesiga 2002:19). It is relatively distinct from its predecessors (Tripp & Kwesiga 2002: 1) in the sense that its concerns went beyond reproductive rights. Women, more than before, raised issues of female political participation and representation: they fought aggressively⁵ for positions in the social (Waliggo 2002; Matembe 2002), economic (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006) and political (Tripp 2000) domains. Backed by the new policy of affirmative action promulgated in 1989 (Kharona 2003) and the woman-friendly constitution which Uganda adopted in 1995, this new breed of women took up professions hitherto dominated by the more powerful male. This all leads to the fact that the woman became a public figure (Bitamazire 1995:7).

It is believed that Uganda's normative traditions discourage women from engaging in public debate. Women's public presence is thus a taboo (Tamale 1999:1). This was particularly the case when Uganda's new generation of autonomous women made significant inroads in the public space after the 1980s. On the one hand, there was the perception that the woman in the public space had abandoned her normative position in the socio-political hierarchy. A career woman cannot be a good wife and mother. On the other hand, she threatened the authority and leadership of the more powerful local male (Tripp & Kwesiga 2002:14) often identified with the modern, urban and

public sphere. Writing in *The Monitor*⁶ of 17 May 2002, Ibrahim Ssemujju Nganda raised these issues, highlighting the fear they engendered. He argued that 'the biggest threat facing the stability of elite families today is the desire for women to join high-level politics'. He then urged men to 'kick women out of politics'. Although Nganda's comments are extremist, they are intertwined in the heated debate and continuing struggle to subordinate Uganda's *new woman*. They demonstrate how the local male has used the press, drama, music and film to force the emergent *new woman* into silence (Matembe 2002: 235-40; Mukama 2002:146-60). It is the target of this research to show that this debate over women's public presence has shaped contemporary Ugandan art.

When assessing the current state of scholarship on art in Uganda, it becomes clear that on the whole there is a lack of critical and informed literature linking art to gender in Uganda. The available literature tends to commend and expound on formal aesthetics. For example, in his doctoral thesis, Kivubiro (1998) investigated the proliferation of Baganda's material culture covering the period 1900 to 1990s. He strongly argues for the importance of material culture because it promotes ancestry as the most important principle of social organisation, ideology and unity among the Baganda.

What is informative to this research, however, is Kivubiro's claim that traditional artefacts are used to maintain asymmetrical hierarchies among the Baganda. It exposes ways in which traditional artefacts appropriated by contemporary artists into their work are part of a superstructure which exploits and marginalises women in the traditional Buganda society to which many of the artists in this thesis belong. Kivubiro, for instance, asserts that in the family institution, material culture in a homestead was organised to 'reflect the superior status of husbands ... [who] were situated at the apex of the household hierarchy' and thus affirm the 'subordinate position of wives'

(Kivubiro 1988:118). He states that the pot is a household artefact that defines 'what women should be, and could do'. Kivubiro also alludes to the fact that in a traditional household the woman keeps the 'territory of the kitchen' which is a woman's place.

Philip Kwesiga (2005) conducted a related study among the Banyankole (an ethnic group native to South-western Uganda). He argues that the production of traditional pottery among the Banyankole has provided an arena for struggles over power, control, gender and social inequalities: 'the Banyankole believe that power is inherent in food and, therefore, men should control it ... pottery is associated with food and gender ... thus, pottery is an arena where social relations, identities, and roles' are appropriated (Kwesiga 2005:ix). There have been changes in the gendered food economy in Ankole in the period 1960-2003. However, the political dynamics have not changed: pottery is still used to define and defend gendered positions in which women are subordinate.

Arguably, like Kivubiro, Kwesiga alludes to the resilience of gendered stereotypes in a traditional society. Many of these claims would have been weakened by colonial modernity, education and religion. Furthermore, Article 33(1) of the Constitution of Uganda guarantees equality between women and men and Article 2(2) provides that any custom inconsistent with this and other provisions is null and void. Thus the Constitution specifically outlaws traditions which propagate the marginalisation of women. However, Kwesiga's (and Kivubiro's) gender stereotypes have been preserved, validated and propagated through artefacts, folktales, song and dance; they are often recited to remind women of their subordinate positions in society (see 'hens do not crow' in Tamale 1999). Kwesiga and Kivubiro have also demonstrated that pots, and pottery production, are not restricted to the economy of food production; they define class and gender.

Venny Nakazibwe (2005) did ethnographic research on the making of traditional bark-cloth among the Baganda (native to central Uganda). Her study examined the notions of continuity and change in the role and meaning of bark-cloth in Uganda. She analysed the extent of Swahili-Arab influence, Western Christianity, colonialism and education, international tourism, intra-regional and regional trade, and local politics on the redefinition of bark-cloth of the Baganda in the past two and a half centuries (Nakazibwe 2005:15).

While articulating the relationship between local politics and the redefinition of bark-cloth, Nakazibwe addressed the gender politics interwoven in the making of bark-cloth in Buganda. She observed that the processing of bark-cloth is essentially a male activity. Although women participate indirectly by supplying food and drink to the bark-cloth makers, they are not entirely welcome in the trade. They 'were (and are still) considered as unclean amongst the Baganda because of their menstrual cycle' and, therefore, should not be allowed to participate in any process of bark-cloth manufacture (Nakazibwe 2005:72).

Nakazibwe stated the power and gender politics in relation to the redefinition of bark-cloth, but failed to challenge them. The issue here resides in the nature of the method that Nakazibwe used which is closer to Kivubiro's and Kwesiga's. What was at the core of the three doctoral researches is the need to preserve cherished material cultures and not to undermine their gendered discourses. I accept that nations need to preserve and protect their material cultures and ensure that 'the old and new ... stand side by side the former gaining more and more prestige and significance and hence recalling the past and identifying the future as a continuation of ancestral traditions' (Kivubiro 1988:238). However, this patriotic duty should not obscure the power discourses which these material cultures fuel and which have been taken up in contemporary art to serve similar political purposes and intentions.

George Kyeyune (2003) wrote a doctoral thesis acknowledging the fact that contemporary artists in Uganda have been aware of developments in their country's politics. Confronted by Musangogwantamu's (also called Musango) earlier paintings (painted in the 1950s) which had gendered aspects, Kyeyune argued that 'what [was] particularly important about these work[s] however is not so much the subject matter as is the evidence of technical handling of colour and emphasis on perspective' (Kyeyune 2003:79). By deploying this formalist model of art history with an interest in the 'sense of colour, harmony, vibrancy and vitality' (Kyeyune 2003:264), Kyeyune missed the gendered politics in many of Musango's (and other) works.

This attention to formal attributes and technical expediencies coupled with a total disregard for subject matter also characterised the thesis written by Catherine Namono. Namono (1997) analysed 'images of women' in Francis Musangogwantamu's work whose moral codes she celebrated. As a result, Namono failed to deconstruct and conceptualise images in which the artist had constructed Uganda's *new woman* as a materialistic, desirous, pervert prostitute and carrier of AIDS. Namono asserted that 'Musango displayed his ability to critically analyse change ... [and] promoted the female body as pure and chaste... . Musango hoped to educate society through his paintings that the nude conveyed moral and noble sentiments' (Namono 1996:107). Thus Namono chose to celebrate rather than question Musangogwantamu's representation of the woman in the public space as a social, political and economic problem in post-1986 Uganda.

It is clear that Kyeyune and Namono only scratched the surface of Musango's work. This then explains their aesthetic claims and failure to expose the gendered biases, and later misogyny, in Musangogwantamu's work. Their scholarship is related to what Brand (1998:155-168) has rejected as traditional theories of taste which assume that the best way to experience a work of art is to view it as pure, neutral and unbiased. Such theories prioritise

formal, stylistic and technical clues as the artwork's meaning. In this way, issues concerning gender, power and social relations which promote 'male privilege and female subordination' (Di Stefano 1986:147-159) are sidelined. What the artwork is about, what it says and in what environment it is created are often considered to be secondary (Pollock 1988: 11, 80; Nead 1992:10). This opens a gap which needs to be filled by analysing how such artworks are part of a campaign to silence the *new woman*.

In his doctoral study, Sanyal (2000) investigated the evolution of Uganda's contemporary art. His priority was to analyse how formal art education has informed the evolution of 'two generations of artists' educated at Makerere Art School. He investigated the 'formal and conceptual roles of visual images in expressing cultural identities of both of these generations and in shaping art and art history' (Sanyal 2000:2). In the course of his research, Sanyal encountered a recurrent female figure which permeated Uganda's modern art. He did not investigate the overarching gendered debate which informs it. Instead, he recommended that other researchers explore why Makerere artists use such devices as the maternal image to make their statements (Sanyal 2000:229).

Angelo Kakande (2008) attempted this task. In his doctoral thesis, he traced Uganda's contemporary art as a form of political expression. In examining artworks done by Fred Mutebi and Bruno Sserunkuuma, he observed that both artists engage with representations of women as embodiments of Uganda's political and social decay. He concedes that the two artists raise 'an interesting (if problematic) gender debate' (Kakande 2008:328). With interest in the broader issues of bad governance and corruption, and how they have shaped visual discourse in Uganda, Kakande did not take the gendered question very far. Aware of this gap, however, he recommended that Uganda's gendered artworks be interrogated 'to extend the margins of the

record on Uganda's contemporary art and art history... devotedly and vigorously.' He warned that 'short of this, the current formalist trend will persist' and much of the outstanding issues will remain unattended (Kakande 2008:328).

Although vibrant and impressive, the available feminist scholarship generated in other fields, for example women and AIDS (Wallman 1996), women and violence (Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza 1997), women and parliamentary politics (Tamale 1999), women and the economy (Synder 2000), women and politics (Tripp 2000), women and education (Kwesiga 2002), women and the constitution (Matembe 2002), and women and religion (Waliggo 2002), has not addressed this hiatus. It is true that it has interrogated the role of culture in the marginalisation of women; it is thus an important resource for this study. However, it has not questioned how contemporary Ugandan art, being a key component of the country's culture, has participated in the debate on women's career prospects, equality and rights. This research thus fills a critical gap.

The scope of the study is determined by the history, extent and nature of the marginalisation of women in Uganda and their battle for emancipation. Uganda has a population of over 30 million inhabitants, 53 per cent of whom are women. Although they constitute the majority of the population, women in Uganda have been marginalised. They last wielded power in pre-colonial times but lost it with the advent of colonialism. The end of colonialism did not alleviate their plight. Instead, women remained a marginalised group in the new dispensation (Tamale 1996:15). The situation worsened in the turbulent and tragic reigns of Idi Amin Dada, Uganda's president in the period 1971 to 1979 (Obbo 1980) and Milton Obote II (1981-1985). Amin and Obote ruled with an iron fist; their armies raped women; they killed and maimed many Ugandans. The situation improved when Yoweri Museveni and his National

Resistance Movement (NRM) led a successful rebellion and came to power in 1986. Museveni's administration initiated policy instruments and programmes which improved the lives of women who used them to claim their rights.

This study covers the period 1986 to 2011 which marks 25 years of NRM's reign in which Uganda's *new woman* negotiated her way into the public domain and evoked fear. It examines ways in which visual discourse has responded to the public presence of the *new woman*. As my point of departure I take the view that some male artists have constructed images based on preconceived values and traditional beliefs which permeate society. I thus interrogate the way in which male artists imagine and image – or imag(in)e – the difference between a desirable traditional woman who remains at home and an undesirable public woman. I examine the representation of the *new woman* as an undesirable public menace and how this has been a poignant visual strategy intended to diffuse the challenges posed by women who have left their traditionally-mediated spaces in the home and moved into the male-dominated public space where they have assumed key roles in the country's economic, political and social spheres. In the process, I investigate the country's visual discourse and how it has assumed its position in the debate on women's emancipation in Uganda.

This investigation is not, however, restricted to artworks made by male artists only. I also consider the art made by professional women artists with academic qualifications. These formally trained female artists – themselves 'new women' by virtue of their tertiary art education and professional practice – are in a position to articulate different visual representations and to challenge the negative images projected by their male counterparts. However, my efforts to investigate and write about the work of women artists have been hampered in different ways.

In the first place, although the number of women graduates from Art Schools in Uganda has been on the rise, still there are very few women who are practicing artists. For example, on 1 September 2011 Tricia Glover mounted a painting exhibition at Kabira Club. She had hoped that it would be for women only but unfortunately she was disappointed. She wrote that 'ladies really are the reason I wanted to have this exhibition and the men are queuing up to join in even those not invited!'⁷ By 31 August only *three women* had submitted work. Tricia abandoned her initial plan and the exhibition, originally intended for women only, was dominated by 31 men.

In 2008 Nagawa conducted a study and subsequently published an article on 'the challenges and successes of women artists in Uganda'. Nagawa (2008:152) observed that the personal lives and careers of Uganda's formally trained women artists still intermingle thus delaying or disrupting their career development (Nagawa 2008:156). As such 'there are fewer [practicing contemporary] Ugandan women artists than men, not because they are marginalised, but for a multitude of reasons, mainly family.'

Nagawa probably assumes that all women artists have families which hamper their progress yet this is not entirely correct. Nankabirwa who graduated in 1990 quit art and joined politics out of political ambition. She is currently a Minister of State. Winfred Lukowe graduated in 2003 but is currently working with DFCU Bank. She abandoned art after mounting an exhibition which was a financial failure. She crossed first into information technology and then to banking. This phenomenon is not unique to women. Men too have changed professions. James Ocaya who graduated in 1993 is a senior police officer. Stuart Agaba, a 1998 graduate, became the Aide de Camp for the President of Uganda. He is currently a Captain in the Uganda Peoples Defence forces. Walusimbi who graduated from MTSIFA in 2000 is also in banking. Patrick

Lukwago graduated in 2003 but is currently working as a mechanic with City Oil located at Bombo Road.

Where I do agree with Nagawa, however, is that women artists are fewer than men not because they are marginalised. Unlike the scenario in eighteenth-century England where, as we read in Linda Nochlin's article 'Why have there been no great women artists' (1971), women were denied access to the best institutions of art instruction, women in Uganda receive education similar to that of men. Some have made artworks in which they reflect on the position of the woman in the public space in Uganda. In Chapters Three and Four I assess the oeuvres of these few women to appreciate their contribution to the position of women in Uganda.

The selection of women artists for this research was further complicated by its focus on gendered politics. For example, the works of Thereza Musoke have not been included in this study. Musoke is a contemporary woman artist who graduated in the sixties and taught at MTSIFA before going abroad and returning to Uganda after the collapse of Obote's regime in 1986. Her works revolve around wildlife and women. In her women themes she paints female figures arranged in genre scenes and rituals. Asked whether the works had anything to do with women issues, Musoke vehemently denied that her paintings were making a gendered point.

Likewise the works of Rose Namubiru Kirumira could not form part of the research. Kirumira who obtained a doctorate in 2010, is one of the very few practicing women sculptors in Uganda. Although Kirumira concedes that her work is gendered, she regards the woman's private life and her gendered comments through art as strictly private. She thus refused to give permission for the use of the photographs I had taken and the information she gave me.

In other cases interviews with women artists were cancelled due to social pressure. According to Margaret Nagawa, the woman artist who is also a wife and mother is “very much aware of her audience in a male dominated society and does not want to step on their toes” (Nagawa 2011:7)⁸. This characteristic is not unique to Nagawa’s interviewee, it cuts across women artists many of whom are married and would not want “to antagonise their marriages”.

The current political climate also determines the response of both male and female interviewees. In some instances fear has forced artists to make statements about their artworks intended to be shared (with the interviewer) but not publicised. This is not to suggest that such comments, and the art they informed, are strictly private and not of relevance to the public. However, it is a strategy artists have adopted to avoid harsh sanctions. Controversial works have been placed in the public domain as exhibits but without captions these works have remained ‘uncontroversial’; the artists have escaped backlash and repression. The role of the art historian is therefore to remain sensitive to this complexity and respond appropriately.

The above examples point to the varied and complex positions which artists have taken towards art, gender, women and this thesis. They have informed the research methods best suited to this study. For example, all interviews were informal. I accept that artists can reposition their works, imputing meanings that were not part of the original objectives. Thus the method of the study was not to follow a strict cause-effect model. Using this model would have resulted in an argument in which gendered art is an effect of a single, immutable, original cause inscribed in what the artist thought at the time of making the work. Such original objectives of the work are sometimes recorded in theses, catalogues and essays. However, a project of this nature would be counterproductive in as far as its basic premise would be that ‘valid

interpretation' must aim at finding the 'original intention' of the author. This would be a redundant exercise. In his *Death of the author* Roland Barthes has helped us appreciate that both the artist and reader are authors of meaning. Umberto Eco (2005) argued that we abandon the original meaning model and accept the 'plurality of meaning' implying that there is no transcendental meaning of a text. In pursuing this semiotic model I did discourse analysis, close reading and cross-referencing of the information I received from artists (their essays, catalogues, statements, discussions) and other sources (newspapers, theatre, music, theses, published literature) to trace the shared political contour in which the artists, their work, their statements and the other socio-political actors are located. Following this line of inquiry I recognised that in the debate on the position of women in Uganda, an artist is as active as anybody else in the meaning-making process and that his/her interpretation of his/her own work cannot be ignored.

The majority of the artworks discussed in this thesis form part of artists' private collections while a few were found in MTSIFA gallery. Because the private collections are located at many sites, accessing these works affected my methodology. I used a snowball method through which I started with a core of few artists who then helped me find other artists working with related subject matter. I have only included artists who, out of political conviction, have made art in which they make a case for or against women's freedom and liberties in Uganda. This choice was strategic. It has helped me to include only works whose gendered politics can be confirmed. I have included some works to control and validate my claims and also to trace the wider trajectory of contemporary art of which gendered art is a constituent part.

While naturalism is the form most often used to render explicit messages to audiences with low visual literacy levels, most of the artworks selected for discussion are executed in non-naturalistic styles. Artists mostly prefer to use figurative stylisation which tends to geometric abstraction or surrealistic expressionism. These images look like 'art' and not like life and therefore their capacity to render social critique is veiled by aesthetic concerns. Although they may render critiques understood by a small audience interested in art, the artworks do not make explicit social comments. Their meanings are to a certain extent encoded.

In this way art is distinguished from propaganda which delivers its messages explicitly, with complete clarity. For this reason I also examine popular imagery in the form of newspaper cartoons to substantiate my argument. There is undeniable evidence to suggest that Uganda's press has engaged a propagandist campaign against women's quest for self-actualisation. Thus throughout this thesis I digest a lot of material in the press to observe the intensity of similar fears which have shaped public opinion in Uganda. I demonstrate that because of generalised fear and fantasy the Ugandan press has invented visual and textual allegories alluding to the notion that educated women have abandoned their domestic roles as wives and mothers and become urban prostitutes (*malayas*) and gold diggers, who lack the necessary intellectual, moral and ethical abilities to occupy a public space.

The press has played another, and more direct, role in shaping Uganda's gendered art. All the artists whose works are analysed in this thesis have access to the media. They have studied in Kampala (the capital city of Uganda) and many are permanently resident in the city. They have easy access to the media which have influenced their work in varied ways. For instance, during our interviews it became clear to me that some artists

depend on shared opinions which are mass-circulated in Uganda's theatre, music, film, print and electronic media. Some have become embarrassed by the views they originally held which are blatantly sexist. Following our interaction they have altered their positions and even attempted to make artworks that challenge the patriarchal views in their earlier works thus expanding their oeuvre.

Silverman argues that the public preoccupation with the *new woman* which was seen in the Parisian press influenced the *Art Nouveau* movement. French artists represented a 'subversive sexual warrior' capable of unleashing powerful, destructive, libidinous impulses' (Silverman 1991:144) and used the 'interiorised femininity and maternal bliss' to challenge the *new woman* (Silverman 1991:160). I demonstrate in this thesis that there is compelling evidence to suggest that although mediated by local concerns and imperatives which are distant from Silverman's France, a similar process has unfolded in Uganda. Mainstream English newspapers such as the *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor*, local language newspapers such as *Bukedde* and *Orumuri*, and tabloids such as *Entango*, *Mirror*, *Red Pepper*, *Spices* and *Stream* have been shaped by the concern over the *new woman*. I also demonstrate that artists such as Francis Musango, Kizito Maria Kasule, Francis Ifee, Godfrey Banadda, Angelo Kakande and John Bosco Kanuge have, more than others, used their art to address the menace of the careerist *new woman* who emerged in Uganda in the late-1980s. That their works have not been theoretically analysed opens a critical gap which this thesis intends to fill.

However, I wish to stress that Uganda's experience is unique. There is no movement of Ugandan artists specialising in the fight for/against women. Thus there is no perfect equivalent of the suffragettes, antisuffragettes or the

French Art Nouveau movements in Uganda. This should be expected. The policy of *individual merit* espoused by the NRM has destroyed all manner of collective action. Uganda is probably the only country where Trade Unions are not fronts for collective action and political change. All those who agitate for collective action are quickly co-opted and drafted into the NRM. This is why the women's movement, and political parties, have lost many of their active members to the ruling party. As such group action has been seriously eroded. The Uganda Artists Association which is the collective for formally trained artists last met in 2008 for its annual general meeting. The Uganda Society which Margaret Trowell chaired and used as a springboard to lobby for art education last met in 2003. The current office bearers are using it for personal gain and selfish ambitions.

Also, while the artworks in this thesis may share common concerns, they are based on an individual's interpretation of the events unfolding in his or her space and time. They are therefore not political in the sense that they sway or galvanise public opinion. Rather, they are political because through them the artist deliberately takes part in an ongoing political debate on the *new woman*. Against this backdrop the political texts seen in the works, and heard through interviews with the artists, become deliberate political stances and actions rather than being accidental.

The methodology applied is informed by feminist art historians such as Peggy Brand, Carol Duncan, Rozsika Parker, Edwin Mullins, Lynda Nead, Griselda Pollock and Linda Nochlin who have taken up Foucault's discourses on power and sexuality in order to improve their methodology. Foucault observes that power is an unstable, fluid, constantly renegotiated social construct, which must 'be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate, and which constitute

their own organisation'. Thus for him the overarching strength of power, or what he calls the 'omnipresence of power', does not lie in its essential qualities mapped by the 'privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity'. Rather, it is reproduced, transmitted and propagated 'from one moment' in history 'to the next'. As such the strength, legitimacy and perpetuity of power – which for Foucault is 'the unity of domination' – resides in this process of reproduction, transmission and propagation. Power is not inherent to any individual (or group of individuals). Rather, 'it is a name that one attributes to a complex strategical [sic] situation in a particular society'. It has forms of resistance which are 'present everywhere in [its] power network' (Foucault 1976: 92-93).

As such, Foucault demystified the boundaries of power. He motivated the need to 'analyse the mechanisms of power' (Foucault 1976: 97). His method goes beyond individual persona to holistically unmask and interrogate the whole system in which individuals wield power over others. It moves beyond moral issues to assert the politics concerning human relationships. This is the method of inquiry which Foucault brought to bear on the understanding of conventions inscribed in the definition of human sexuality or what he calls 'sex and the discourses of truth'. Casting doubt on the legitimacy of the normative expectations which frame 'sexual behaviour' (domination, conformity, etc), Foucault unfolded a four-way methodical approach useful in the analysis of the power matrix which places men high in the hierarchy while locating women at the fringes of society.

His method is controversial and it has limitations in Uganda where traditional family values are often mobilised to police sexual boundaries to the extent of proposing a death penalty for gay and lesbians. I am cognisant of this debate. However, I am also aware that Foucault himself did not intend a universal, overarching theory. Instead, he provided an alternative platform for fresh

inquiries into the realm of human sexuality and the discourses of power which shape it. As Hoy (1986:17) rightly puts it, Foucault wanted to 'get us to start thinking differently about [human] sexuality', not as an essentialised, biological phenomenon but as a social construct grounded in a complex power relationship.

These theoretical paradigms have thus helped feminist art historians to unmask the power relations behind 'high art' and art history which itself works in a hierarchical system⁹ (Perry 1999:87-90). Broude and Garrard (2005:1) explain that '[f]eminist art historians have built [their] work upon the ... precept that the circulation of power in society is not natural but culturally manipulated and directed'. These positions have helped feminist scholarship to 'deconstruct patriarchal power structures', 'ruffle feathers in the patriarchal dovecotes' and question the premises of mainstream art history (Nochlin 1988: xii). Hence Gill Perry (1999:8) analysed how high art is interlaced into socially constructed categories of femininity and masculinity. She argued that gender issues can affect the conception, production and interpretation of artworks. This is the theoretical platform which can problematise the representation of women in high art.

For example, Patrick Bade used it to interrogate how the 'preoccupation with evil and destructive women became one the most striking features of late nineteenth century culture' (Bade 1979:1). He observed and argued that the depiction of wickedness in art has 'always been done by men who feared female sexuality and who took masochistic delight in fantasies of fatal women' (Bade 1979:9). Bade set a stage for Virginia Allen's notion of the '*femme fatale* as erotic icon' (1983:ix) and Bram Dijkstra's analysis of late nineteenth-century Western art and the way it circulated images representing 'the "bad" woman's facile renunciation of her maternal duties...' (Dijkstra1986:277). Implicit in Bade and Dijkstra's analysis is the contention that representations

of women through high art are part of 'the war between the sexes, the war between male and female' (Dijkstra 1986:331) in which men seek to weaken and ultimately domesticate women who subvert male power and authority. It is in this frame that artworks with exaggerated female naked bodies gain new meaning (Betterton 1987:154); the representation of human 'sexuality emerges repeatedly as an instrument by which power over women is maintained and exercised because it serves to define them in particular ways' (Abott & Wallace 1991:xii). It is also against this backdrop that the imagination and visualisation of the woman's body, circulated through high art, become political. As such the visual representation of women through high art becomes a device which renders the woman's body accessible to the powerful gaze (Chadwick 1990:12).

It is, however, important to ascertain the position of art and the artist in this power matrix. It is often the case that gendered art coexists with medical, legal, policy briefs and other reports which point to broken families, sexually transmitted diseases, prostitution, etc. Does this mean that the artworks presenting a 'fallen woman' are effects of these reports? In her *Myths of sexuality* (1988), Lynda Nead interrogated this question. Anchoring her discussion in Foucauldian discourses on power, Nead argued that images are not an effect of popular views, medical reports and intellectual discourses on the sexuality of women. Rather, artists are agents: they are part of the cause and they are part of the production of the fallen woman.

Furthermore, we learn from Lynda Nead (1988:23-44) that the 'mother-and-child' and the 'countryside-woman' as representations of women, and their attendant popularity in male-made art, are not neutral. Nead posits that Victorian Britain imag(in)ed motherhood and rural life in order to define the roles of the ideal woman, while perpetuating the domestication of non-conforming women. According to Nead (1988:25) this ideal woman had lost

currency in nineteenth-century Britain as women took on unorthodox roles in society. Faced with this reality, 'high art' re-invented and circulated the ideal image of childcare and motherhood in order to move the *new woman* into the natural and private domain and ultimately silence her (Nead 1988:23-44). The silence here is important, not as a woman's choice not to participate in verbal discussion but as an imposed device intended to limit women's access to the public space and the discussions which entail such access. In the process, the visualised silence seen in high art became what Foucault (1976:101) calls a shelter for power anchored in prohibitions, confinement and circumscription. Nead's discussion is insightful as it provides a new platform for reading what Sanyal called the maternal figure in contemporary Ugandan art. Therefore I have pursued it in this thesis.

Reading postcolonial discourses on the vulnerability of those in dominant positions due to 'a core ambivalence or unconscious anxiety on' their part, Broude and Garrard (2005:2) argue that the dominant-and-oppressed model in gender debates has been abandoned. Attention is given to an alternative model in which 'agency on part of the repressed and unconscious fear on the part of the dominators' interplay. Using this model feminist art historians begin to circumvent art history as a narrative of monolithic patriarchal control in which women exist as passive victims who have accepted, without question, their fate. They begin to uncover and appreciate the intricate forms and strategies through which women, and women artists, have used art to reclaim their 'agency' and build a case for the *new woman*. This analysis expands knowledge on the available alternative ways women use to challenge their marginalisation and to assert their rights. I have explored it to engage ways in which women like Alex Baine, Rebecca Bisaso, Lillian Nabulime and Maria Naita have challenged negative stereotypes through their art. Broude and Garrard's argument is useful in defining the strategies in which women have

explored ambivalence (and parody) to reclaim their agency and challenge mainstream views used against the *new woman*.

I have studied cartoons, film, theatre and newspaper reports; medical and science reports; legal documents and reports; and scholarship in women studies, history and art history. This material was accessed to find the common ground between art and the wider discussion on the *new woman*. It helps to assess gender bias in artworks and to evaluate the extent to which the artist is the cause or the originator of the fallen woman rather than a recipient of a prefabricated image which he transmits without agency. As Hatt and Klonk (2006:161) put it, images construct gendered reality; they 'do not report something that has already happened – whether in reality, or in discourse – but bring the category of the fallen woman into being.'

The artists whose artworks I have considered produce many other kinds of art apart from gendered art. Therefore it would be misleading to state that the intention of this study is to show that Uganda's contemporary art is misogynistic. On the contrary it is intended to show that within this vibrant creative space some artists have chosen to make a case for or against the emerging *new woman* in Uganda.

I have written the thesis in two parts. Part I consists of the written text in which I identify and analyse the connections between gender and art. In Chapter One I trace and analyse the gendered debate which has shaped women's liberties and rights. Relying on secondary sources I first present an overview of a complex history dating back to pre-colonial times and leading up to the emergence of a 'new generation of women' after 1986. This overview is important: it sketches the different stages, political processes and negotiations which have shaped women in Uganda. This debate touches on the wider question of how to deal with the menace of non-conforming women

which has preoccupied the country since colonial times. Because this trajectory relates to the emergence of modernity symbolised by Christianity, formal education, the city and Uganda (the modern state), it must be investigated to gain a proper understanding of the art-related issues addressed in the following chapters of the thesis.

Chapter Two examines the historiography of art in Uganda and traces the early beginnings of gender ideologies in Uganda's modern art. The roles of different actors who have contributed to the growth of formal art education in Uganda are analysed. The chapter attends to the institutional, socio-political and economic issues which preoccupied Uganda's contemporary artists in the period prior to 1987. It is until the late 1980s that Musango intensified a visual campaign against the *new woman* which some of his students pursued while others challenged it.

In Chapter Three I discuss artworks produced by the artists Francis Musangogwantamu, Maria Kizito Kasule, Francis Xavier Ifee and Godfrey Banadda in order to demonstrate that from 1987 Uganda's modern art has tapped into the backlash against the *new woman*. A complex visual vocabulary emerged in which public health and socio-political concerns are addressed and transformed into a pointed device intended to oppose women's claim for equality. I analyse images through which the *new woman* has been denigrated and visualised as a ruptured, contorted, decomposed, narcissistic, self-indulgent, vicious agent of gluttony, exploitation, vice, disease, destruction and moral degeneration. I also show how female artists such as Bisaso, Naita and Nabulime responded in different ways.

Chapter Four examines the notion of women's sexual availability through the work of the artists Angelo Kakande, Fred Kakinda, Robert Sewanyana,

Patrick Lwasampijja and Gerald Mwebe. I investigate the eroticised female body and its use to tame elite women and perpetuate their availability as objects of sexual desire. I show how the wall separating high and low art (modern art and pornography) in Uganda has sometimes collapsed as images of female sexuality are endlessly multiplied to reinstate relationships of sexual power and subordination. I discuss artworks in which fashion, interiority, coiffure, mien, bounteousness, youthfulness, voluptuousness and women's erogeneity have been used as voyeuristic symbols to image men's fantasy towards women's sexuality, to mitigate the *new woman's* claim for equality and ultimately silence her – an enterprise which Maria Naita challenged by calling on women to assert their rights and pursue their careers.

In Chapter Five I examine how the domestic and nurturing functions of women are used as tools to tame the *new woman*. I study John Bosco Kanuge's lino and wood prints to demonstrate that the image of a woman as care-giver is interlaced with shared expectations about the position of a woman in a patriarchal society. I peel the surface of Kanuge's prints to expose the gender biases inscribed in his themes of domestic chores, rural labour, maternity, coiffure, manicure and pedicure, motherliness and polygamy. I expose the means through which the artist reconfigures and articulates the dividing line between womanliness and manliness. In his work the rural woman becomes more than an attribute and assumes her role as a powerful weapon used to challenge the *new woman*.

Part II of the thesis provides the catalogue of the works analysed in Part I. For the purposes of this research I only refer to works done by formally trained visual artists. The bulk of my discussion is focused on male produced art

although some images done by women artists and other forms of cultural discourse are used to illustrate related and counterarguments.

Uganda's turbulent history has led to the destruction and disappearance of a lot of the country's artistic heritage (Sanyal 2000; Kakande 2008). Because primary education, defence and the improvement of rural households are prioritised, Uganda has no national art collection. In this environment Makerere Art Gallery has played a key role. Although the Makerere collection has also been pillaged and is poorly kept and catalogued, it has provided many of the works discussed in this thesis. I consulted the National Archives at Entebbe and Makerere University archives for crucial information. For some of the works which are lost I have relied on secondary sources – documents, catalogues and theses – in which such works are mentioned. To validate my claims and expand the debate I also had informal discussions with artists, women activists and musicians.

Endnotes

¹ The label *feminist* is used here to describe someone (either female or male) who studies, exposes and challenges women's cultural, political and social positions and disadvantages.

² See African art society; successful first exhibition opened by his excellence (*Uganda herald* of 3 August 1939).

³ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/OpEdColumnists/DanielKalinaki/-/878782/1244684/-/sgiktcz/-/index.html> (accessed 29.9.2011)

⁴ De Fourcaud, a professor of Aesthetics at the École des Beaux-Arts, argued that a woman excels at small tasks, no matter how minute, as long as they require nimble hands (cited in Silverman 1991:152).

⁵ For example, they formed an umbrella organisation called Uganda Women's Organizations Network (UWONET).

⁶ Although it was initially *The Monitor*, this paper has undergone immense transformation from 1992 when it was formed by a group of Ugandan journalists to the present day when it is part of the Nation Media Group of Kenya. Amid this transformation, it has adopted four brand names: *The Monitor*, *Daily Monitor*, *Saturday Monitor* and *Sunday Monitor*. In this thesis, I cite the appropriate brand name.

⁷ Tricia Glover, I thought about you today, e-mail, August 5, 2011.

⁸ See Nagawa, "Beyond the Gallery: Interactions Between Audiences, Artists and their Art Through The Kampala Art Tour 2007 – 2010".

⁹ Pollock (1988:11) sees art history as a series of representational practices which actively produce definitions of sexual difference and contribute to the present configuration of sexual politics and power relations.

CHAPTER 1

The evolution of Uganda's *new woman*: debates and contests

In this chapter, I search history for traces of the *new woman* in Uganda. I examine the socio-political life of women during Uganda's pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence periods. This analysis allows me to demonstrate that colonial and postcolonial policies of state formation have re-defined the patriarchy and marginalised women. I then examine strategies which women have used to negotiate their position; the institutions with which they have negotiated; the gains they have made and how the patriarchy has responded to such gains to propagate and perpetuate its power. As we will see in chapter two, Uganda's visual artists did not directly take part in this debate until after 1986. However, this chapter sets the stage. It lays out issues relevant to the understanding of the evolution, in the 1980s, of what scholars have called the 'new generation of autonomous women' (Tripp & Kwesiga 2002:19) in Uganda. In short, this chapter sets the socio-political background to the debate in the rest of the thesis.

1.1 FROM PRE-COLONIAL HEROINES TO COLONIAL RELICS: A LOST GENERATION OF POWERFUL WOMEN

The historical record of women's role in Uganda's pre-colonial politics is scanty. I base my discussion on secondary sources, which refer to the period dating back to the thirteenth century. Probably, if more information had been available, our understanding of the history and participation of Uganda's women in the country's pre-colonial politics would have been different. To further complicate matters, the available secondary information is based on paternalistic missionary and explorer accounts which draw from other paternalistic local hegemonies: kings, male converts and porters. The available information is, therefore, helpful but not entirely objective.

We learn from Marilyn French (1992:9-26) and Coquery-Vidrovitch (1994:34-44) that women participated in the construction of ancient communities.¹ Uganda was no exception.² Although the majority of women were demeaned and seen as exchangeable commodities of barter trade and used to concretise social networks (see: Roscoe 1921:14; Mamdani 1976:25; Karugire 1988:23; Musisi 1991:757-62; Reid 2002: 119-130), some wielded significant influence in the dispensation of political and social policies in pre-colonial Uganda.³ For example, Byanyima argues that

[I]n pre-colonial Uganda, women had never been confined to the private or domestic sphere. Rather, multiple responsibilities between and across spheres shaped their political history, the political/juridical spheres heavily depended on personal relationships that women could (and often did) influence (cited in Tamale 1999:5).

Let me qualify this statement by saying that some, and not all, women in Uganda enjoyed this privilege. In fact, women slaves and commoners were strictly confined and served no role beyond the household. However, the statement is compellingly instructive. It relates to women who wielded social, political, economic, judicial and religious power during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in some kingdoms (Hanson 2002:221-225; Tripp 2000:29-33; Tamale 1999:4-8). I will cite a few examples to demonstrate my claim.

To begin with, the Buganda Kingdom is one of Uganda's traditional kingdoms.⁴ It was the strongest and most prominent by the middle of the nineteenth century, when the first Europeans came to Uganda. Princess Nakku and Queen Nannono were among the women who are known to have 'ruled' the kingdom during the thirteenth century (Hanson 2002:221-225). Princess Nassolo also made her mark on Buganda's history when she led her brothers in a rebellion against King Kagulu's brutality around the seventeenth

century. The record suggests that it was Nassolo who chose the successor to Kagulu (Hanson 2002:221-225), thus restoring sane leadership in Buganda. Also, we know from historical records that two females were active in the administration of the Buganda Kingdom – at least by the middle of the nineteenth century. They were the queen mother (the *Nnamasole*) and the king's sister (the *Lubuga*). These women exerted considerable influence⁵ on the king through their lineage positions (Gray 1934:267). For instance, Hanson asserts that 'the queen mother in Buganda ... participated in a system of gendered political power in which the mother of the king had autonomous authority, which she used to check excesses and protect the nation' (Hanson (2002:221). The *Nnamasole* and the *Lubuga* continued to wield power until 1900 when the Buganda Agreement⁶ relegated, marginalised and silenced them socially, economically⁷ and politically. Hanson (2002:228) confirms this assertion with the argument that 'with European colonialism, the king became a figurehead, carrying a will of coalitions of chiefs with military power. The queen mother ceased to have a meaningful role in politics, because the queen mother had always exercised authority in relation to a powerful king. In relation to a weak king, the queen mother's ability to influence affairs of the state was severely diminished'.

Examining the situation in south-western Uganda (an area covered by present-day Kabale, Kanungu, Kisoro and Rukungiri districts), Murindwa-Rutanga (1991:1-320) analyses how Nyabingi, a female leader wielding much power, used it to emancipate her society. She formed a powerful cult and claimed divine authority. She had female soldiers (called the *Abagirwa*) whom she organised into a political movement to fight colonial agents from 1909 to 1914 (Murindwa-Rutanga 1991:33-70). However, in the 1930s, the traditional role of the Nyabingi was replaced by new Western religions known as Revivalism or *Ruvaivuro*. The new religions undermined the Nyabingi cult and movement through public addresses, lies, threats and opportunism

(Murindwa-Rutanga 1991:71-100). This was part of the long and painful process of conquest and subjugation through which Uganda – the modern state – was constituted. Most specifically, it was one of the many ways in which the British colonial establishment targeted Nyabingi and downgraded her power (Muridwa-Rutanga 1991:101-132). Today the Nyabingi cult is a theme in history.

From 1225 to 1500 AD, the Bunyoro Kingdom in western Uganda had Nakayima, a goddess of defence who guarded Mubende, a sacred hill dedicated to Ndahura – the first Muchwezi (plural [A]bachwezi) ruler⁸. Mubende hill is a ridge nine miles long, which rises 200 feet from the surrounding villages (Tinkasimire 2002:138). The Banyoro (natives of the Bunyoro Kingdom) believed that the spirit of Ndahura dwelt there. Many people made pilgrimages to the hill to consult Nakayima on various matters such as politics, sickness and wealth. However, the advent of colonialism and Christianity undermined the myths which propagated the strength of Nakayima. She lost her political clout and today takes her place in the Uganda Museum as a relic of history.

By the middle of the twentieth century the *Nnamasole*, *Lubuga*, Nyabingi, *Abagirwa*, Nakayima and other eminent women had all lost their power. This should not surprise us. Lerner (1986:239) submits that the work of the ‘patriarchy in its wider understanding means the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women in a family and the extension of male dominance over women in society...[This] implies that men hold power in all the important institutions and that women are deprived access to such power.’ Hanson (2002:220) agrees while explaining that:

[C]olonising Europeans effaced women’s political institutions because they could only see and comprehend the political power of men. Sometimes the drawn-out process of conquest brought Europeans into

direct conflict with women's form of authority: queen mothers were banished...

In the light of Hanson's explanation we begin to appreciate why the colonial dispensation dealt with the local men and excluded women. The local male fitted the preconceived political prototype which the colonials imposed on Uganda. Most importantly, Hanson affirms that the perception that women are unable to hold political offices is itself a colonial construct, which was handed down to Uganda's post-colonial governments and perpetuated as the norm for the country's independence in 1962. Also, the examples I have cited question claims that women are weak and cannot lead. Furthermore, these propositions invite a closer discussion of the strategies and actions through which colonialism had disenfranchised women and legitimised men's control over the public space by 1962 when Uganda became an independent state.

1.2 COLONIALISM AND POLYGAMY

Uganda is located in East Africa **(2)**. It shares borders with four other countries: Sudan to the north, Kenya to the east, Tanzania and Rwanda to the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. Its capital city is Kampala.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the area currently constituting the modern state of Uganda was a rich tapestry of independent kingdoms, chiefdoms and ethnic groups. Uganda is therefore a colonial construct – a product of military occupation and negotiations between Europeans⁹ and the Buganda Kingdom.

The Buganda Kingdom has played a major role in the shaping of Uganda's history. Owing to internal dynamics and contacts with Arab merchants,¹⁰ by 1860 Buganda had become the most powerful¹¹ kingdom in the interlacustrine region. It had a hereditary kingship and a highly organised

system of government based on established traditions (Faupel 1961:1). Attracted by these attributes, in addition to their intention to find the source of River Nile, the European explorers John Hannington Speke and James Augustus Grant came to Buganda in 1862. They were followed by Henry Morton Stanley in 1875. Stanley dispatched a letter, which was published in the *Daily Telegraph*, purportedly inviting Western agents of civilisation to come to Buganda (Stanley 1878). In response, the Anglican Church Missionary Society came to Buganda in 1877 and the Catholic White Fathers followed in 1879.¹²

Missionaries had many perceptions about the Baganda (inhabitants of Buganda) and the rest of the communities in Uganda. Most important to my discussion is the perception that polygamy was oppressive as well as enslaving to women (Jones 1926:108). Archdeacon Walker (1888)¹³ wrote extensively on Uganda's 'polygamy as an institution that enslaves women'. To demonstrate his claims, Walker used the Old Testament, biblical stories or religious literature (Walker 1888:31). In Musisi's judgement the missionaries therefore perceived and presented polygamy as an 'unnatural institution' that only enhanced people's rejection of God and encouraged 'heathenism' among the Africans (Musisi 2002: 98-99). This debate was partly informed by the notion of the epithet of the primitive Dark Continent¹⁴ which, for Mudimbe (1994), shaped Western views about Africa and justified colonialism. However, it also points to ways in which polygamy indubitably placed women in a dual role as producers and reproducers, which was widespread in Africa (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1994:10). Murindwa-Rutanga (1991:15) agrees with Coquery-Vidrovitch as he cites Uganda's case. He argues that polygamy was a common practice because women were desired for the production of wealth, reproduction of children and expansion of the clan. 'Ordinary polygamy meant only two to ten wives, if only because of their cost' (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1994:10). This definition must be viewed against the more

extensive polygamy of chiefs and kings who possessed several hundreds and even thousands of wives. For example, Reid (2002:111) claims that Muteesa I had five hundred wives, each of whom had her maids and female slaves. According to Reid, Arab traders also told Burton that Suna's harem comprised 3000 concubines and women slaves. Kabaka Muteesa reportedly told Mackay: "I have no wife; my women are all slaves" (Reid 2002: 123).

Being English translations, these accounts could have missed the subtle and unproblematic wealth in some local customs. For example, the word *omuzaana* is literally translated as 'female slave'. However, the word has a broader usage in which all non-royal women in Buganda are called '*abazaana ba Kabaka*' (translated as the *Kabaka's* female slaves). This classification was used in pre-colonial Buganda. It still has currency today even though slavery is specifically outlawed through Article 44 (b) of the Constitution of Uganda and the current Kabaka has no male or female slaves: women in Buganda proudly refer to themselves as *abazaana ba Kabaka*.

This, however, does not totally invalidate the fact that women were seen as objects of economic value in pre-colonial Buganda. It is also true that by the 1880s many women in Buganda would have been taken captive during the frequent expeditions by different kings in Uganda and during the long civil wars (Reid 2002:111). This problem was not unique to the Buganda Kingdom.

Most specifically, the above missionary and explorer accounts are helpful to my discussion as far as the interpretation of polygamy as slavery fused into the wider need to civilise Africans is concerned. For example, Cardinal Lavignerie used sensational stories to influence public opinion in Europe in which he detailed the havoc wreaked by slavery as follows:

These armies carry fire and sword, blood and iron far and wide. Vast herds of women and cattle are swept, as well as thousands of children, to be henceforth chattels – chattels, perhaps, of children, and possibly of slaves. So miserable is their fate, so wretched, so dulling to the senses, so destructive to all feeling, that one can scarcely be surprised that in a few years the unhappy creatures have given way beneath the weight of their misery, and have even actually lost all desire for freedom (Ashe 1898:91).

Lavigerie was not alone. Explorer and other missionary accounts sketched a similar picture to sway public opinion in London and Paris towards supporting a three-pronged campaign to introduce Christianity, civilisation and commerce into the region. The metropolis responded. In 1892 Buganda became a British Protectorate; in 1893-94 all forms of slave trade were abolished in Buganda (Waliggo 2002:28) before the policy was rolled out as more areas came under British authority.

Secondly, missionaries made a resolution to the effect that ‘polygamy had to be destroyed or weakened before Christianity could be planted effectively’ (Waliggo 2002:22). They mobilised on two fronts. On the one hand, they openly undermined polygamy. It was preached that ‘it was sin and people’s uncontrolled passions that led to polygamy’. In short, polygamy was not an expression of tradition. Rather, it was immoral and contrary to God’s design. On the other hand, missionaries persuaded local chiefs, who constituted Buganda’s ruling elite and opinion leaders, to abandon polygamy. They also lobbied Buganda’s parliament (the *Lukiiko*) and the colonial government to pass legislation which protected the sanctity of monogamy and outlawed ‘indentured’ marriages. In the next section we see how these interventions affected women’s lives both positively and negatively.

1.3 'PRISONERS', 'BAD WOMEN': CHRISTIAN MONOGAMY AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS

Starting in 1890, Christian missions overhauled the marriage institution first in Buganda and later in the rest of Uganda. They introduced a new institution drawing on some aspects of the old and the new.¹⁵ Some old marriage customs, for instance polygamy, were dissolved. The changes supposedly left some women free: they could divorce, remarry if they wanted to or remain unmarried.¹⁶

Christian marriages gave a new sense of pride to women; many embraced Christian marriage so that they could rank well above women who were not wedded in church (Southall & Gutkind 1957:156-158). The colonial government also introduced laws to support them. For example, a law was enacted criminalising rape and illegal abortion,¹⁷ other laws criminalised alcoholism with the intention to ensure that men remained faithful to their wives.¹⁸

However, the new marriage institution faced new problems. Waliggo (2002:29) writes that 'soon, both Catholic and Protestant missionaries regretted the effects of freedom on women, when women of the household of Kaggo, a county chief... refused to cook'. As a result the missionaries turned around and accused women of misusing freedom and of being lazy. Waliggo cites Walker, who argues that:

there is danger of the freedom and liberty granted to the women becoming licence and laziness . . . There must be some control over the women, they cannot be allowed to wander about from home to home just as they like. When a woman is married, the husband looks after her, but there are numbers of women who refuse to be 'married' just for this very reason. If a man brings any pressure to bear on the women of his household, he is afraid of being charged with introducing slavery again (Walker 1896 in Waliggo 2002:29).

In other words, the new freedoms gave rise to inherent contradictions and unintended consequences which weakened the new marriage institution itself. This development invited a new set of gendered negotiations and colonial ordinances to police marriages.

First, in 1901 the *Native Marriage Ordinance* was enacted. It decreed that 'from now on, every married woman will visit only the home indicated by her husband, be it the home of her brother, she must never visit it without her husband's permission'.¹⁹ The law further prescribed that when a wife visited her parents and relatives, the husband should specify to her the period of stay there. Should he fail to do this precisely, and should the wife stay there longer and as a consequence get impregnated by another man,²⁰ the husband was to be heavily fined by the *Lukiiko* (the Buganda parliament). This law required that any man visited by a married woman was to find out the period fixed by her husband for her to be away, and it was prescribed that he sends the woman back to her husband before the expiry of the stated period. Failure to comply meant heavy fines.

Waliggo (2002:31) writes that the Christian chiefs concluded that all these new measures were intended to strengthen Christian marriages and replace the old laws with 'the new customs' which agreed with the new religion. However, as a result of the implementation of the ordinance, by 1901 the movement of wives became so restricted that many Christian wives began to regard themselves as "prisoners"²¹ of their husbands.

Then in 1902, colonial administrators promulgated the *Uganda Marriages Ordinance* to curb insolence and to instil good manners among the people.²² According to this law, any man convicted of adultery or fornication or impregnating an engaged woman, was either imprisoned, fined or whipped.²³ Passed in August 1902, the law targeted, *inter alia*, 'wives who, with or

without reason, wanted to leave their husbands'.²⁴ It was stated that once married in church, a couple could only be separated by death.

The *Uganda Marriages Ordinance* abolished the Christian wife's strongest safeguard. Returning to her parents, called *okunoba* in Luganda, was usually a wife's protest against her husband's unfair treatment or failure to reform.²⁵ Roscoe (1911:92) argues that whenever a wife returned to her relatives, the husband, whether innocent or guilty, took a pot of beer or a goat to his in-laws. The husband would humble himself before the in-laws and if found guilty, would be fined. There were no guarantees that abuses, if any, would not be repeated. This practice, however, protected women and not men; its assumption that women could not be abusive towards men is open to criticism. However, *okunoba* provided an opportunity for reprieve; confidence in the intervening traditional court of justice improved the status of women. The new ordinance ignored all this.

In 1913 the Anglican Synod enforced a law to mark, map and police the line between married and unmarried women in Uganda, qualifying and rejecting the latter as unwanted. Designed to affect all newlyweds, it prescribed that all married women take their husbands' names. This was meant 'to distinguish them from the unmarried' who were presumed to be 'sexually loose' and hence prostitutes (Musisi 2001:176). This law was consistent with Christian beliefs. However, traditionally women in Uganda would not lose their clan names upon marriage. This is because a clan, and hence a clan name, is a source of identity. It thus follows that the new law altered women's identity upon marriage.²⁶ This practice is still in place today; it has affected women like Joyce Mpanga, Sarah Ntiro, Rhoda Kalema, Specioza Kazibwe, Gertrude Njuba, among others, as we will see later on in this thesis.

Lastly, the monogamous marriage which the missions preferred, and the protection of whose sanctity the above-mentioned laws were designed to guarantee, produced a group of 'marginalised women, many of whom became "bad women"' (Musisi 2001:176) in the Protectorate. This was the case because 'the Christian insistence on monoga²⁷my' absorbed few women of marriageable age and yet many others had been dispersed from the formerly polygamous marriages! This scenario resulted in a "deplorable" social situation' where women were "free", unmarried, and not cared for' (Musisi 2001:176). As a result, the colonial polity was thrown into confusion. By 1912 the Christian fraternity was split: there 'were disagreements among missionaries' over monogamy; and yet the colonial government could not provide leadership either. Instead, in 1918 it sought to absolve itself by blaming the missionaries. There was, therefore, a void which turned into varied opportunities for the "free" women. Some built themselves houses. Others migrated 'from rural areas to the emerging towns' (Waliggo 2002:31). It is here that they joined other "bad women" forced into the city by colonial economic policies, as we shall see in the next section.

1.4 "BAD WOMEN" IN KAMPALA: UNDESIRABLE WOMEN IN THE COLONIAL CITY

In 1892 Colville signed a protectorate agreement. The document outlawed slavery. It also set in motion a process of negotiations that culminated in the signing of the 1900 Buganda Agreement²⁸ – a comprehensive document which fixed the borders of the Buganda Kingdom and laid the foundations of Uganda's modern statehood which was confirmed through the 1902 Order in Council.

Unfortunately, however, the 1900 Buganda Agreement had unintended socio-economic consequences. Of interest to this discussion is its introduction of a system of taxation which was to affect women's livelihoods in diverse ways.

Under section 12 of the agreement, a hut tax was levied on any building used as a dwelling place. Within a week of the signing of the agreement, a new taxation regime was launched to collect hut tax in three ways. To begin with, payment was in cash: each family was required to pay three rupees per annum for each house, hut or dwelling. Secondly, where the hut tax could not be paid in sterling coins and rupees, then its value was paid in livestock, produce, or in labour, in accordance with rates of value fixed from time to time by the Commissioner who represented the colonial authority. Lastly, where the collector had a reason to believe that the house or the hut owner or occupier had sterling coins, he insisted on the said tax being paid in cash (Stock 1897:148-149).

The payment of hut tax proved to be extremely difficult because the amount of sterling coins and rupees in circulation at the beginning of the twentieth century was still very low. These challenges had serious fiscal and monetary implications (Gutkind 1963:56). Fiscally, they hampered the collection of the tax and in terms of monetary policy they led to inflation. For instance, the search for the limited rupees in circulation pushed the exchange rate up to 1000 cowries²⁹ to one rupee (Jorgensen 1981:54).

Most significantly, by the end of 1901, hut-tax payment in cash had become unbearable (Musisi 1999:177); it forced many polygamous marriages to break up. Women were sent back to their relatives' homes where new huts would have been erected to accommodate them. And yet the relatives themselves failed to meet the excess tax obligations which came with the new huts. Consequently, many women were turned adrift by their relatives. Unable to resettle in their families, the rejected women migrated to the emerging modern city (Musisi 1999:178), the *kibuga*.

Southall and Gutkind (1957:1-6) give a complicated historical background of the emergence of the Kampala city centre and how it overtook and consumed the old *kibuga* or royal capital – Mengo.³⁰ They argue that by 1899 there was a Mengo/Kampala that was an agglomeration of native capital, government station, Christian missions' headquarters and commercial bazaar. But progressively Kampala superseded Mengo. The special administrative, sanitary, financial and other measures necessary to deal with the rapid growing foreign town of European and Asian officials and merchants soon distinguished Kampala sharply from the Ganda capital, whose character changed more slowly. The foreign-dominated town of Kampala began to dwarf the African capital of the *kibuga* centred upon Mengo. Kampala, which was initially a suburb of Mengo in which foreigners resided under the watchful eye of the Kabaka, became the *kibuga* itself and reduced Mengo to a mere suburb in the process (which it still is today.)

Put another way, although on the advent of colonialism the word '*kibuga*' meant the royal capital of the Buganda Kingdom when Speke visited it in 1862 (Gutkind 1957: x), by 1906 it had acquired multiple meanings. On the one hand, it meant a space dominated by Europeans and characterised by the concepts of 'residential' and 'administration' (Southall & Gutkind 1957:1-15), imperialism, modernity, politics and power. On the other hand, the noun *kibuga* derived from the Luganda verb *okwebuga*, meaning to walk about, to and fro (Gutkind 1963:9). *Okwebuga* implies 'high mobility', a notion which is fundamental to the understanding of the link between an archetypal city (*kibuga*) and the resident male. Implicit in the notion of *kibuga*, therefore, are issues of sexuality and power (Musisi 2001:178). It is in this context that the *kibuga* changed the lives of the women who migrated to the city of Kampala where they dwelled, worked and claimed 'freedom of movement and acquisition of property, with its potential for sexual autonomy' (Southall & Gutkind 1957:136-152, 158-169). Under these circumstances, confusion over

sexual boundaries and functions, and other social roles, all combined to open up spaces for contradiction and ambiguity (Musisi 2001; Gutkind 1963: 9-257), struggle and conflict.³¹

In September 1899, the *Lukiiko* (Buganda's legislative body) had passed laws to instil order and discipline in the areas of the capital. The law forbade married men and women from travelling to those areas of the capital where foreigners lived, as one way of controlling immorality. The *Lukiiko* appointed a chief to guard the routes to the homes of 'Nubians and Wangwana'.³² It was provided that 'the husband must guard his wife well. Husbands must love their wives and never allow them to go and sleep with the Bulungana'.³³

The 1899 legislation was, however, not sufficient to address the challenges imposed by Kampala, the modern colonial city. In 1906 Kampala was gazetted as a township. Musisi argues that 'Kampala provided an early site for the significant confrontation of capitalist and pre-capitalist social relations and interactions between representatives of widely different ethnicities, races, religions and cultures' (Musisi 2001:178). Working in the city meant that many men abandoned their families in the countryside. As such African employees were encouraged to bring their wives and families to the urban centres (Southall & Gutkind 1957:99). Kampala became a centre for socio-political changes that informed colonial policy. Since 'most proposals for the improvement of African life in towns' (Southall & Gutkind 1957:99) depended heavily upon assumptions about the desirable form of family life, emphasis was placed here.

As a result, by 1906 Kampala had become a cosmopolitan space in which 'a gradual but threatening change in the status of women was taking place' (Musisi 2001:178). For example, 'missionaries and the Baganda men attributed the shortage of agricultural labour and resulting food crisis to a

decline in the country's morality, unnecessary female migration from rural areas and a decline in marriages' (Musisi 2001:177). This rhetoric was consistent with the colonial economy designed to export agricultural produce to the metropolis and import finished goods from there under the theme: 'export to the metropole and import from the metropole!' (Mamdani 1976:35). To ensure economic growth, the colonial government 'de-urbanised' the local population, insisting that men and women stay in the rural areas and produce cotton, coffee, tobacco, tea etc.

Let me observe that the 1907-1908 *Blue Book*, which was an indicator of the health of Buganda's and Uganda's colonial economy at the time, did not raise issues of labour. Instead, the concern was one of how to attract Western capitalists into an area less suited for 'European settlement' (Mamdani 1976:50). It is easy to know why. Colonial policy had provided the necessary remedies to shortages of labour. Where labour shortages existed, the *kasavu* system of corvée labour (enacted in 1903)³⁴ addressed them. Clearly then, at the heart of the campaign against 'unnecessary women migration' – and not men migration – to towns was a gendered fear of the relative freedom which came with women's presence in the city. Roscoe (1921:170) alludes to this fear, arguing that 'women's freedom was identified as a source of Buganda's troubles' and hence the call for 'a stricter control of women' (Musisi 2001:117).

Put differently, ideological undertones masked the statements cited above as the presence of "free" women in the city became a matter of grave concern and a matter of public policy and debate. To begin with, it was observed that women's freedom of movement, with its potential for sexual autonomy, was disruptive in the city. It caused fear among the local elite, Christian missionaries and colonial officials alike.³⁵ As a result, 'all parties adopted a highly moralistic tone in dealing with the women in the city' (Musisi 2001:178)

who were considered 'dirty', 'sick', 'wicked or bad women' (Musisi 2001:171) and thus a general risk to public health.³⁶

Secondly, unlike the French policy which permitted colonial officers to keep mistresses (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1994: 118-119), the British colonial administration in Eastern Africa strongly discouraged its foreign officials from living with native women and using them as concubines (Southall & Gutkind 1957:79). Under these restrictions some officers in colonial service resorted to *malayas*³⁷ (a local word which translates as 'prostitute'). In the process commercial prostitution emerged as a new evil in Kampala (Gutkind 1963:154) which threatened the family. The 'city residents' (who were mainly middle-class Caucasian married men) filed petitions in 1915 calling on the government to deal with the migrant women in the city (Gutkind 1963:155). There were calls for decisive and deterrent action (Musisi 2001:178).

Thirdly, by 1915 there were at least five children of mixed race born in southern Buddu. This statistic was probably insignificant. The colony had significant number of non-Africans, having five children of mixed race could have been ignored. However, it was not. This is because these children were an index of racial miscegenation which shocked missionaries, colonial administrators and traditionalists, forcing them into an action intended to define and police native/non-native, or black/white, as exclusive, impenetrable racial categories.

Consequently, in 1915 action was taken. A new law raised the fine for adultery to 240 rupees. In 1916 the *Lukiiko* outlawed dances which were sexually provocative and encouraged moral degeneration. 'No person,' the law stated, 'shall arrange or take part in a performance of native *tabulu* dance or any other native dance of an indecent or immoral nature.'³⁸ In 1917, there was an order to 'arrest all women who do not live with their husbands'. By

1918, a law against 'fornication and adultery' had been promulgated to constrain women's movements in the city (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1994:75). Furthermore, in 1918 both Catholic and Anglican bishops signed a memorandum calling upon the colonial government to restrain 'the unrestricted liberty by which all are free to travel as they will and under which large numbers of women leave their husband and their country for immoral purposes' (Musisi 2001:180).

Probably there was need for legislation. Musisi (2001:175) writes that urban women 'cohabited or changed lovers rather than marrying; were available for illicit sex; demanded money for sexual services; or openly manifested evidence' of sexual desires and feelings. In some ways such behaviour was a source of health concerns in a period where the public health system was threatened by promiscuity-related diseases like yaws and syphilis (also see Southhall & Gutkind 1957; McCurdy 2001: 212-229).

However, it is also important to see how the discussion wove into the wider debate on how to control urban 'women [who] contravened some if not all patriarchal codes. They started to sit otherwise, eat poultry, eggs, mutton, fish, or grasshoppers; some did not have homes, husbands, or children; avoided male control...' (Musisi 2001:175). These women became a new generation of women, the forerunners, who

...stepped outside their prescribed roles, challenged established power relations, and disturbed male hegemony. They aroused the resentment and disapproval of most men and good women. Later their behaviour provoked negative labelling by the Buganda state, inspired missionaries and church discourses on morality, forced the creation of new colonial regulations, and elicited social stigmatization (Musisi 2001:175)

Clearly Musisi traces the early gendered struggles against non-conforming women in Uganda and the issues which informed such struggles. She shows

how the early attempts to control women's rights forced a coalition of the state, the church and traditional institutions – a coalition which, as we see later, would become harsher under Amin in the 1970s.

In this context then, Musisi's statement helps us to appreciate why in 1918 women's freedoms were identified as a source of rising crime inviting new, harsh and inhumane sanctions. The 'provincial commissioner, the chief secretary of local missionaries of both denominations felt that women deserved punishment just like men since in most cases they were the main offenders'(Musisi 2001: 175). They then suggested whipping as the most suitable penalty to be applied to women accordingly. With that effect, 'a law was approved for flogging women and it continued unabated until 1927 when it was abolished because of abuses by men who carried it out' (Waliggo 2002:41).

In addition, in the 1920s the Church Missionary Society turned its attention to 'those women in the native township who appeared to live as prostitutes and have so commercialised the relationship between men and women that even the clan can do nothing to them' (Gutkind 1963:155). In 1936 the Provincial Commissioner received complaints about young girls living as prostitutes in the *kibuga* in huts near the government township. Radical traditionalists and conservatives lobbied the local administration to deport such women to the villages, or else 'the whole Buganda nation will be ruined' (Gutkind 1963:155). The *omukulu we kibuga* (mayor) ordered occasional arrests in those areas where prostitutes were known to concentrate (Southall & Gutkind 1957:79-88). Music was drafted into the campaign. For example, one song decried women's 'excessive love for money and European dress and advised...men to avoid prostitutes and wanderers in the city' (Waliggo 2002: 38).

This was not because the problem of prostitution was very widespread in Buganda or Uganda. In fact, according to Gutkind (1963:154) 'prostitution had not been a serious problem like the brewing and consumption of liquor'; there were not more than 30 known prostitutes on the outskirts of Kampala. Realistically these could not threaten the 40,000 people who lived in Kampala by 1940 (Mamdani 1976:34) or indeed the 77,000 people who lived in Buganda's capital, Mengo. Yet prostitution became a convenient device which the patriarchy used to scold all "free" women seen in the city.

In 1941 government took drastic action. A law was put in place to provide for the deportation of non-Ganda women suspected of being prostitutes. It provided for the 'prevention of prostitution'. However, the same law decreed that 'it is an offence for girls under 20 to be employed unless they can return to their homes at night' (Gutkind 1963:155, 286). Although such clauses were intended to stamp out prostitution, they were very amorphous and could be used indiscriminately against working women.

The Second World War (1939-1945) provided a temporary respite: it diverted the government's energy and public debate to the war. Also, under the national response codenamed the *War Effort* launched in 1940 (Kakande 2008:85), women were called upon to raise money to supplement the escalating war budget. A report by *Uganda Herald* (Vol. L No. 1795), published on 20 June 1945, indicates that when war broke out, women were openly welcomed into the city where they participated in Second World War-related activities; women's presence in the city and their service in sectors which were hitherto preserved for men were officially sanctioned.

The situation changed after the war. In 1956 the Premier of Buganda instructed the mayor to enforce the 1941 law referred to above. Subsequent

to this instruction the mayor arrested a large number of women suspected of being prostitutes and deported some to their villages. This radical move was part of colonial policy at the time. The failing post-WWII political economy invited policy to force people to return to the rural areas where they would be 'gainfully employed' (Gutkind 1956:155) in the agriculture sector. Other scholars have argued that the deportations reflected the colonial labour policy which preserved employment in the urban areas for Europeans and Asians.³⁹

However, there is another side to the post-war expulsions. Mackenzie (1988:41-53) writes that it was not unusual for women to be told to return home after the war. She gave an example of the 1914-1918 and the 1939-1945 world wars when, upon their conclusion, 'British women were told to go home' since their role in the post-war reconstruction was deemed to be working at home and taking care of their husbands and children. Mackenzie explains that these calls on women to go home indicate the 'common-sense' view that women's natural place is in the home. This is a full-time requirement which calls for 'social discipline' (Mackenzie 1988:41). While enforcing this 'social discipline', in Uganda the same policy served to diffuse the nuisance created by a generation of non-conforming women, who were a product of missionary activities and colonial economic policy.

1.5 CENSURING THE MIDWIFE: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST A NEW GENERATION OF WOMANHOOD

In 1897, Albert Cook and Catherine Thompson (later Mrs Cook) arrived in Uganda to establish a medical structure.⁴⁰ Batebya and McIntosh (2006:61) reveal that 'midwifery was the first medically related career to open to African women' following the 1915 smallpox epidemic. The midwife later assumed additional responsibilities. We learn from Summers that as faith, morality and fertility⁴¹ became important pillars of colonial policy, officials, missionaries and medical practitioners began to regard women's health and education in a

serious light (Summers 1991:806). The policy may be critiqued for being a veiled attempt to politicise women's reproduction.⁴² It however informed a campaign to train midwives and, through them, mothers, in an effort to improve the quality of Uganda's population (Summers 1991:796). Hence the midwife was placed at the centre of a campaign to educate Ugandans about safe motherhood and the dangers of immorality (Cook 1897-1940:325).

As a result, the Maternity Training School (MTS) was founded to train young girls from all over Uganda as midwives and to prepare them to care for women and their babies. Alongside providing essential health care⁴³ the Church Missionary Society acquired an official role as the only trainer of the midwives under supervision from London. This training was restricted to women because local customs prohibited male involvement in the delivery of babies (Batebya & McIntosh 2006:61).

I concede that the MTS was an agency for colonial cultural imperialism. Summers (1991:799-800) writes: 'The MTS was rooted in a more profound European desire to transform African society...since from the beginning of the twentieth century Europeans perceived Ugandan mothers as incompetent...and less fully human'. Inscribed in colonial lingua this reasoning was condescending. The MTS however played positive role in the improvement of maternal health. It supported Ugandan mothers designed appropriate programmes to improve essential health care.

The MTS published progress reports with touching stories about 'happy mothers who survived childbirth and whose babies lived, saved by the midwives'. Pictures showed smiling midwives lined up in their clean uniforms, symbolising 'the best scholars' (Summers 1991:804). The midwives were portrayed as prototypes for a 'new African womanhood', one 'doing yeoman service to their country women and children', as each maternity centre

became 'a potential centre of light and learning' (Summers 1991: 804-805). Put differently, unlike her sister the wanderer in the city who was a product of colonial policies of socio-economic engineering, the midwife was a fine product of missionary education, a lifesaving raft, a gift to society.

This development informed three subtexts: First, the midwife gained respect in the local community. Secondly, given her high status in the African community and her access to medical knowledge, she demanded more rights. She aggressively fought for her position in the social and medical domains. Thirdly, she refused to act as an agent of colonial morality and moreover rejected the British policy on 'women as spiritual, and moral, and reproductive centres of families' (Summers 1991:806).

As a result, Uganda's new breed of 'African womanhood' soon found itself at the centre of controversy and suspicion. First, it was alleged that midwives did not always possess the most stable moral character. Many of them came from homes of doubtful virtue. Thus 'missionaries and officials alike saw midwives not as rational adults, but as fragile, morally suspect, impractical girls' (Summers 1991:805).

The cause of this backlash was political. The midwife's clamour for equality upset the status-quo built on an asymmetrical colonial-colonised, power matrix. It upset normative standards of professional practice in which the African had to unquestioningly obey her Caucasian master. Midwives asked questions and 'talked back to the Europeans'; they 'took vacations from their stations...they were seen as rejecting the tight, narrowly prescribed role of the deferential, self-denying professional imagined by the programme's sponsor' (Summers 1991:806).

Consequently, missionaries, and even the more sympathetic MTS committee, were appalled and forced to take decisive action. A policy was enacted to the effect that following conviction on any malfeasance, the midwife would either lose her professional status or, if suitably repentant, be suspended for a year, retained at the MTS, and reassigned with a lower salary (Summers 1991:806). Secondly, the Native Government was tasked to provide midwives with male guardians who were to protect them; midwives 'were supposed to defer to European missionaries'. Missionaries complained when the midwives proved difficult to dominate, requesting official MTS scolding for the offenders. However, censure and subsequent expulsion were the most powerful tools available to the MTS in its attempt to ensure that midwives continued not merely as competent medical practitioners but also as moral models.⁴⁴ As such the freedom and liberty of the midwife were curtailed. Order was restored although the battle to control career women produced by colonial education was just beginning.

1.6 'CAREER WOMEN, BAD WIVES': THE CONTRADICTIONS OF COLONIAL WOMEN EDUCATION

Missionaries sincerely attempted to raise the status of women through education. The education they offered, however, first single-handedly and later in conjunction with the colonial government did not go beyond preparing women for the domestic life, nor did it differ significantly from precolonial education for women. The methods and philosophy of the missionaries were greatly influenced by the ideologies of domesticity prevalent at the turn of the century in both Uganda and Britain (Musisi 1992:172).

Missionary education offered opportunities to women in Uganda and created a new generation of career women. For example, the Mill Hill Fathers established Nsuube School for the girls in Mukono district. The White Fathers established St. Mary's High School and Bwanda School for girls in Masaka

district (Ssekamwa 1997:220). These schools trained women for careers in the colonial public service.

However, the education offered in girls' schools was not like that offered in Namilyango College, Kings College Buddo, St Mary's College Kisubi and other missionary-led boys' schools. For instance, in 1904 a proposal was tabled at a Women Missionaries' Conference to establish a girls' boarding school to train daughters of chiefs and clergy. However, the proposal was problematic. On the one hand it trained future wives of the elite sons of the chiefs and the clergy. On the other, it emphasised needlework, mat-making, basket-weaving, cooking, washing, and general housework as well as Christian doctrine. Underlying this curriculum was the well-articulated notion that maternal influence was of social value to the colonial state and the Ugandans themselves, as well as to the kingdom of God (Musisi 1999:173).. With "well-educated" mothers, it was argued, there would be less infant mortality, less social dislocation, warm, well-run homes for husbands (servants of the colonial system), and a Christian nation (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:52-66).

This curriculum fused traditional and Christian ideologies. In pre-colonial Uganda, 'boys' and girls' education differed notably'.⁴⁵ Boys were prepared for the public space while girls were trained for the private space. This past arrangement became the very basis for the process of founding Christian girls' boarding schools, where missionaries worked closely with the chiefs. In their desire to maintain the distinctive status of men as elite, local chiefs insisted that boarding schools be established for their daughters.

This is the environment in which the Church Missionary Society established the earliest agency of domesticity, Gayaza High School. Established in 1905, Gayaza was an institution for training daughters of local aristocrats in the

Buganda Kingdom (Sarah Ntiro interview, 20 August 2007). It was started seven years after the establishment of Kings College Budo, which had been established to prepare sons of chiefs to take their proper place in the colonial (modern) economy (McGregor 2006:1). Its beginnings were humble, with only four girls attending class. Later Gayaza became a popular destination for daughters of chiefs, clergy, prominent farmers, and other elites from all over the country and beyond. Gayaza still remains a respectable school admitting pupils from affluent families.

The school had two main objectives: one, it trained 'good housewives and keen cultivators' equipped with the skills necessary to 'keep the family table well supplied' (Musisi 1992:174); two, it trained Christian wives and mothers in order to bridge the gap between Christian husbands and wives (McGregor 2006:7). As such its first headmistress, Alfreda Allen, herself a missionary from England, insisted on teaching 'domestic science, housewifery and hygiene as it was taught in England' (Allen cited in Musisi 1992:182). Implicit in Allen's statement is a colonial civilising mission which transformed Africans into imitators of 'expressions of ...English life' (Musisi 1992:177). On the other hand, Allen's statement, in the light of the above two objectives, demonstrates that Gayaza High School was conceived and established as a school of domesticity.⁴⁶

As if to confirm my claim, Blacklock writes:

...in order to keep a home and to care for a family in a healthy manner, women require a special type of education...[where women are] given the knowledge and the opportunity to keep a healthy home and family, the good effects would naturally be felt also by the men and so by the whole community (cited in Musisi 1992:183).

Against this gendered backdrop, the curriculum at Gayaza included 'cultivation, handiwork, child care, and needlework as well as scripture, reading and writing, arithmetic and geography' (McGregor 2006:7). Musisi

explains how this domesticating curriculum was implemented at Gayaza. She asserts that:

...the girls wake up every morning to dig in the plantation for almost two and a half hours as was a custom of women in Uganda. Practical domestic work combined with religious education to build character heavily outweighed the time given to academic studies. The daily timetable required the girls to wake up at 5:30 A.M. for cultivation and prepare themselves for school at 8:30 A.M. School started at 8:30 A. M. with prayers and Bible reading, followed by writing at 9:15 A.M.; 10:00 A.M. was for peeling plantain for midday meal. Morning classes, which resumed at 11:00 A.M. with Bible lessons (two days a week), geography, or English ended at 11:45 A.M. The afternoon classes started at 2:00 P.M. with Bible study followed by arithmetic at 3:00 P.M. After school the girls fetched water and engaged in other extracurricular activities (Musisi 1992:174).

Starting from 1914, the colonial administration targeted the training of Africans to take up positions in the expanding and modernising economy in Uganda. This led to the revamping and secularisation of colonial education which had been dominated by evangelism. A new education policy evolved to standardise girls' education. Girls' colleges such as Buloba, Nsuube and Nkokonjeru were built. However, there was no radical change in curriculum and pedagogy. The new curriculum provided courses in domestic science and child welfare. Music and art were also taught but mainly as extracurricular activities.

Secondly, traditionalists did not see the need for improved women's education. Joyce Mpanga⁴⁷ studied under this colonial educational regime. During our interview she argued that for a long time many men held the view that education delayed marriage. This was the case because educated girls – and boys – spent more time in school and married much later than the uneducated. But the most important complaint was that a woman's proper place was the home and not away in places of work. 'It was contended that

once a girl learnt how to read and write then that is enough. Beyond reading and writing the girl was only expected to learn home chores and home-making which is to be her career' (Mpanga interview, 29 August 2007).

Also many traditional men wanted women to keep a low profile in society. Hence it was feared that if a woman gained higher education she would become less amenable as a wife. She was prone to showing off owing to her knowing a bit too much (Ntiro interview, 20 August 2007) and this affected marriage. Musisi (1992:185) quotes a Luganda newspaper article of the 1940s in which the author wrote that educated girls were in the habit of rejecting potential husbands, preferring casual liaisons. This is not entirely correct because missionaries in the boys' and girls' schools regularly arranged marriages for their graduates; many graduates from Makerere – the Ntiros, the Mpangas, the Lubegas, the Namboozes, the Kalemás etc – were all married women. In addition, there was no scientific evidence to the effect that educated women were necessarily bad wives.

However, as a result of the aforementioned perception, 'traditionalists' started to undermine women's education in order to diffuse the menace posed by the careerist new generation of women. Ssekamwa (1997:221) gives two Luganda sayings which, round about 1910, were used to attack the notion of educated women, namely *Nnakapanka, ng'omukazi asoma ebbaluwa* and, *Atijja nga Maria omubatize* (translated: a school-educated girl or woman is presumptuous).

In the light of these concerns the conservative media became a sharp critic of women's education. The contention that higher education was an excuse for delaying marriage as elite women preferred to pursue certificates and careers gained popularity. Waliggo wrote about a song popular in the 1950s which carried comments such as:

...who will ever marry an educated woman? Will such a wife know how to cook or look after the children? I pity such a husband and I pity the children of such a man! (Waliggo 2002:78)

This opposition to educated women did not succeed. Women did not abandon their careers; they continued to take up opportunities as and when they opened up. In 1938, twenty-eight girls received secondary education under a new colonial policy which expanded women's education curriculum to include 'academic qualifications'. In 1945, six women joined (Musisi 1992:176) Uganda's revered Makerere College (now Makerere University) from where some pursued graduate courses in prestigious universities in London, thus becoming a new generation of professional women. This was a big achievement for women (Byanyima & Mugisha 2003:17); a new generation of career women – teachers, doctors, etc – emerged. For example, Nambooze became the first female medical doctor. Sarah Ntiro pursued a postgraduate degree at Oxford University (UK) before she returned to become a wife, mother, educationist and legislator. Joyce Mpanga graduated with a master's degree. She fought many battles as she served as a wife, mother, legislator, educationist and government minister. These women⁴⁸ were also activists who championed the cause for women's rights, equality and education.

1.7 REAPING FROM ACTIVISM: WOMEN MOVEMENTS AND THE QUEST FOR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Starting in the 1890s, women in Uganda formed groups to help themselves and the wider community in Uganda. First, soon after Uganda became a British Protectorate in 1894, the wives of colonial administrators, businessmen and Christian missionaries started women's voluntary associations affiliated with national and international bodies. Women held a conference called Women Missionaries Conference of the Church Missionary

Society in 1905 with the objective to plan for women's education (Tripp & Ntiro 2002:24). The Mothers' Union was initially started, in 1908, for the wives of students attending King's College, Buddo.

In 1914 Mary Weatherhead, wife of the headmaster of the college, affiliated the Uganda chapter to the Mothers' Union in London (Brown 1988: 4). Brown observes that by 1926 there were 88 branches of the Mothers' Union throughout the country.⁴⁹ The initial objectives of the Mothers' Union included promoting Christian principles of marriage, upbringing of children and Christian living. In the 1930s and 1940s the Uganda Women's League was active in establishing nursery schools, educating nursery school teachers and building maternity wings in hospitals (Tripp & Ntiro 2002:24).

However, in the 1940s there was a radical shift in the priorities of the women's movement. Women of all races responded to the Second World War (1939-1945) and formed the Uganda Women Emergency Organisation and provided food for soldiers and ambulances, first aid and secretarial services, clothing and supplies that were sent to armies in Africa (*Uganda Herald* 1941:6). Women's participation in the War Effort influenced their 'interest in political activity; in nationalistic politics but even more consistently around women's concerns' (Tripp 2000:33). This was an important development which shifted women's focus from marriage, upbringing of children and Christian living to participation in political activism and activities.

As a result, in 1946, the movement to promote women's rights, the Uganda Council of Women (UCW), was born (Brown 1988:20). Also registered under the International Association of Women, the UCW was a multi-racial, multi-religious collective in which women of African, Asian and European descent participated. According to Brown (1988:28), 'members of the UCW came from well-to-do educated sections of the community around Kampala'. It worked

with other local women groups, such as the Mothers' Union and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), to fight all forms of women's subordination and exploitation mainly regarding employment and accommodation.

Tripp argues that through collectives such as the Mothers' Union, UCW and YWCA, 'women started to set goals ... sometimes with a political purpose in mind' (Tripp 2000:36). They became conscious of their political space and time and fought to determine their destiny. For example, in 1958, women protested the mistreatment of a widow whom clan heads had deprived of her matrimonial home and property after the death of her husband (Brown 1988:18). Secondly, political consciousness led to women's participation in the wider anti-colonial debate which gained pace in the 1950s and culminated in the independence of Uganda. This was the beginning of women's participation in active political struggle which has continued to today.

In 1957 the colonial government signed an agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to train over 3500 women's club leaders who were promoting the club movement in the country (Tripp & Ntiro 2001:26). Initially, women's clubs were important for equipping women with skills in child welfare, agriculture, cooking, nutrition, needlework, hygiene, carpentry, and learning how to write and act in plays. They however also sponsored talks on a variety of topics. For example, African women talked about their experiences in travelling or living in Europe.

Beyond the roles prescribed by colonial hegemony, women's clubs engaged a political agenda. They became important forums for discussing education, voting, inheritance laws, and other such topics. They nurtured strong cadres. For instance, Sarah Ntiro participated regularly in the club meetings before,

and during her time as a legislator during the late fifties. During our interview Sarah Ntiro recounted that:

...during that time I drew the attention of many people [to the fact] that Uganda did not have a family law. And I drew their attention to that fact, but no one was willing in the government to bring a bill which would become an act of the legislative council on family law because it was going to tread on many toes (Sarah Ntiro interview, 20 August 2007)

Ntiro's attempt to upset the balance of power (what she called treading on many toes) was frustrated: she did not get the amendments she wanted. However, as independence drew near, women issues could no longer be ignored. A case in point was when the Uganda Council of Women prepared women to influence public opinion and government policies concerning the family and the home (Tripp 2000:35). The UCW promoted literacy, formal education, leadership skills and civic education. It set up a committee in 1961 to encourage women to take part in community affairs. This committee liaised with the Uganda Association of University Women (UAUW) and the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) to spearhead voter education. The coalition mounted a strong media campaign in which they pressurised all political parties during the elections of 1961 and 1962 to address women issues.

The efforts of women activism were rewarded: all 'political parties expressed their sympathetic concern' (Brown 1988:36). Women's voices altered the texture of party manifestos, policy documents and statements as different politicians promised to address women's concerns with marriage laws, education, and opportunities for 'participation in public life' (Brown 1988:34).

Clearly then, if the modernising and colonising processes gave rise to women's movements, which varied in their makeup, leadership, cohesion and capacity to challenge women's subordination,⁵⁰ the era of anti-colonialism

created a wonderful opportunity for women to link their aspirations to the popular nationalist agenda and movements. This was a good lesson in which women learnt the benefits of political activism. They would later apply this experience to fight dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s. As we see later, this participation placed women at the centre of political negotiations which ushered in the current regime, which has been billed as the most women-friendly in Uganda's history.

1.8 FROM TRIUMPH TO LOSS: WOMEN AND THE STORY OF UNFULFILLED PROMISES

Colonialism ended and Uganda gained independence on 9 October 1962. Under Milton Obote as premier, Uganda's first post-colonial government encouraged Africans (including women) to migrate into the city (Obbo 1980:23). Also, women got voting rights (Tripp 2000:46) and almost every district council in Uganda passed resolutions levying graduated tax on all women over 18 years of age (Tripp 2000:46). Such actions created some degree of equality between women and men, since such rights were connected to citizenship.

This, however, was only a gesture that was part of the post-colonial sloganeering. The end of colonialism did not place women into positions of power. Tripp (2000:48) writes that 'women were told to participate in politics only behind the scenes'. For example, political representation in the new National Assembly was 2:90 in favour of men. The new president and his deputy were men, and the entire cabinet, announced by Prime Minister Apollo Milton Obote, was male. This remained the case until the late 1980s when the ruling NRM reversed it.

Put simply, just like during the time of colonialism, the *Nnamasole*, *Lubuga*, *Nyabingi*, *Nakayima* and others had no space in the new (post-colonial)

political landscape. This should not surprise us. McClintock (1995:354) explains that, all too often, women are typically constructed as symbolic bearers of the nation yet are denied any direct relation to national agency. McClintock's postulation is relevant. First, in chapter two I will show how in spite of this marginalisation women symbolised the new nation through visual art. Secondly, Tamale writes that

Women were granted full suffrage at independence but it meant little in reality. Not only had they been completely sidestepped in all negotiations leading up to independence, but colonialism had systematically alienated them from the redefined political structure. Such alienation was maintained by the nationalistic parties with women playing only marginal roles in decision-making processes and the designation of political priorities at the time (Tamale 1999:14).

Worse still, colonials left behind a complex constitutional system⁵¹ which trapped traditional leaders and the modern state into a marriage of convenience. Muteesa II, the king of Buganda, became the president, deputised by Wilberforce Nadiope, the king of Busoga (another traditional kingdom in Uganda), while Milton Obote became prime minister. This was a political marriage of convenience with inherent contradictions which led to its collapse in 1966 when Obote overthrew the rule of law and constitutionalism. A state of anarchy ensued. Obote's army chief of staff, Idi Amin, wrested power from Obote through a bloody coup d'état on 25 January 1971. Ironically, Idi Amin was not better than his overthrown predecessor. His regime was marked by state-sponsored violence. Approximately 800,000 people lost their lives during the Obote and Amin regimes, about 200,000 went into exile, and millions more were displaced within the country (Karugire 1988:74-90).

Also important for my discussion is the fact that in 1972, Idi Amin expelled non-Africans: bankers, clerks, teachers, artisans and others who had formed the main entrepreneurial classes of Uganda (Mamdani 1976:302-303). All

victims of his eviction had been residents of Uganda since or before the First World War (Hansen and Twaddle 1998:1) and hence were Ugandan citizens. Amin objected to their citizenship and alleged, for example, that the Asian community failed to integrate into Ugandan society and that the Asians committed acts of economic sabotage such as currency racketeering, hoarding, income tax evasion, smuggling, and frustrating government efforts to encourage Africans to enter the business sector. For Amin, alien Asians were manipulating the country's economy at the expense of the Ugandan citizens; hence he expelled them in what he called an "economic war".

Although celebrated as 'Africanisation' of the economy by many Africans as well as Amin's apologists, in Uganda and the Diaspora, Amin's policy was ill-advised. It did not empower the majority. Instead, it placed the economy in the hands of a few illiterate (Mamdani 1976:305), inefficient and corrupt Ugandans – the *Mafutamingi* (literally translated as 'the super-wealthy fat men').

Economic mismanagement aside, the economic war saw the influx of Ugandan women and men into the city and other towns to fill the vacuum created by the fleeing non-Africans in the manufacturing and service sectors. This influx had some unintended consequences as it threatened some norms. To cite an example, a traditional woman in Uganda, we are told by Christine Obbo, takes care of the family and this was the position men wanted her to maintain in the 1970s. However, following the onset of the "economic war", women came to the city and competed for paid labour with men. In the process, it was alleged, they ignored their traditional position in the family and subverted traditional orthodoxy.

The patriarchy responded in the following ways: First of all, it inflated demographic statistics in order to provoke anxiety and raise alarm. It was

alleged that the population of women in towns was much higher than that of men. A writer in *The Uganda Argus* (17 March 1972:2) observed that ‘when you go along Kampala Road during office hours, you cannot miss meeting a group of five young women with one man... secondly, restaurants are filled by women at such periods... women are everywhere in town’. Kampala Road is the widest road in the centre of Kampala, bordered by banking halls and expensive shops. The writer used Kampala Road to make the point that ‘there was an increased influx of women in towns’ and these, the author argued, will become a problem to men. This way the author intended to ignite gender tensions and call for the return of all women to the villages.

Like in the fifties, women were instructed to go back to the countryside. A ‘good woman stays at home in the village’ where she would be ‘gainfully employed’, they were reminded (*The Uganda Argus* 17 March 1972:2). It was argued that ‘women were a wasted resource’ in towns. These views were held in support of the contention that the massive influx of women into Kampala had produced a new breed of less productive female ‘job poachers’ (*The Uganda Argus* 11 February 1972:3).

Clearly, these were excuses employed to exclude women from the “Africanised”, urban middle-class economy. Christine Obbo argues that

[F]ear and frustration in personal or professional relationships with individual women [led] men to lash out at all women, particularly those in wage employment, as sexually loose, ‘dangerous and wicked’, ‘bigheaded’ and ‘immoral’ (Obbo 1980:7).

Put another way, career women were a degenerate class, a public nuisance. Clearly then, by the 1970s fear, anxiety and the attendant battle against career women, whom the post-colonial leaders had invited into the city, had escalated. Most worryingly, like the *malayas* of colonial times, the woman in the city of the 1970s was imagined as a vector of disease and immorality. Being a *malaya* (*The Uganda Argus* 11 March 1972:3) became a convenient

label for all urban women, who were accused of being prostitutes, immoral, sexually loose and wicked. Like it was the case in colonial Uganda, *malaya* became a strong weapon repeatedly used to discourage female rural-urban migration.

As events progressed, fear and anxiety translated into attack. The poem *Song of Malaya* by Okot p'Bitek demonstrates my point. P'Bitek writes:

Tell me
You mayors and clerks
When are you going to destroy
The stinging weeds
From the City Parks?
Don't you see the wild thorns
Blossoming in your compounds
You Presidents, and Ministers,
Liberators of Africa...
You have defeated colonialism and imperialism
...against corruption and decay ...
Can we not free Africa
From this one pest? (p'Bitek 1972:140)

Implicit in p'Bitek's poem is a call to deal with women who had come to 'set towns ablaze' (p'Bitek 1972:140). The poet calls such women 'stinging weeds' and 'wild thorns' which must be destroyed. Drawn from nature, these symbols have been effective since the 1970s in dealing with the threat of non-conforming women. In chapter three we will see artist Godfrey Banadda inventing related symbols to project the threat of women.

In his poem Okot p'Bitek lobbies the state to free Uganda's men from the threat of urban migrant women. He implores Amin's government to intervene and get rid of the city woman, whom he regards as a 'pest'. He shares the perception that 'a good woman stays at home in the village because if she is in town, she is a source of worry to her husband, who therefore needed the state to intervene' (Obbo 1980:7).

Actually p'Bitek resonated men's implorations of the 1970s to which Amin responded and issued Decree No. 16 of 1973. Called 'the customary marriage (registration) decree, 1973', it was intended to make provisions for the registration of customary marriages and for other purposes connected therewith.⁵² Although Brown (1988:4) argued that this decree was significant for the health of society, the penalties it set were overwhelming. It decreed that those failing 'to register their marriage ...shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five hundred shillings...[or] imprisonment up to five years'.

The decree also stated that it would be used for 'other purposes'. This provision is important for my discussion because the other purposes turned out to be morality campaigns which Amin used to control women. Tripp (2001:49) writes that 'as part of his crusade to impose morality, Amin ordered the city streets to be cleared of unmarried women, all of whom were alleged to be prostitutes'.

Amin also invited community leaders, farmers, doctors, leaders of ethnic groups and university professors to debate women's [im]morality. The agenda comprised the following: women's dress code, marriage (who women should marry) and women's mobility (Obbo 1981:9). Consequently, Amin issued another decree to constrain and police women through their appearance and dress.

Traditional fashions for women, and men, in central and western Uganda favour long elaborate garb. Traditions in eastern and northern Uganda permit their followers to wear traditional apparel which leaves most of the woman's body bare and hence permits related fashions. In other words, there is no single definition of modesty and decency when it comes to dress in Uganda.

Located in this heterogeneous dress culture were the women of the 1970s who chose to wear short dresses called *minis*, trousers, high-heeled shoes and wigs. This was an expression of affluence, class and elitism.

Being the symbol of non-conforming women, however, the *mini* became the first target for Amin's draconian laws (Musisi, interview 2006). Like p'Bitek, Amin argued that African women were copying Western ways of dressing. He maintained that when African women wear make-up and Western clothing they look like white women. He thus amended the penal code to criminalise 'certain dresses'. He signed into law the 'decree to prohibit the wearing of certain dresses which outrage decency and are injurious to the public morals and for the other purposes connected therewith'. He outlawed the *mini* and all its accessories (*The Uganda Argus* 23 November 1972) and many women were imprisoned for contravening this harsh law. Although couched in issues of morality and decency, these laws were suspect. As French (1992:20) rightly observes, 'passing laws governing female bodies....dominates women'.

In spite of their dictatorial subtext, Amin's draconian laws were widely welcomed in the male-dominated press where they were lauded for decisively blocking

... our women from wearing the tails of the donkeys on their heads. The sign of these shameless tarts...with long red useless fingernails and a vermilion mouth like that of a wild cat which has dipped its mouth in blood...An African woman's beauty was traditionally judged by her likely child-bearing capability: the more children, the better. In African eyes, it is difficult to separate beauty from usefulness. A useful girl will usually be a beefy one, good at digging, child-bearing, and good at caring for her husband (*The Voice of Uganda* 7 January 1975:5).

To begin with, we see a pointed criticism here associating women with animal attributes. This was a powerful device intended to caricature and undermine

career women. We will see a related device in Banadda's work in chapter three. I therefore suggest that we note its early usage.

Secondly, there is an attempt in this article to sexualise the body of a woman and mass-circulate it through the press. This is what Chadwick (Chadwick 1990:12) called 'a powerful gaze which is structured through men's control over the power of seeing women'. Using this power, *The Voice of Uganda* structured powerful lenses through which the male gaze accessed, in graphic detail, a 'useful girl'. It was stated, for instance, that she must be 'beefy', which in other words means she must possess 'a big bust...with protruding African buttocks' (*The Voice of Uganda*, 7 January 1975: 5).

This attention to the sexually appealing structure of a woman, and its provision for the powerful gaze of a heterosexual male, is in itself problematic. It is intended to remould the woman as an object of male sexual desire. As Betterton would tell us, it intentionally exaggerates the woman's body in order to emphasise her sexual availability (Betterton 1987:154) for the access of the privileged, powerful male. As we see in the next chapter, contemporary artists did not take it up in their work during the 1970s. Their interests were elsewhere. However, we will see, in chapter 4, artists engaging it to deal with the threat of the post-1986 new woman. We will trace it from that point.

We also notice in the above quotation the insistence that women should adhere to their normative domestic roles of child nurturing and caring for their husbands. If in colonial times this view was couched in Victorian notions of respectability and British cultural imperialism, under Amin it underwent a radical shift. Both the press and p'Bitek engaged a leftist, Africanist (post-colonial) discourse to implore Amin to reject Western cultural imperialism, which he did. Based on traditional orthodoxy, they invoked the archetypal African woman as a child nurturer and comforter to oppose the woman in the

city. We are told that the woman's role in society is closely linked to being 'good at digging, child-bearing, and good at caring for her husband'; the beauty of the Ugandan woman was measured by her supply of cheap agricultural labour and usefulness as a comforter to her husband. Again, as will be shown in the next chapter, this strand of the debate did not inform contemporary visual art since artists were preoccupied with other urgent political concerns in the 1970s. However, in chapter five we will see John Bosco Kanuge attending to a related debate through his prints.

This debate affected the lives and careers of urban women provoking interesting responses from them. Some married working women were mistaken to be *malayas* – because of external characteristics such as dress and make-up. Also the category of the *malaya* overlapped with professional unmarried women. Obbo (1970:14) writes that:

[P]rofessional women became further trapped in the double standards that distinguished 'good' and 'bad' women. Here, the issue concerned unwanted sexual advances from male employers as well as familiar biases against 'urban women'. Elite women continued to be troubled by the total lack of distinction in the public's mind between the 'lady of the twilight' and 'genuine decent married women'. The difficulty was partly due to the fact that both categories of women were smartly dressed and wore rings. This made some 'decent wives' vulnerable to abuse from men who [took] them for prostitutes...it was particularly difficult for married, as well as unmarried, women to go out to bars or restaurants and enjoy themselves alone or with friends, male or female, without being suspected of being prostitutes. Some women resorted to advertising their motherhood by packing their children into [cars] and driving around town.

This was not an innocent case of mistaken identity. What we see here is a complex regime of policing women, the arbitrariness with which it was imposed, the suffering it bred, and the survival tactics women developed while getting further trapped into subordinate positions.

On the other hand it was reported in *The Voice of Uganda* of 17 March 1975 that

... town/city women dwellers ... think that to be free from marriage is to maintain more enjoyable life and comfort. Such women are worse and retarding the country's development ... Such women spoil good married and working-class ladies. They cause divorce in married families. They are venereal disease carriers. They are worse than *kondos* [criminal gangs]...our beloved President [Idi Amin] save us from this glaring problem of devaluing sex by the street women in our country. I call upon the President to enact a decree for women to get married at a certain age in order to stop this practice.

Three things emerge from this excerpt. Clearly, as it was the case in colonial times, it conflates marriage with the norm of respectable sexual behaviour in order to define, and reject, women's self-actualisation as illicit, deviant and hence a "glaring problem". In the second instance, Bhasin (1993:8) explains that customarily, a blind eye is turned to male promiscuity and this becomes a whole moral and legal regime that exists to restrict the expression of women's sexuality outside marriage in every society. Without seeking to abate promiscuity, Bhasin argues that this sex-policing and the call to protect those who are married from those women who are unmarried out there is another way of subordinating women and silencing women's voices. This can be said of the rhetoric in the *Voice of Uganda*.

Thirdly, in 1977, like he did in 1973, Amin intervened and 'ordered the city streets to be cleared of unmarried women'. He signed a law called the 'Venereal Disease Decree'⁵³ in which he ordered the security apparatus to mount a crusade to force single women into marriage (Tripp 2000:47; *The Voice of Uganda* 19 September 1977). Amin also ordered men and his military to punish the unmarried women by raping and impregnating them. It was common for military personnel to organise abductions of girls from university, high schools, training centres and hospitals for the 'entertainment of Amin's men' (Tripp 2000:49). It could be argued that these acts were part

of the wider scheme of lawlessness and abuse which characterised Amin's regime. We, however, cannot ignore the way rape became a powerful political restraint on women's mobility and voices. Bhasin (1993:80) argues that rape is an effective political device, a political act of oppression exercised by members of a powerful male class on members of a powerless female class. Tripp and Kwesiga (2000:2) extend this debate showing the way rape was used against women in Uganda. They argue that Amin unleashed an anti-immorality campaign which, among other things, involved the clearing of the city streets of unmarried women all of whom he regarded as prostitutes. To serve this purpose, he used rape as a 'frequent terror tactic'. Put in another way, besides the criminal intention of the military, rape was a state-engineered form of punishment; it had the intended effect of banishing women from urban and public life.

Indeed there is evidence that some of these devices worked. Princess Elizabeth Bagaaya is a graduate lawyer from Cambridge University. Unlike many women in Uganda, she is an aristocrat.⁵⁴ This explains why she studied law at the prestigious Cambridge University in England where many aristocrats, including the king of Buganda, Muteesa II, studied. She was 'Uganda's first woman advocate [to be] received at the English bar' in 1966 and became a practising barrister-at-law (*The Uganda Argus* 30 November 1966:5). In 1971, Bagaaya was appointed Uganda's ambassador to the United Nations; in 1974 she served as Uganda's minister of foreign affairs.

Bagaaya's tenure as minister did not last long. She faced numerous direct and indirect sexual advances from the President all of which she rejected. For example, on 27 September 2009 *The Monitor* published a column describing the sexual advances Amin made to Bagaaya. It is unclear when and where all this took place. What is clear however is the fact that on one occasion Amin sent an emissary called Roy Innis to the princess: "If Amin asks you, will you

marry him?””, asked Roy. ““Out of the question, came the answer”” from Bagaaya. Amin did not take this rejection lightly. ‘In a few weeks, the woman who had months earlier dazzled the UN General Assembly and was being swooned over in world capitals for her ability and beauty was fired. She was thrown into a police cell in the night’ accused of prostitution.

It was, however, Bagaaya’s fight for women’s education which further annoyed the ‘life president’. In 1975 Amin prohibited all embassies from processing overseas sponsorships for Ugandan girls (*The Voice of Uganda* 8 May 1975:1). This action was taken ‘urgently’, all because Amin was concerned that when girls went to study abroad they would practise prostitution. There was no scientific evidence to back these claims neither was such evidence necessary. Clearly the label of prostitute was being conveniently deployed to constrain women’s access to higher education and careers. Most importantly, however, Amin instructed that the money for women’s education should instead be saved and used on essential commodities such as weapons. In other words, women’s education was secondary to Amin’s military adventures, which saw him engaging in conflicts in the Middle East and around East Africa, ultimately leading to his downfall.

Amin’s action was a slap in the face of Bagaaya – the only female minister in the country at the time. Bagaaya believed that ‘women’s education would empower them to fight their subjugation’ (*The Argus* 29 March 1972:5). She called on the state to look into the matters of women’s education, arguing that both men and women should have equal opportunities for education.

Amin repudiated Bagaaya’s petitions. His regime championed a propaganda campaign destined to damage Bagaaya’s reputation. She was declared a ‘sex pervert’ in order to scandalise, humiliate and subordinate her. For instance, *The Voice of Uganda* (10 April 1975:1) published a story accusing

Bagaaya of having had sex with an unknown European at Orly Airport in France. Also, the government newspaper printed Bagaaya's nude photograph taken when the young princess was a model in Britain years before her appointment. The photograph was then discussed by all media houses in Uganda to 'confirm' Bagaaya's immorality.

The anti-Bagaaya campaign worked. Bagaaya's ability to serve the public was doubted. She was accused of being a gold-digger who used government money to purchase gold jewellery and other expensive items. This marked the beginning of the deployment of the strategy of reducing a woman activist to a sex pervert and gold-digger in order to silence her. This is an important lead because, although in chapter two it will be shown that this strategy did not inform contemporary art of the time, in chapter three we will see artists – Francis Musangogwantamu, Godfrey Banadda, Francis Ifee and others – using a related strategy to deal with the menace of independent women activists who emerged after 1986. We will trace it from here. Suffice to note at this stage that Bagaaya was maligned and ultimately silenced – an act which Schiffman and O'Toole (1997) see as part of gender violence. On 8 February 1975 Bagaaya fled into exile where she remained until the NRM took power in 1986.

Thus through open campaigns (like the one against Bagaaya) and decrees (outlined above), Amin's regime completed what Obote had started in the early 1960s. It seriously eroded the local potential for women activism throughout the 1970s. Women were not, however, completely obliterated. Activists resorted to international forums and agenda for meaningful debate on equal opportunities, freedom and self-actualisation. One of these forums, and probably the most outstanding, was the United Nations (UN).

1.9 UGANDA'S WOMEN AND THE UN DECADE 1976 TO 1985: GAINS, CHALLENGES, PROSPECTS

In *The UN decade for women: documents and dialogue* Arvonne Fraser (1987:1) observes that 'in our times, women's role will emerge as a powerful, revolutionary social force'. Fraser's optimistic prediction was part of the world plan of action for women adopted by 125 nations at the historic United Nations International Women's Year Conference held in Mexico City in July 1975. This world conference recommended that a 'decade for women' be established and that its themes be equality, development and peace. In 1975, the UN General Assembly established the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), putting women's issues on the international agenda.

In the wake of the Mexico conference (1975), two more world women's conferences were held in Copenhagen (in 1980) and Nairobi (in 1985) (Fraser 1987:17-156). These conferences drew attention to the resurgent women's movement, made it remarkably international and contributed to creating a powerful, new social force. Though most of the groups in the movement would never publicly admit to being feminist, they carried on the feminist tradition from the suffragette movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the women's movement of the late 1960s.

Fraser explains that right after the 1975 conference the symbol of the UN Decade for Women began to be seen even in remote provinces. It transcended language barriers and it conveyed a simple but powerful message. The symbolism of the dove of peace put together with the women's sign symbolised a powerful revolutionary social force which gained recruits every time that symbol was displayed. These recruits were most probably silent; however, they were watchful. They had a new consciousness and a new confidence. New networks and organisations emerged. Encouraged by the conferences, they formed a kind of women's underground movement

which used both the old techniques of one-by-one political organisation and the new technology that allowed women to communicate easily and quickly across national boundaries. An ongoing dialogue went on between organisations, between activists, and wherever women met (Fraser 1987:33-54).

As the decade drew to an end, women leaders agreed that the momentum generated by the decade had to be sustained by setting realistic goals and continued networking through conferences. Some leaders also recognised that although women were a political force capable of thinking about their own international strategic interests, the potential of that force had yet to be realised. The importance of engendering political will had to be re-emphasised, and the importance of legal equality had to be stressed, to ensure the benefit for all women in the long run (Fraser 1987: 9-17).

Waliggo (2002:138) argues that, in the long run, the worldwide women's quest for equal opportunities contributed to immense achievements; they were partly responsible for what we see at the moment being celebrated as the most women-friendly constitution Uganda has ever had: the 1995 Ugandan Constitution. In the short run however, the women's movement was faced with serious opposition. To demonstrate, in Uganda, the local press warned that

[T]he challenging world of women is thundering with an echo for rights. The typical African male, has seen and feared the rising wave in the trend of women's rights, which he had believed has threatened his own privilege of natural influence (*The Voice of Uganda* 13 August 1975: 2).

We note in the above excerpt that the inequality between women and men was naturalised as a typically African way of life; calls for equality were rejected as a veiled attempt to upset the natural, legitimate and normative

privileges of Ugandan men. Actually these fears were widely rehearsed. For instance, writing in the local daily under the 'Advice-to-Youth' column, James Okanya wrote a poem underlining similar concerns. He explained that the typical African values would be at risk should women's equality prevail (*The Voice of Uganda* 21 August 1975:4). In essence, Okanya questioned the logic of the quest for gender equality and development which were crucial to the UN Decade for Women. For him, it would defy the rules of nature. He argued that men and women are physiognomically different and therefore can never be equal. Equality, for Okanya, would also reverse/invert traditional roles and women would abandon their normative (African) duties of child nurturing and being comforters to men. He then warned: "Who will attend to your Youngie? If you want equality, who will sew a button on dad's shirt?"

Okanya's pleas that women accept the status quo and abandon the international women's movement instilled fear and caused consternation. By 1976 there was widespread fear and anxiety that the quest for women's emancipation was a rebellion against male authority (*The Voice of Uganda* 27 March 1976:4). Some men saw the equality between women and men as unachievable; they counselled women to 'stop thinking in terms of equality, because man and woman will never be equal...if women want equality with men, they should alter differences between sexes, and other biological facts...these are the basic causes of inequality' (*The Voice of Uganda* 19 March 1975:2). Others contended that if women became liberated, men would be the victims. The local newspapers presented cartoons depicting domestic violence against men. In short, the 'results of women liberation' (*The Voice of Uganda* 6 September 1976:4) were considered unacceptable to Uganda's male public; they were perceived as a threat to traditions. Exaggerated reports indicated that since 'the beginning of the women liberation campaign, marriage rate[s]...reduced tremendously...' as women appropriated men's 'only remaining treasure – management of women' (*The*

Voice of Uganda 31 March 1975: 2). Although there is no evidence to confirm these assertions, government was invited to intervene. This debate revolves around traditional orthodoxy in the fight against women's rights.

In 1977 Amin took action. He abolished all nascent independent women organisations linked to UN activities since they were hazardous to society's progress. He decreed that 'for avoidance of doubt, it is declared that with effect from the commencement of this decree, no women's organisation shall continue to exist, or be formed in accordance with this decree'⁵⁵ (Tripp 2000:49). In the place of independent women's organisations, Amin formed the National Women's Council (NWC) which operated under the watchful eye of his spy agency – the State Research Bureau. He ordered that the organisation ensures that women concentrate on their normative roles of 'maintaining discipline in homes and teaching children to be good citizens' (Tripp 2000:49) and providing comfort to men (*The Voice of Uganda* 13 August 1978:12).

Having been denied access to international forums and the right to free expression, some women resorted to underground activity to keep the campaign for emancipation going. They worked with a combined group of Ugandan dissidents who fought Amin's military brutality and state-sponsored repression until 1979 (Tripp 2000:50). In April 1979, Amin was toppled.

Unfortunately, however, the end of his dictatorship did not bring hope. In 1980, women reconstituted themselves to advance the quest for equality (*The Uganda Times* 7 July 1980:4). This new quest for rights was interrupted by the events that followed. In 1981, Obote returned to power through a badly managed election which his party, the Uganda People's Congress, stole. A group of Ugandans, led by Yoweri Museveni, mounted a rebellion against the

Obote II regime.⁵⁶ In this environment the new movement could not effectively organise.

However, these challenges inspired the development of new opportunities. They revolutionised women's lives and their economic activities. As men, the breadwinners, were killed, forced into hiding, or to flee the country, women became heads of households. During their daily struggles to support families, they became resilient. They joined mainstream economic activities (Snyder 2002:76). They also joined the open rebellion to oust Obote's dictatorship.

Women's participation in open rebellion contradicted traditional stereotypes in which a woman was relegated to the backyard of mainstream political debates (Njuba, interview 2006). Initially, Obote insisted that women were mere 'mothers of the rebels in the bush' (Tripp 2000:51). This was valid since the majority of the rank and file behind the rebellion were born to Ugandan mothers. Obote's claims, however, relied on mothering and motherhood and thus grossly underestimated women's potential to fight his misrule. Olivia Zizinga, Gertrude Njuba and Proscovia Nalweyiso, among others, were mothers. They were, however, good combatants, too, who actively fought in battles within the Museveni-led National Resistance Army (NRA).

Women also fought on other fronts. For example, when Tito Okello Lutwa, then head of the Uganda Army, overthrew Milton Obote's second regime in 1985, the country was plunged into further anarchy. The capital city (Kampala) was pillaged, there was no state control and a cross-section of semi-autonomous, gun-toting, trigger-happy soldiers roamed the streets and suburbs. As a result, over 2000 women emerged from the city suburbs in 1985 and demonstrated on the Kampala streets for peace and against the mistreatment of women by the military (Njuba, interview 2006).

On 26 January 1986, the NRM seized power from Tito Okello. The takeover was a turning point in women's struggle for equality. The NRM vowed to improve the status of women (Museveni 1997:190-192) and proposed a programme of affirmative action, probably as an acknowledgement of women's contribution to the success of the guerrilla war that brought the NRM to power (Byanyima & Mugisha 2003:136).

1.10 THE HERALD OF A NEW ERA: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND THE NEW WOMAN AFTER 1986

Affirmative action was first inscribed in the wartime policy document drawn up by the NRM, the *NRM Ten Point Programme (TPP)*.⁵⁷ After the war, it was transformed into the Affirmative Action Bill and promulgated into law in 1989. The bill accorded women seats at all levels of the political hierarchy (Tamale 1999:17). It expanded women's participation in national politics and the economy. In 1988, a Department for Women in Development was established in the Office of the President under a minister of state. This department was responsible for the overall formulation and coordination of policies on women. It worked with other women non-governmental organisations – especially Action for Development (ACFODE)⁵⁸ – to develop policy. In 1991, the Department for Women in Development grew into a full ministry headed by a woman minister, Joyce Mpanga (to whom I referred earlier).

Unlike in previous years, in 1989 the parliamentary elections to the National Resistance Council (NRC) – the new legislature – reserved seats for women, while other women competed with men and won seats (under adult suffrage).⁵⁹ President Yoweri Museveni nominated five additional women to the NRC,⁶⁰ two of whom were “historicals”.⁶¹ In the 1994 cabinet reshuffle, Museveni appointed Specioza Wandira Kazibwe (formerly Minister of Gender and Community Development) as Uganda's first-ever woman vice-president.

The 1996 parliamentary elections saw women participate on two fronts: adult suffrage and affirmative action. One hundred and nine women competed to fill the 39 seats in the National Parliament reserved for District Women Representatives. This represented an overall increase in women candidates and representatives for the first time in the history of the country.⁶²

Alongside participation on the national stage, women took part in political activities that enhanced existent women's grassroots movements in the country. Some of these movements had their roots in the 1960s women 'struggles for equality' (Joy Kwesiga 1995:61), but were ineffective and their accomplishments in the national arena were minimal. However, by 1990, about 50 non-governmental organisations (NGOs)⁶³ had been formed. These adopted radical goals for women's participation in the development of the country (Joy Kwesiga 1995:62).

The NRM regime also revised the education policy for women. Traditionally, women's education remained secondary to that given to men. As we have seen earlier, women's education was officially sidelined under Amin's regime, but the NRM radically changed the situation. It insisted that women and men should have similar educational opportunities – and this was the policy. The number of women enrolled at university had risen to 40% by 1996. The creation of a Gender and Women's Department at Makerere University in 1987 was another giant step ahead. This department hosts international conferences bringing together women from all over the world to discuss women's issues and to inform policy.

On 9 October 1995, Uganda celebrated its 33rd Independence Anniversary. Significantly also, the country's fourth constitution, the *Constitution of the Republic of Uganda* (1995), was promulgated. Unlike earlier constitutions, the 1995 constitution specifically addressed the plight of women. For instance,

the *National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy* insist that the State ensures 'gender balance and fair representation of marginalised groups' on all constitutional and other bodies. Women's victory is also apparent in the constitution's *Preamble*, 19 chapters and 7 schedules where equality is guaranteed. Most specifically, Article 33 provides that:

Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person equal to men. The State shall provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women and to enable them to realise their full potential and advancement. Women shall have the right to equal treatment with men and that right shall include equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities...women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition, or custom. Laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status are prohibited by the Constitution (*The Uganda Constitution*, 1995:30).

Arguably then, the new constitution guarantees all the principles women need in order to spearhead their dignity, rights, empowerment and development. Whereas the past constitutions used sexist language, the framers of the new constitution avoided such language. Uganda also saw women gaining access to the positions of Speaker of Parliament, deputy chief justice, etc. By 2011, out of the 75 ministers appointed in May 22 were female; 10 are full cabinet ministers and 12 are ministers of state. The number rose from 16 in the previous cabinet. Women now constitute 28% of the ministers.⁶⁴

Put simply, when the NRM assumed power in 1986 it heralded a new era for women; it saw a 'new generation of autonomous women' taking up positions in the country's political, economic and social domains. Interestingly, the patriarchy has deployed overt and subtle devices to reclaim and reinstate its authority. As we see in Chapters Three, Four and Five the current contest has interesting aspects which have shaped visual expression.

In conclusion, some women played key roles in the public sphere during the pre-colonial times. Colonialism altered this path. It created Uganda the modern state for which it invented a new form of government premised on the British model. Under this model Christian marriage, draconian regulations and ordinances were used to silence women voices and exclude women from the city and consequently mainstream social, economic and political domains. The postcolonial state inherited this structure. Built on an unstable alliance, however, the postcolonial state crumbled as it immediately descended into anarchy. Located in this volatile environment, women used their ability to organise locally and internationally, which they had gained in the late 1950s, to link their quest for emancipation into national and international political struggles. These developments set in motion battles for self-actualisation fought on different platforms. In the process, several generations of independent women have exploited available opportunities and attempted in different but related ways to upset traditional orthodoxies forcing the patriarchy to respond and reclaim its authority. This is the socio-political environment which gave birth to a 'new generation of women' in the 1980s. Backed by strong constitutional provisions, the current generation has made significant inroads in the country's economic and political spheres. This is the *new woman* who is being challenged by the contemporary visual artists whose works we will see in Chapters Two, Four and Five.

Endnotes

¹ To read more on female power in ancient communities, see Bamberger (1974), Sanday (1981) and Smith (1995).

² There is need to note, however, that this claim is often ignored in some colonial and post-colonial accounts of Uganda's socio-political history. Instead, the history is based on general views about women which, as Beasley recapitulates, have defined women in terms of 'men's needs regarding pleasure, provision of service, and childbearing or as partial helpmates' (Beasley 1999:6). For Coquery-Vidrovitch (1994:45-56) this record of history, and its writing, fails to account for ways in which some women wielded power in 'primitive' societies. Musisi argues that in Uganda's case, it has been fuelled and cemented by traditional mythology, Judeo-Christian traditions, colonialism and its attendant capitalism; it is 'heavily distorted and destructive to our [women's] history' (Musisi interview 13 October 2006).

³ See Coquery-Vidrovitch (1994:34-40) for further discussion of powerful women in Africa.

⁴ Coincidentally, most of the artists whose works I explore in this discussion hail from this kingdom.

⁵ For more on women influence in Buganda see Jjuuko (1993).

⁶ According to Sir Harry Johnston, the Buganda Agreement of 1900 was signed between the British Empire and the Kingdom of Buganda. The agreement recognised the king (traditionally given the title of *Kabaka*) as the ruler of Buganda. As long as he remained loyal to the British Crown, the *Kabaka's* position was protected by the British administration. Although he was to administer the kingdom through a native council consisting of clan heads and county chiefs, the real power lay in the colonial system to which he swore allegiance (Johnston 1902:642). Consequently, the king was not wholly answerable to traditional institutions; the traditional offices, including that of the *Nnamasole* and that of the *Lubuga*, were undermined (Tripp 2000:32).

⁷ See Hanson (2002:29) who argues that the queen mother and other royal women received the estates related to their positions as privately owned land in 1900, but the hierarchy of administrative chiefs established by leading chiefs and the British ignored them. And yet, the queen mother owned property, large amounts of land that had been a material basis for her in the past.

⁸ The Abachwezi ruled the ancient Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom between 1225 and 1500AD, when the kingdom collapsed. Smaller kingdoms of Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro, Karagwe, Rwanda and Burundi, among others, replaced it.

⁹ By the 1870s, Europe felt the need for expansion because of her insufficient markets. The Europeans began to acquire colonies in Africa. The period 1870-1900 was the period for the acquisition of colonies for commerce, Christianity and civilisation (Kiwanuka 1970:4). Colonialism – the implantation of the metropolitan state apparatus in a conquered territory – was not possible without *mediating* this rule through classes physically situated in the colony. In the language of British colonialism, 'indirect rule' became a necessity. A class of collaborators (those who would receive partial treatment in return for helping to maintain law and order) had either to be found among 'natives' or be brought in from other independencies. In Uganda Britain resorted to both measures. This policy was embodied in the Buganda Agreement of 1900, which created a class of notables, which Mamdani calls a 'landed gentry', that was to exist by the grace of the colonial masters and was thus to find it in its own interest to maintain the colonial status quo – in other words to be loyal (Mamdani 1976:1-223).

¹⁰ The first merchant Arabs arrived in Buganda about 1840s from the East African coast. See Reid (2002:6).

¹¹ For more on Buganda as the political kingdom in Uganda see Apter (1976).

¹² For more information on the history of the early Missionaries in Uganda see Mackay (1891), Tucker (1892).

¹³ He wrote a series of letters called Letters to mother (1894) and Letters to father (1900), in which Walker championed teaching on the institution of marriage. He viewed Kiganda marriages as 'not sacred'.

¹⁴ For more discussion on this see Stock (1897).

¹⁵ For example, the old marriage ritual of bride price payment (called *okwanjula*) in which the groom and his family paid before taking the bride was preserved. It is still a cherished tradition. Critics and women activists dislike it. On 8th September 2009 a group of women activists filed a bride price petition before the Constitutional Court. The activists argued that 'the regime of bride price subjects a woman to slavery and servitude, making it impossible for her to move out of an abusive marriage long after it has irretrievably broken down. It is high time the custom is abolished and the woman should be set free.' This argument convinced Judge Twinomujuni who ruled, in a dissenting judgement, that bride price portrays a woman 'as a chattel that can be sold in a market and subjects her to potential humiliation, cruel torture and degrading treatment.' However, in a majority decision the Constitutional Court of Uganda ruled that there were so many causes of violence against women and that bride price is only one of them. The judges argued that there 'is no justification for the court to make a blanket prohibition of the practice of bride price.' For more on the ruling see By Hillary Nsambu, 'Constitutional Court rules in favour of bride price' in the *New Vision* 27 March 2010.

¹⁶ For further discussion of women, divorce and inheritance see Brown (1988).

¹⁷ Law of Uganda Protectorate 10 December 1901.

¹⁸ Law of Uganda Protectorate 20 May 1901 (sale of beer prohibited at the capital) and 19 August 1901 (sale of beer on main routes forbidden). For more see Southall and Gutkind (1957:57-63, 151).

¹⁹ Law of Uganda Protectorate 20 May 1902.

²⁰ Adultery in pre-colonial Buganda was judged by the Katikiro's Court and was punishable by death. See Roscoe 1911:261-262.

²¹ To justify their imprisonment women started to give their children names such as *Sirinagyendidda* (I have nowhere else to go), *Bwekwegayirira* (marriage is constant begging and suffering), and *Simanyi bwalinkola* (I don't know how my husband will treat me). Also, married women saw the ring as a symbol of Christian marriage, and it became a sign of endurance and indissolubility. Patience and endurance was the only advice the wedded woman could receive from her relatives and marriage counsellors whenever her marriage turned sour (Waliggo 2002:32).

²² Law of Uganda Protectorate 18 March 1901.

²³ The *Uganda Whipping Ordinance* of 1903 allowed whipping as a form of punishment to take effect. See No 4 Chap 19 of the Laws of the Uganda Protectorate.

²⁴ Law of Uganda Protectorate 18 August 1902.

²⁵ See Roscoe (1911).

²⁶ For more on how religion affects women's identity see Ruether (1983).

²⁷ For more on the Uganda protectorate see Stock (1897-1940 : 83-117).

²⁸ See Southall and Gutkind (1957:156). He argues that the Uganda Agreement of 1900 was finalised after ten years of negotiation between the British authorities and the leaders of the Ganda tribe. It confirmed the allegiance of the Ganda king to the British Crown and the power of the British representative to tender advice to the King and, in the last resort, to have it accepted and followed. It modified and crystallised the Buganda political structure. The *Kabaka* himself was a minor and for nearly three decades effective power lay in the hands of the three chief ministers of the Kingdom, the *Katikiro* (prime minister), *Omulamuzi* (chief justice) and *Omuwanika* (treasurer), who also acted as regents. They were advised by the Great Council (*Lukiko*), whose composition was for the first time defined, and which was dominated by the great chiefs who in their other capacity were the administrative staff of the *Kabaka* and his regents throughout Buganda. This treaty provided the framework of security within which the urban centre of Kampala grew, and its main provisions remained unaltered until a new agreement was concluded in 1955 as a preliminary to the return of the *Kabaka* from his two years of exile. Agreements were also signed with the kingdoms of Toro (1900), Ankole (1901), and Bunyoro (1933). These were, however, of less political significance.

²⁹ Introduced through trade with the Arabs, cowrie shells remained the medium of exchange until the British replaced them after 1900.

³⁰ The capital was a small area in central Buganda, not more than ten miles wide. From the death of *Kabaka* Suna in 1859 until the arrival of Lugard in 1890, the capital changed at least ten times. When Burton was at Tabora in 1858 the Arabs told him about the *kibuga*, the capital of Uganda. On whatever hill the capital happened to be, there was a centre for Buganda. Speke found *Kabaka* Muteesa 1 at Banda in 1862, and Stanley found him at Rubaga in 1875. When Wilson arrived in 1877, he found the *Kabaka* at Kasubi hill. The capital was built on four hills, Mengo, Rubaga, Namirembe and Kampala, the first three being occupied by the king and the Catholic and Protestant missions respectively. The officers of the Imperial British East African Company (IBEA Co.) chose Kampala as the site for their fort (Southall & Gutkind 1957:1-4).

³¹ For more on urban politics see Bond & Peake (1988)

³² The Wangwana are mentioned in the Law of Uganda Protectorate 4 September 1899. Limited information is available on this group. However in his *Swahili origins: Swahili culture & the Shungwaya phenomenon* (1993) Allen James de Vere writes about what he calls the 'Arab-Wangwana' who inhabited the East African region. He refers to being Wangwana (plural for Mu-ngwana) as a reference to behaviour which, under the puritan Shiraz brand of Islam, was considered 'inappropriate to a Muslim gentleman' (p. 4).

³³ Law of Uganda Protectorate 4 September 1899.

³⁴ *Kasanvu* system was forced labour which was introduced by the colonial state. For more on *Kasanvu* system see (Jorgensen 1981)

³⁵ For discussion on how women in other African cities were a matter of concern see, Allman (2001).

³⁶ For more, see White (1990:6) for her discourse on prostitution and pollution.

³⁷ For further discussion of the notion of *malaya*, see White (1990:15, 16-19, 55-225).

³⁸ Law of Uganda Protectorate 12 October 1916.

³⁹ Kaberuka (1990: 141) argues that according to the 1946 Ten-Year Development Plan, Ugandans would only qualify for unskilled labour but it was the Asians and Europeans who qualified for employment in the commercial sector.

⁴⁰ For more information on medical history in Uganda see Albert Cook (1897-1940).

⁴¹ These three aspects were part of the Social Purity Campaign which Cook and his wife later headed. For more information see Cook (1897-1940 :325).

⁴² For further discussion of how women's reproduction is used as a site of political struggle in and about Africa see Thomas (2003).

⁴³ I say essential because the Church Missionary Society played a key role in the provision of health care. For example, Dr (later Sir) Albert Cook was a member of the Church Missionary Society. In 1897 Cook founded the first hospital in Uganda on Mengo Hill in Kampala with support from his wife Katherine Thimpson Cook. It, however, must be emphasised that Africans could not qualify as medical practitioners. In fact by 1912, the medical workers in Uganda consisted of a handful of European doctors and nursing sisters, some Indian assistants, and an unremunerated group of 'native attendants' (Neema 2002:59).

⁴⁴ See Summers (1991:804-807).

⁴⁵ Musisi (1992:173) gives details on pre-colonial education where 'boys were often sent to prominent chiefs' courts (*ebisaakate*) for political education as prestigious students in waiting' whereas 'the courtly schools (*kigalagala*) prepared boys for their future roles in the public sphere'. On the other hand, in the *bisaakate* 'girls were trained for their future roles in the nation as wives and mothers of the elite'. Musisi further explains that girls were called "*bakembuga* in keeping" that is, wives-to-be of the aristocrats; they could not be referred to as *abagalagala*. To Musisi there was no greater difference between missionary education and traditional education than by missionary education being taught by foreigners (or people who had been in contact with foreigners), with foreign tools of instruction, including the technology of writing, and in a classroom environment but otherwise the fundamentals remained constant.

⁴⁶ For more on this debate see Musisi (1992:197).

⁴⁷ Joyce Mpanga (nee Masembe) was born in 1934 in Mityana, Buganda region. She studied at Gayaza High School and later went to Makerere College in 1953. In 1960 she served in Uganda's Legislative Council. In 1962 she graduated with a master's degree (Joyce Mpanga interview 29 August 2007).

⁴⁸ For more on these and other women, see Byanyima and Mugisha (2005).

⁴⁹ The Catholics had parallel organisations which were later consolidated into the Catholic Women's Clubs of Uganda in 1959.

⁵⁰ See Tripp and Ntiro (2002).

⁵¹ See the Constitution of Uganda 1962.

⁵² See the Republic of Uganda 1973 Decrees, Decree 16, 109-118.

⁵³ For more see the Republic of Uganda 1977 Decrees, the *Venereal Disease Decree*, 1977. Decree 16, 85-89.

⁵⁴ Bagaya is the daughter of His Royal Highness, King George Rukidi III and Lady Kezia Rukidi of Toro in western Uganda.

⁵⁵ For more see the Republic of Uganda 1977 Decrees, *The National Council of Women Decree*, 1977. Decree 1-29.

⁵⁶ For more see Mutibwa (1992).

⁵⁷ The NRM, under the chairmanship of Yoweri Museveni, ushered in a new political dispensation with a new programme that was to form the foundation for a '... national coalition of democratic,

political and social forces that could at least get things to move after years of stagnation, destruction, and utter chaos' (Mutibwa 1992:179). The government developed a Ten Point Programme (TPP), which took its name from the ten issues it embraced: democracy, security, consolidation of national unity, defence, self-sustaining economy, restoration of social services, elimination of corruption, emancipation of formerly disadvantaged groups, redressing errors of the past, and embracing a mixed economy.

⁵⁸ Action for Development (ACFODE) is a non-governmental organisation. It was formed on 19 November 1985. It originated from the 3rd World Conference on Women (WCW) held in Nairobi in July 1985. This conference was celebrating the end of the Decade of Women launched in 1975. ACFODE started as an indigenous action-oriented non-governmental organisation created to stimulate, energise and catalyse action on women's issues and improve their status in Uganda. For example, shortly after the NRM took over in 1986, 20 leaders of the National Council of Women (NCW), ACFODE and other NGOs paid a courtesy call on President Museveni. They lobbied for women representation in the government and positions of leadership (Tamale 1999:20).

⁵⁹ The two women were Rhoda Kalema (representative for Kiboga county and Victoria Ssekitooleko (representative for Butembe county, Jinja).

⁶⁰ These include Janat Mukwaya, Gertrude Njuba, Olivia Zizinga, Betty Bigombe, and Beatrice Lagada.

⁶¹ Some women were nominated to the NRC because they participated in the 1981-1986 war known as the guerrilla war under the leadership of Yoweri Museveni. The nominees were called "historicals" and they included Gertrude Njuba and Olivia Zizinga.

⁶² The ratio of 2:90 to which I referred earlier remained static in the period 1962 to 1971, when Amin toppled Obote's first government. The numbers changed in 1986 after the NRM rebellion. Fifty women joined the first post-war parliament – the National Resistance Council – in 1986. Fifty-one were in parliament in 1996; the number doubled to 101 in 2006 (Jamwa 2007:4).

⁶³ The Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO) and Action for Development (ACFODE) were the most prominent of all. For more see ACFODE 1995.

⁶⁴ For more see Kiwawulo (2011).

CHAPTER 2

The evolution of Uganda's contemporary gendered art: institutions and actors

Uganda's contemporary visual art did not derive directly from the country's rich tradition of craft making. The country's formal education nurtured the skills deployed in the making of its gendered art. In this chapter, I trace the roots of the gendering of Uganda's modern art. I discuss the institutions and actors who have shaped the evolution of gendered modern art in Uganda. I analyse how as a new form of visual expression Uganda's contemporary art evolved from local and external resources and energies and how it has followed a complex path shaped by the region's colonial and post-colonial histories. This analysis explores the wider trajectory in which the artists and artworks to be examined in chapters three, four and five are located.

2.1 COLONIAL EDUCATION AND THE BIRTH OF GENDERED ART? FLORENCE KAWALYA'S *RETURNING HOME*

Florence Kawalya was an art student at Gayaza High School when she painted her *Returning home (3)* (1935) – a work which is probably the only surviving example of the earliest forms of modern painting in Uganda. It captures a lush green landscape interrupted by isolated trees and undulating hills cast against an open blue sky. The presence of huts in the background suggests a rural countryside. Its serenity and silence allows us to concentrate on the foreground where we see tall grass from which a small snake emerges to the left crawling towards a doorless hut where it joins a much bigger snake coiling while leaving its head in the entrance. If a well-marked footpath would suggest that the hut was used for human habitation, the presence of the two reptiles seems set to change that. They block access to the hut rendering it uninhabitable; they pose a threat for a returning man followed by a woman carrying a large pot on her head.

Done in the in the mid-1930s, *Returning home* foregrounds important issues. First, the artist contrasts a secured home, to the right, with a number of unsecured homes while highlighting the problems they pose for human habitation. Probably this was a comment on the need to secure homes in order to render them habitable. It could also have been a critique on the economic classes existing in the countryside at the time. The colonial economy, but mainly the new land system introduced through the 1900 Buganda Agreement, created a class of landed aristocrats who dominated and exploited the landless masses in the countryside, resulting in riots in 1928.¹

Secondly, Kawalya's use of geometric patterns, limited realism, flat and raw colours renders her message with unambiguous clarity and boldness. But it does not testify to a mastery of skill in the application of materials. This is possibly because the painting was made by a young girl in the early stages of her career. The artist's technical deficiency and inexperience do not, however, obscure the position of the painting in the history of contemporary visual art in Uganda. *Returning home* demonstrates the role of colonial education in the shaping of contemporary art in Uganda: the strategies that instructors used, the way they were received by their students and the new forms of visual expression which emerged.

Thirdly, by 1900 colonial education had been introduced in Uganda. The emphasis was on reading, writing and arithmetic (the 3 Rs). This painting confirms that, by the 1930s, art had been added to the curriculum. Learners used foreign materials and visual vocabulary to interpret local (mainly mundane) themes and subject matter drawn from local traditions and idyllic countryside sceneries. Although Kawalya used gouache, her theme is identifiably local.

Colonial education in Uganda was criticised for training its recipients to copy Western (read British) mannerisms. In his *Ideology of Buganda* (1935) Kabaka Daudi Chwa argued that

instead of the Baganda acquiring proper education at the various schools and of availing themselves of the legitimate amenities of civilisation the young generation of this country are merely drifting in wholesale 'foreignisation' of their natural instincts and is discarding its native and traditional customs, habits and good breedings² (Chwa 1935: 108)

Chwa's critique needs to be explained. It confirms that the earlier project of linking education to the imitation of western mannerism was now being openly rejected by the beneficiaries (Chwa received British education; all his successors accessed education in England). This was probably part of the anti-colonial stance which developed in the 1930s before it radicalised the ideas of writers and playwrights like Uganda's Okot p'Bitek³. This criticism misses the fact that colonial education did produce excellent teachers, agricultural assistants and others whose direct contribution to the country was undeniable. In the previous chapter, we saw how midwives improved maternal health. However, Chwa's remarks served their purpose, namely to demystify colonial education. It is also correct to say that some graduates of Western education developed an insatiable appetite for Western lifestyles; they still do. It is this appetite, and attendant copying of Western lifestyles, which was dubbed foreignisation – a pejorative term used to criticise ways in which Western education alienated its beneficiaries.

Intriguingly it can be said that Chwa's concerns did not affect the emerging contemporary art. Like other students of colonial art education, Kawalya adopted Western ideas; she explored a style and palette reminiscent of Paul Klee's works (Kakande 2008:59). This influence can be traced back to Geraldine Fisher (also called Geraldine Mary Gordon Baines). Geraldine Fisher was a British missionary, artist and art educator. Born in Uganda in 1907 to missionaries, Arthur Fisher and Ruth Hurditch (to

whom I refer again in a moment), Geraldine Fisher graduated from Croydon College in England. She taught art classes at Gayaza High School in the 1930s – the time when Kawalya was a student there. According to her son Martin Baines, Geraldine Fisher enjoyed interpreting the works of Paul Klee; they helped her build her compositions and colour.⁴ Looking at Kawalya's work, one can certainly confirm that Fisher not only admired Paul Klee's work, and used it as a point of departure for her own work, but she also introduced it to her students some of whom took Klee's style and visual vocabulary into their own works.

On the other hand Kawalya's *Returning home* is testimony to the earliest traces of individual creative enterprise. It is not a direct copy of Western visual vocabulary. Rather, it testifies to an intricate mixture of Western material, visual language and local ideas through which a local form of visual expression evolved. This is not merely an unmediated hybrid, but rather a deliberate process in which an artist transforms a traditional sign⁵ appropriating it to new usages. In this process, the traditional sign gains a vast array of new (and politically constructed) meanings through processes of art making and visual expression shaped by formal education. Here lies the early traces of an interesting form of visual expression which Trowell, as we see in a moment, explored, developed and introduced into the university curriculum at Makerere University (formerly Makerere College) where many contemporary visual artists in Uganda were trained. In other words, contrary to the popular view held by many scholars (especially Sanyal 2000), this important characteristic of Uganda's contemporary art did not start with Trowell although it is under her instruction that it entered the University curriculum at Makerere University.

In addition, in the centre of Kawalya's work appears a couple dressed in fabric material, the brown colour of which recalls bark cloth⁶.

The use of bark cloth has survived all the landmark changes that have shaped Uganda from pre-colonial times up to today. By the mid-1930s, bark cloth had lost its position as the prime source of clothing to cotton cloth. It gained significance in cultural rites, in traditional ceremonies and for the abject poor who continued to wear it. In this respect, it could be surmised that Kawalya's painting reflects the artist's commitment to (and celebration of) the traditional use of bark cloth. It could also have been a reference to the abject poverty common in the countryside at the time (Kakande 2008:103-104). Beyond speculation, however, is the artist's use of dress to define and affirm the norms of masculinity and femininity. This strand is important because it opens the debate on the use of traditional fashions such as the *busuuti*, *ssuuka* and *kanzu* in Uganda's art to define sexuality.

2.1.1 Dressing sexuality? *Busuuti*, *ssuuka*, *kanzu* and their positions in the power hierarchy

Historically, dress and dress codes have been powerful devices for defining sexuality in Buganda and Uganda. The boundary separating women's and men's costumes and fashions is often policed. In pre-colonial times, men and boys in Buganda (the region where Kawalya hails from) wrapped themselves in bark cloth toga-wise and tied a knot on one shoulder in a manner similar to what we see in Kawalya's painting. Adult women wrapped their bodies in bark cloth from below the armpits downwards to the ankles and fastened it at the waist with a belt, while girls would wrap themselves from the waist down to the knees. The breasts would often be exposed and this would not be regarded as immodest or a taboo. The woman in Kawalya's work is not dressed in a similar fashion. Instead, she wears a sleeveless dress tied at the neck. To begin with, this confirms that the artist's reference to local traditions was not constrained by traditional mores; appropriation and invention were part of the process through which she realised her work.

The Makerere University Main Library has preserved an interesting photograph (4) (1903) which alludes to Uganda's early dress codes while raising the issue of colonial [im]modesty which is relevant to my debate. Taken in the early twentieth century, the photo depicts Ruth Hurditch (Geraldine Fisher's mother) towering above a group of African girls holding pieces of paper to their chests. Hurditch was a member of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and arrived in Uganda in the 1870s. In 1902, she married Arthur Bryan Fisher, another member of the CMS and taught in different Ugandan schools before she retired in England in 1914 where she died in 1955. It can be deduced from her career that the photograph depicts Hurditch with her students, although the symbolism of the pieces of white paper remains unexplained,⁷ it is unclear where the photograph was taken and to which school the girls belonged.

The photograph captures Hurditch and the young girls posed in a tableau, motionless, with a static gaze, rendering the whole composition frozen in space and time. The composition and contrasting tones permit us to easily contrast a European missionary instructor with her African students. She dominates the space with her Victorian dress code inscribed in a hat, gloves and a neat long-sleeved dress. She sharply contrasts with her African students wrapped in stiff material, probably bark cloth, with their full round breasts uncovered, save for one girl on the extreme right of the picture who is draped in a cotton cloth running to her ankles in a manner that resembles a *ssuuka*.

Ssuuka derives from the Swahili word *shuka*, which means cotton cloth (Kivubiro 1998:227). Cotton cloth came to Uganda in the middle of the eighteenth century when the Arab traders started to explore the East African hinterland for ivory and slaves. The introduction of cotton cloth led to the development of the *kanzu* and the *ssuuka*. The *kanzu* is donned by men. Made of white cotton cloth, it is a collarless, long-sleeved shirt worn to cover the entire body. Kivubiro argues that on the advent of colonialism,

the British introduced a 'European coat as [a] formal and respectable' dress code (Kivubiro 1998:228). The coat began to symbolise elitism, formality, civilisation and respect – in short, modesty. Kivubiro further explains that by 1905, the coat had been added to the *kanzu* and adopted as the formal attire for the Baganda elites.

The *ssuuka* was used in a manner which recalled the use of bark cloth to which I referred earlier. Women wrapped their bodies in cotton cloth from below the armpits downwards to the ankles and fastened it at the waist with a belt, like the girl we see to the extreme right of Hurditch's photograph. As we notice in the photograph, breasts and arms remained exposed. This exposure of the upper body, however, contravened the norms of colonial modesty as defined by the metropolis.

Alfreda Allen, whom I have referred to in the previous chapter, argued that the girls were barely clothed and hence indecent (Kivubiro 1998: 227). Consequently, she innovatively transformed the *ssuuka* into the *busuuti* to offer the girls some decorum, and to redefine and capture the notions of colonial modesty. As Kivubiro writes, 'a Victorian bodice was added to [the *ssuuka*] by the Anglican missionary teachers to enable students to cover their upper bodies particularly their breasts, considered indecent by the Europeans' (Kivubiro 1998:228). The *busuuti* became Gayaza's school uniform. Unlike the *ssuuka*, the *busuuti* has a square neck, and short sleeves. It is worn to cover the upper body and the arms down to the elbows. It is wrapped around the body to the ankle and fastened at the waist with an elaborate long belt. During our interview, Musisi explained to me that a complete *busuuti* consumes fifteen metres: seven metres for the dress, three to five metres for the undercoat (*kikoyi*)⁸ and three metres for the belt. She wondered how someone, especially a young girl in a country on the equator, could wear 15 metres of cloth (Musisi, interview 2006) and attend school. Questioning the practicability and convenience of the *busuuti*, Musisi rejected the assumption that such a superfluous garment

suited school-going children in Uganda. Admitting Musisi's argument would ignore the fact that issues of practicability and convenience were immaterial to the hierarchical power embedded in the Victorian/Edwardian concept of decency which colonial modernity unleashed. Callaway (1992:223-224) argues that although the British imperial dress code may have communicated a sense of self-discipline and assumed social superiority, its ultimate function was to uphold the balance of power. He argues that 'dress became a visual marker for distinctions of race, gender and social rank.' Callaway's critique confirms that Hurditch's dress code in the photograph was intended to reinforce an asymmetrical power discourse in which the colonials and the colonised were involved. It also confirms that Uganda's colonial dress codes, just like their pre-colonial antecedents (seen in *Returning home*), carried political biases.

The *busuuti* still exists today. It has been adopted by the mainstream as a cultural dress and is celebrated nationally. Although no longer used as a uniform at Gayaza High School, its ideological biases have been maintained in Uganda's post-colonial history. It is rigidly enforced that an ideal adult woman wears a *busuuti*. As we will see in the rest of this thesis, these ideological biases have permeated Uganda's visual arts where the *busuuti*, alongside dresses and the *ssuuka* have been deployed in many gendered artefacts to construct sexuality, appropriate hierarchical power structures, and to define and confine women.

2.1.2 Walking sticks and pots as symbols of patriarchal authority

The man in Kawalya's painting carries a walking stick while a woman carries a pot. Arguably, Kawalya's painting is the earliest surviving example of artworks in which these symbols were used to distinguish gender roles. In the rest of this study we will see them being deployed by different artists in a similar way. I will discuss the symbolism of the pot later on in my discussion of Trowell's instruction.

By the mid-1930s conservative traditionalists considered it inappropriate for women to carry walking sticks. Margaret Trowell writes that

...one evening we passed the house of the old Mohammedan sheik, who had been as far as Mecca, and so had a right to set himself up as an authority on behaviour. At Lweza my husband and I carried walking-sticks but our friend had none. The sheik looked at me with scorn. What, you, a woman carrying a stick and your stranger has none? A bad custom, Mother it is indeed' (Trowell 1957:92).

We learn from the excerpt that although it did not bother her husband that she carried a walking stick, in the local context it was a taboo for a mother to carry one. It needs to be explained, however, that this was not a unique experience in which a Muslim patriarch had policed Trowell's behaviour (as Trowell seems to imply). Rather the sheik was delivering a message inscribed in the shared stereotypes and conventions intended to preserve and sustain patriarchal authority. Put in other words, the messenger was a Muslim sheik. However, his message is a generally accepted view. This is because symbolically walking sticks in particular, and household sticks in general, are associated with the man's position as owner and defender of a home. There is a Luganda⁹ proverb which says that *Omuggo oguli ewa muliranwa, tegutta musota guli mu nju yo* literally translated: a man must always have a stick for use in the defence of his household from snakes. Thus although there is no clue in the painting to suggest that he is aware of the presence of snakes in his homestead, it can be said, with certainty, that with a stick in his hand the man in Kawalya's painting will confront the reptiles in his house and protect his woman and property. In light of this Luganda proverb the Muslim sheik's statement, just like Kawalya's painting, confirms that sticks define male power and obligations in Buganda. That Margaret Trowell, a colonial woman, was unaware of this norm does not alter this reality.

Like many other contemporary women artists, Kawalya probably abandoned art practice after school due to family obligations. Mary Wilson was the first female to graduate from Makerere Art School in 1951. She,

however, has been inactive since she got married in 1951. Asked why, she said: “art nze nnamuvaaka nentandika kuzaala buzaazi” which means “I gave up my career in art in order to raise my children” (Wilson, interview 2007). Wilson’s statement affirms that family obligations, mainly child nurturing, can impede the development of art careers for some women in Uganda although in the case of Kawalya this cannot be confirmed without further evidence.

Kawalya’s *Returning home* is nevertheless significant for my debate. It serves as the earliest example demonstrating how the use of polyvalent traditional symbolism, bearing a multiplicity of meaning, including those related to gender, entered Uganda’s contemporary art through colonial education. As I show in the next section, this is the thread that evolved through Margaret Trowell’s teaching starting in the late-1930s and is currently used to diffuse the problem of career women.

2.2 MARGARET TROWELL AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ART IN UGANDA

Geraldine Fisher returned to England in 1939. Before her departure, she had joined Margaret Trowell and the African Art Society to host the ‘first exhibition of African art in Uganda at Nnamirembe Synod Hall on 29 - 30 July 1938’ (Trowell 1957:105). From this point until the 1950s, Margaret Trowell took up the task of developing modern art in Uganda.

2.2.1 Circumventing domesticity: Trowell and the colonial ‘codes’ and ‘inflexible rules’

Margaret Trowell was born in London and lived from 1904 to 1985. She received her primary education at St Paul’s Girls’ School, Hammersmith in London. In her teenage years she longed to be ‘an artist, a missionary, a teacher and mother of a large and demanding family’ (Trowell 1957:28). This prompted her to attend the Slade School of Art where she trained as a painter under Professor Henry Tonks (1861-1936), between 1924 and

1926. The teaching under Tonks was based on academic principles, which emphasised exact and scholarly observation (Kyeyune 2003:76). Tonks hoped that Margaret Trowell would pursue her career in painting, but she did not. Instead, Trowell enrolled at the Institute of Education at the same University from 1926 to 1928 to study Art Education. By doing this Trowell wanted to fulfil her other vocation, namely to become a teacher. Here she met Marion Richardson, a teacher who re-shaped her teaching career (Trowell 1957:28).

If Tonks had emphasised the production of art based on direct observation and academic principles, Richardson was fascinated by the way African sculptures possessed an inner life of their own, which could influence the instruction of art to children (Trowell 1957:28-29). Richardson thus did two things simultaneously: (i) She trained Trowell to learn to appreciate non-Western cultures; (ii) she introduced Trowell to the link between African art and the teaching of modern art. These are the two aspects which Trowell explored as she developed a curriculum for college art education in Uganda (Sanyal 2000:65).

While at the Slade, Margaret Trowell met Hugh Trowell, a medical doctor from St Thomas Hospital. We learn from Trowell that Hugh Trowell had a fondness for Africa. For example, he had decorated his room with a large map of the African continent. Margaret and Hugh Trowell got married and travelled to Africa in 1929 (Trowell 1957:29) where Hugh Trowell was to join the colonial service first as a medical officer in Kenya and later as a medical officer and instructor at Makerere College in Uganda. Margaret Trowell believed that this trip was a mission for her spiritual calling that she could not refuse.

While in Kenya, the couple faced 'old colonial policies' which threatened their careers in the following ways: Upon arriving in Kenya in 1929, the Trowells were confronted with a set of colonial 'codes' and 'inflexible

rules'. For example on arrival at Boma¹⁰, newcomers had to learn strict codes of colonial behaviour and abide by them (Trowell 1957:21). These included dress codes and the requirement for women to work only in the home. Nochlin (1988:2-3) argues that the confinement of women to domestic and nurturing functions is part of the ideology which veils overt power relations making them appear natural and logical. Consistent with this ideology, and its inherent power discourses, women who would marry men drafted in the colonial civil service would be 'suddenly transplanted from an active life in England' to a domestic life interrupted by 'morning tea-parties', squabbles and family feuds which were common in the Boma (Trowell 1957:17-19). Secondly, it was ill advised for any officer recruited in the colonial service to get married before he completed his tenure in Africa. Margaret Trowell writes that 'an officer seldom married until he was getting towards the end of his twenty years' service'. Africa was not considered a hospitable place for a white woman, let alone children; colonial service was meant for unmarried men who were ready to lead 'a very artificial life' and face the challenge of raising a 'family on a pension after retirement' (Trowell 1957:34-35). Those, like her husband who entered into marriages, faced difficult choices of leaving their wives back in England or resigning from colonial service. In her case, Margaret Trowell would have stayed behind in England as a housewife while Hugh Trowell relocated to Africa as a doctor or resigned. As Margaret Trowell puts it:

...it was our chief problem when we looked to the future as we could not see that such a separation was right, yet we did not believe that we should resign after a few years' service (Trowell 1957:35).

These colonial policies were 'deplorable' for Margaret Trowell (Trowell from here onwards) as they threatened her wish of becoming a 'mother of a large and demanding family' (Trowell 1957:28-29).

It is, however, particularly interesting to note the way Trowell circumvented these challenges in order to pursue her chosen career path. First, she

joined her husband in Africa although she was expecting their first child. Secondly, she broke the domestic code. She argued that;

...no woman can be expected to be at her best if she is tied all day long to her house and children, we all have to get away sometimes. If a woman has been given a professional training and has learnt to love her profession it is asking a very great deal of her to drop it all in order to run the house and potter around doing only apparently trivial domestic jobs (Trowell 1957:36).

It is clear from the above excerpt that Trowell considered housework to be inimical to the development of a woman's career. Hence she freed herself by finding helpers to do the household chores, to wait on her and accompany her on her art collecting missions (Trowell 1957:80-89). She may be criticised for turning African men (the so-called shamba boys or *bboyis*) and women (called the *ayahs*) into her domestic workers while freeing herself from such bondage. She limited the career prospects of her native subjects while freeing her hands to pursue a career as a researcher and art educator. This should not surprise us. Save for the urban-based Africans, natives in Uganda (as indeed it was the case elsewhere) were considered to be subjects and not citizens (cf Mandani 2004) entitled to the same rights as Trowell.

2.2.2 Margaret Trowell: From house wife to career woman

After freeing herself from the shackles of domesticity, Trowell embarked on her career. Between 1929 and 1935, she studied East African cultures starting with the local Akamba community¹¹ where she collected artefacts and taught painting. Her Akamba students would have done work based on diverse African themes, but it is lost leaving no trace.¹² I, however, found a reproduction of *The farmer (5)* (1929) in Kyeyune (2003), a series of paintings one of which (top left) needs specific mention.

Done in 1929, this work represents African rural scenery. The way the artist varies the sizes of the objects and uses colour creates a sense of

depth demonstrating his access to Western visual vocabulary and thus the influence of Trowell's instruction. He, however, does not attend to the rules of anatomy and shows little skill in the handling of media. He plots figures in the picture plane whose masses and locations symbolise their relative importance. To demonstrate, the artist depicts the over-sized torso of an identifiably male figure tending to an animal in the central foreground. Among the Akamba, the family (called *Musyi*) plays a central role in the community. A family is woven into lineages or clans, called *mbai*, that constitute the Akamba community. Like many traditional families, the Akamba family (and community) is hierarchical. The man (called *Nau* or *Tata* or *Asa*) is the head of the family. He controls all economic activities: trading, hunting, farming and cattle herding. Men cherish polygamy owning several women who remain abandoned in case they die. Each of the women in a polygamous marriage receives a plot of land, and farming tools, upon joining her husband's household, from which she produces food for the family. Clearly, this artist referred to this traditional polygamous Akamba family. Two female figures join the scene from opposed directions. That they are dressed in the same way and holding a tool each – probably farming implements – and thus performing similar activities in the picture would confirm that they are of equal rank and status in the household: they are co-wives. The painting thus shows that, like Mary Fisher at Gayaza High School, the art education Trowell offered to her Kenyan students encouraged the exploration of polyvalent traditional themes some of which represented traditional appropriations of power in a domestic economy.

In 1935 Trowell relocated to Uganda when her husband was posted there. She extended the research in African art which she started while in Kenya, writing on diverse aspects of Uganda's material culture. She revamped and headed the Uganda Museum which had stalled since 1900 when Sir Harry Johnston initiated it. With help from government, and Makerere College, she stocked the museum with artefacts representing the 'heterogeneous population of Uganda' (Trowell 1957:77-79) She

published the first comprehensive catalogue of Uganda's traditional artefacts – called *Tribal crafts of Uganda* (1953) – alongside other publications in the local press, journals and books.

Trowell hoped that her research, the museum and publications would help the teaching of art through two processes. On the one hand she wanted to expand her own knowledge of the local cultures. With this knowledge Trowell hoped to develop a uniquely African pedagogy different from the education system offered by religious institutions. On the other hand, she hoped the presence of such materials would help her African students to take pride in their past achievements, so that their future could be built on a ground with roots in the past and its cultural achievements (Kyeyune 2003:74).

This ambitious project required perseverance, patience and tough negotiations. Trowell had all these qualities: she was 'an undaunted fighter, who managed to plant the Art School in a University structure against much opposition from the administration' (Kyeyune 2003:101). She 'had particular gifts and ... instruments of approaching even ... [the most] ... diehard colonialists ... [she was] a knowledgeable leader' (Maloba interview, 2001 cited in Kyeyune 2003: 101).

2.2.3 Trowell and the Makerere Art School

Trowell's art classes were initially humble: civil servants took art lessons on the veranda of Trowell's house at Mulago Hospital¹³ and later in a thatched hut in the garden when she moved from Mulago to Lweza (11km on the Entebbe Road). They continued until Trowell succeeded in convincing the college administration and the colonial government of the need to teach art to college students.

Trowell earnestly began teaching art in Uganda in 1937 following an account she saw in the *Listener* of a successful exhibition of the work

which Kenneth Murray's Nigerian students had put up in London. She writes that 'I decided that if they could do it there [in Nigeria], we must do it here [in Uganda] too' (Trowell 1957:103). That week, Trowell went to the principal of Makerere College, D. G. Tomblings (principal from 1925 to 1939), and lobbied to start 'experimental classes'. The principal gave permission to any student who wanted to go to Trowell's house on Wednesday afternoons and study art mainly as a 'hobby'. Trowell's students did needlework, painting, sculpture and drawing.

A lot of work was produced at this stage because Trowell's students learnt with excitement and enthusiasm: 'they got tremendous pleasure out of their work' (Trowell 1957: 104). It is unfortunate that this art completely disappeared. Trowell, however, explains that initially, her students' work was completely

... unsophisticated with a freshness and vigour which was quite unique, resulting from a group of grown men coming together to do something which was quite new to them, with no complications or pre-conceived ideas of what a picture ought to look like, for they had practically seen none before (Trowell 1957:103-104).

Aware that the students at Makerere came from schools like Kawalya's Gayaza High School, one could argue that Trowell's statement was probably an exaggeration. It is nevertheless a good point of departure for my discussion. Trowell suggests that her students started from scratch: everything was new to them. This needs to be contextualised. Trowell favoured the integration of figurative art into the curriculum she envisaged. She believed that the integration of traditional African art into formal art instruction would help her students 'appreciate its essential qualities', and hoped that 'these qualities will carry over into art forms of the new African world' (Trowell 1957:1). And yet, save for the Acholi fertility dolls and a few masks (from Toro, Busoga among other regions), Uganda does not have a tradition of figurative art comparable to the one found in West and Central

Africa, for example. Instead the country has rich traditions of craft-making and story telling.

Secondly, in her *African arts and crafts: their development in the school* (1937) Trowell observed that “art is absolutely necessary to religion...[but]...it is far more important in the education of the child...” (Trowell 1937:16). Yet many local crafts were deeply ingrained in traditional religious practices. This is the reason why by 1900 missionaries engaged a vicious campaign in which they forced African converts to burn such artefacts through public rituals and spectacles . These are still being performed today. Put another way, ‘because she was a missionary in so far as she encouraged religious subjects as a means of spreading the gospel’ (Kyeyune 2003: 136) many traditional crafts would have been inimical to her Christian ideals. Besides, she faced opposition from parents who insisted that they did not send their children to learn what they (the parents) could teach them, the traditional crafts. Rather, they wanted them to learn new skills that would allow them to be relevant in the new and modern colonial economy.

To get out of this predicament, Trowell turned to the tradition of story telling as a primary resource for her instruction. This is not to suggest that Ugandan stories and legends are neutral because they are not. In fact, accessing some of the material related to supernatural powers landed her ‘in difficulties’ when she seemed to support witchcraft – a vice her fellow missionaries were intent on denouncing (Trowell 1957:75-76). She thus angered the high ‘Bishop of the Upper Nile’ who argued that her activities hampered his missionary work. Yet, Trowell did not relent. She believed that ‘the whole countryside [was] full of story and legend waiting to be collected and written down’ (Trowell 1957:76). She thus collected and documented several legends and stories from different parts of the country with which she shaped a modern curriculum and started college art education (Trowell 1957:73, 76). The images created were part of a new

visual language fusing spoken narratives into modern art. Unlike the art which would have come from crafts the images based on story telling were not encumbered with preconceptions and prejudices. This was a novel form of visual discourse without local precedents.

Kyeyune (2003:54) explains to us the 'Protectorate Government had never demonstrated that it considered art as an important element in the country's development'. This is because its relevance to the demands of the colonial economy was not clear. As a result, Tomblings who was an 'agent and implementer of government education policies at Makerere did not wish to commit his full support on a subject for which there were no clear guidelines or precedents'. Tomblings therefore made his support to Trowell's art classes informal.

Through exhibitions and public campaigns in Uganda and London, Trowell convinced the public, college administration and colonial government that she could develop clear guidelines along which to instruct art in Uganda. She was convinced that African artists could use Western materials and techniques to express themselves without imitating Western art. In all her literature, Trowell despised such imitation and by the 1930s, the colonial establishment had become uncomfortable with this too. For example, writing in the catalogue for the second exhibition held at the Imperial Institute, South Kensington in England in April 1939, Sir Philip Mitchell (then Governor of Uganda) argued that imitation is dangerous to Africans 'in the realm of art and aesthetics' (Trowell 1957:106). Officiating at the opening of the same exhibition, Lord Hailey reiterated a similar sentiment. He argued that:

...though it is difficult to be certain exactly what form of guidance should be given by those who set to instruct people so different from ourselves, it is clear that we should not satisfy the African's desire for self expression if we merely set out to teach him to imitate our own culture. I think that we should give the African all that we have in our experience - the principles of art, the use of material, and the like, but we should leave him as far as possible to express the African spirit in the product. We may then

establish in time a true African tradition of art... (Trowell 1957:106-107).

Lord Hailey's comments are interesting. Firstly, they marked a shift from the 'colonial violence' (McClintock 1995:16) which had judged Uganda's material cultures as 'heathen' and destroyed them in the period 1877 to 1900 – a sentiment the Bishop of the Upper Nile harboured. Secondly, they confirm the lack of direction, a gap in the teaching of art and cultural discourse, which Trowell urgently filled. We cannot trace many of the much celebrated works, but it is clear from Lord Hailey's comments that Trowell had found the right formula for the instruction of African art whilst preserving its African identity and avoiding imitation. Lord Hailey observed that the exhibits showed that a solution had been found. '...perhaps we have here something that will be one of the first records in history of the development of the true African tradition of painting' (Trowell 1957:07). Trowell had resolved the problem by organising her art education around the literary and oral traditions of the local communities, which abounded in East Africa (Kyeyune 2003:59-60).

Riding on this success in London, Trowell returned to Uganda to introduce art into the college curriculum. In the next section, I analyse how Trowell implemented her project. I however also demonstrate that by using story telling in her teaching Trowell integrated complex narratives which in many ways were gender biased.

2.2.4 Gendering of Uganda's modern art? Trowell's stories, legends and myths

Trowell used the medium of story telling, and legends, to start off her painting sessions. Her choices of narratives ranged from social, economic, religious and political perspectives. For example, in one of them Trowell tells her students to close their eyes and contemplate a

... market day, and the bare brown earth of the hill side is covered with many figures. The air hums with their talk; they

move like a cluster of ants. There they sit, old women with potatoes, mealies, old men selling snuff, here a man drives two goats, there a hen flutters loose from her basket On the left men haggle over a great heap of beans and the children push forward to see what is to do [sic]. But all this is, as it were, in the back of our picture. You do not see it very clearly. For it is not that of which you are thinking. Close in front of you are two women. One is old and bent and wizened, the other young and supple. The young one buys a new cooking pot for her home, low they bend over the red pots and carefully is the choice made (Trowell 1937:52-53).

It is unclear from which part of the country this story originates, but this is irrelevant because Trowell did not intend it to represent a tribe. Rather, she used it because of its ability to inform the development of a visual statement when the students open their eyes and begin to work. What is urgent for us, therefore, is to analyse the narrative and predict what visual representation Trowell hoped to obtain in the end.

To begin with, the colonial economy, dominated by the production of raw materials for export to the metropolis and importation of finished consumer goods, was strong and significant at the time. It had frozen the traditional artefacts on its fringes. For example, Trowell observed that “traditional baskets and the pots are getting fewer because the petrol *debbe* [sic] is driving them away” (Trowell 1938: 174). [*E*]*debbe* is a common word in Uganda. It is derived from a Swahili word which refers to measurement of 18.184 litres and the aluminium tin which can hold such a capacity (Kakande 2008: 150). By the mid-1930s the *debbe* was commonly used in the countryside as a kitchen utensil and building material. That it was displacing traditional household items was an inevitable (and intended) consequence of colonial modernity. Trowell was, however, unwilling to accept this; accepting it would have been inimical to her intention to nurture authentic African contemporary art grounded in local traditions.

Thirdly, Trowell sketches a backdrop animated by a busy, crowded market scene. But she advises that little detail was to be painted from it. It is

unclear what Trowell intended with this busy backdrop then. It should, however, not be deduced that she intended her students to create a linear perspective. As we saw in the work done by her Akamba student, Trowell did not encourage linear perspective and anatomy. Writing in her early literature she argued that “if our aim is the building up of an indigenous African art, there is very little to be said of perspective at this stage; in importance, it is far below design and colour and vitality” (Trowell 1937: 58).

Fourthly, called *obutare bw'emibuulo* traditional markets have been important sites of economic activity in Uganda. They date back to the pre-colonial times when they were centres for primitive barter exchanges involving slaves, ivory, salt, animals, and so on.¹⁴ However, the country has witnessed geopolitical and economic transformations since the nineteenth century. Most significantly, the signing of the 1900 Buganda Agreement consolidated Uganda into a British protectorate designed to supply raw materials to the British industries. Consistent with this new reality was the ‘establishment of a peasant economy’ (Mamdani 1999:40-65), with all its inherent power relations and contradictions, for which the production of cotton, coffee, tea, tobacco and minerals was more important than the production of traditional products such as hoes, pots, bark cloth, spears and arrows among others (Mamdani 1999:34-35). This is the new reality in which Trowell taught her students. However, Trowell’s appetite for the authentically African, which steered her involvement in the Uganda Museum, did not tolerate these developments. As a case in point, she deplored the aluminium *debbe* which had come to Uganda by the 1930s.

Lastly, Trowell also constructs a market in which men, women and children have clearly marked roles against which her students were to cast two women prominently located in the foreground selecting a new cooking pot for domestic use. We see elsewhere Trowell (1954: 20) encouraging

her students to model what she called 'a woman carrying a water pot'. In other words, the symbolism of woman and pot was among her favourite themes. Trowell must have met women carrying water pots in the countryside during her field tours. But the validity of this explanation should not eclipse the gendered undertones implicit in this theme and its symbolism.

In his doctoral study Kivubiro observed that different artefacts are used to maintain the hierarchical status of institutions and individuals in Buganda. He asserts that pots defined what women should be, and could do. He argues that:

[T]he cooking pot was referred to as female, the mother that fed the children (members) of the household. It belonged to the social realm of women. This stemmed from the woman's responsibility for accommodation, household maintenance and hospitality. These duties, especially the provision of food, were an essential part of her identity. In the...household division of labour, the cooking pot also belonged to their territory, the kitchen (Kivubiro1988:136).

This interpretation could be criticised for being reductive. It excludes the other important roles a pot plays. For example, pots are used as banks – a use which is not problematic. Kivubiro's interpretation is, however, instructive in as far as it exposes the gendered undertones implicit in the tradition of linking women to pots. This is confirmed in some literature.¹⁵ For instance, Ssetuba argues that traditionally pots domesticate women. They map and define women's identity, normative roles and fecundity. It is in this context that the Luganda proverb *Omukazi ntamu nkadde; togiteresa munno* (A woman is an old cooking-pot; you never entrust it to a friend) – among others – becomes relevant. The pot, and the proverb, 'give us images of the woman that translate the way traditional society perceives her and wishes her to be'.¹⁶ Arguably then, the woman-and-pot symbol, which Trowell emphasized, was interlaced with the definition of women and their spaces in a household.

Three aspects emerge to guide this debate. Firstly, we cannot say that Trowell was aware of this interpretation or that she intended it. But it can be argued that the link between women and pots which she encouraged, and which we saw earlier in Kawalya's *Returning home*, is a tradition which is biased against women and cannot escape the valid criticism we see in Kivubiro and Ssetuba. Secondly, we will see in chapter five John Bosco Kanuge, who graduated from Makerere's Art School several decades after Trowell had returned to England, using this device to mitigate the challenges imposed by the new woman. It is therefore important to note its unintended roots and observe ways in which it was initially deployed before its current use.

Also, in her book *Teaching art in African schools* (1954:19-20), Trowell prescribes to African students, and the art teachers she had trained, what she calls 'suitable subjects for modelling'. She mentions several examples involving men and women in different social activities: 'two men wrestling', 'a man riding a horse', 'a man sitting on a folded chair' and 'a seated man, deep in thought'. These were fascinating subjects although it is unclear why Trowell considered them most suitable.¹⁷ What is clear is that she placed these themes into a standard curriculum for the teaching of art in Uganda which she also published in a teaching handbook called *Picture making in schools* (1954) illustrated by 12 pictures based on 'her verbal accounts ranging from social to religious' themes. The illustrations depict women carrying water pots, women carrying children, men wielding spears and walking sticks.

We are now conversant with the symbolism of the woman-and-pot and that of a man carrying a walking stick. Hunting is a cherished tradition and sport. Men hunt using spears and arrows although the symbolism of a man-and-spear could have another powerful message. Spears define a man's position as defender of clan and tribe in addition to a household.¹⁸ The mother-and-child symbolism requires an extended discussion

because it informed Gregory Maloba's *Independence monument* (an important national symbol) while recent artists have invoked it to constrain women.

2.3 GREGORY MALOBA AND THE SYMBOL OF MOTHER AND CHILD

Trowell taught many students before she retired in 1958. Sanyal (2000) and Kyeyune (2003) give an interesting discussion on them and how they pursued interesting careers in many different ways (some not anticipated by Trowell). Gregory Maloba needs specific mention because of the way he dealt with the mother and child theme and breathed new life into it while raising a debate important to this thesis.

Gregory Maloba (1922-2007)¹⁹ was Trowell's first professional student²⁰ who later became a member of staff and taught art in Uganda until 1966 when he left for Kenya to open up a department of art education at the University of Nairobi. He was a native of Kenya whose exposure to art and art making started early in his life and through access to religious iconography. During his secondary school, he got support from his teacher, Brother Morris. In 1940, Maloba received further support from the Governor of Kenya (Sir Henry Moore) and his wife (an artist and alumna of Slade School like Trowell). Sir Moore wrote to Margaret Trowell asking her to admit Maloba to the Art School. He suggested that Maloba needed help because he showed great skill although his work was 'crude and unimaginative stuff' informed by 'photographs in some ecclesiastical catalogue' (Trowell 1957:103). Being a statement from a typical example of what Maloba called a 'diehard colonialist' (Maloba cited in Kyeyune 2003:101) Moore's assertion was condescending; its colonial patronising attitude is obvious. It was, however, beneficial as it persuaded Trowell 'to try to help him' (Trowell 1957:104).

Trowell introduced three influences for Maloba's career. One was direct and led to the production of his work *Death* (1941).²¹ Made out of wood,

Death represents a frail man pressed down by an allegorical figure. The artist depicts the inevitability of death and the anguish that frames it. He based his work on local myths and mythologies pertaining to death, although he also used it to explore the possibilities of wood as a medium.²² Trowell explains the evolution of this work in the following way:

First I suggested he might start by saying Death, using a well-seasoned tree trunk from the garden. For some weeks nothing happened, and I began to think he had forgotten, when one day he came to me with a smile all over his face. 'I know now what I want to say about Death; I want to say it isn't unkind, but you just can't help it.' I sent him off to say it with his log and adze, and soon he was well away with what I still believe is his best carving (Trowell 1957:105).

This excerpt helps us to understand that Trowell's pedagogy was not so rigid after all. Clearly, she did prescribe materials and themes. However, what she suggested did not limit individual creative enterprises. Students took their time to internalise it before they responded. This must be borne in mind. This culture has remained in the teaching of art at Makerere Art School. A lot of the art we are about to see was done by students for whom lecturers prescribed broad themes and/or materials. However, individual creativity is always nurtured and emphasised; the final product is the artist's own statement.

The second influence was indirect; in fact it was accidental. According to Trowell (1957:104-105), 'Epstein became a great inspiration for Maloba's career in art since late thirties.' It all started while Trowell was away from home and Maloba accessed her home library where he found Epstein's illustrated biography. Trowell explains that Maloba:

...found Epstein's illustrated biography on my book-shelves and looked at it one day when I was out. When I returned he burst out, "at last here is a European whose work I can understand..." (Trowell 1947, 6-7).

It is hard to speculate on which other artists Maloba looked at alongside Epstein's work and why he failed to understand their works. What is,

however, clear was the influence from Epstein's work; the link between Epstein's *Night and day*²³ and Maloba's *Death* in terms of form is unambiguous.

The third influence Trowell had on Maloba stems from the mother and child symbol. Trowell's *Mother and child* (6) has no exact date but most scholars agree that it was done in the 1940s. It is a lino print portraying an African woman seated on a clear ground. There is a single horizontal clean line cutting through the print separating the floor from the wall. This allows the mother to settle down. The expression on the mother's face gives her a sense of calm. That she closes her eyes makes her completely absorbed with the child to whom she gives undivided attention. She sits providing a lap on which her child sits comfortably playing with a leaf. The leaf is fresh and green. Together with the full body of the child, the leaf suggests a healthy well-nourished baby. The mother wraps her arms around the young child offering affection, care, warmth and protection.

Kyeyune (2003:81) suggests that in her *Mother and child* Trowell reveals her appreciation and interest in the theme of the African mother. Kyeyune, however, also observes that Trowell's treatment of the subject clarifies the dilemma that she faced in her art education, and serves as a perfect assessment of the results of her project. He further argues that while Trowell wanted to protect what she considered to be an African instinct, *Mother and child* comes out as a superficial representation of Africa. As a result Kyeyune argues that Trowell's peculiar conception of 'Africanness' was inadequate and detached from the Africa that her students were part of. She was not able to appreciate the internal cultural logic of the entire system and ground her beliefs in a thoroughly African manner for them to sprout and grow.

Kyeyune's claim that Trowell in her *Mother and child* reveals her appreciation and interest in the theme of the African mother is valid.

However, Kyeyune's other claim for the print as a representation of Africa is probably stretched too far. It detracts from what I would consider the correct position we find in Kakande (2008:166). Kakande argues that Trowell's *Mother and Child* is one of the earliest expressions of the symbolism of child-nurturing that has shaped Uganda's modern art. I say this because Trowell wrote that she instructed her students 'to model a mother and child where the mother could be made holding her arms closely round the child' (Trowell 1954:19-20). This excerpt, in light of her print, would suggest that Trowell also took up this theme in her own work. The gesture of a mother's arms closely wrapped around a child points more to affection and motherly care than the continental debate on African identity which was taking shape at the time and resonated in the anti-colonial and nationalist debates of the 1950s and 1960s.

Indeed the child is naked. However, this is far from being superficial. On the contrary, it is a reference to the fact that in the countryside many children remain naked while at home. Mostly, it is an economic issue: children born of families which are so poor that they cannot afford buying clothing for everybody will remain naked most of the time. Poor families give priority to adults. Secondly, even where parents can afford it, some children are still left undressed. This is part of child rearing. It is widely believed that staying naked allows the growing child to play with the soil and become creative without encumbrances. Trowell was aware of this convention and its potential benefits for the growing child. Despite not being a native, she allowed her children to play naked. As such in her *African Tapestry* (1957) she presents two photographs in which her own children play while naked.

Maloba took on the mother and child in two interesting ways: Firstly, there is a photograph (7) displayed in the Dean's office at Makerere Art School which suggests that, like his own instructor (and probably through the use of her teaching manuals which I have referred to already), Maloba

instructed his students to engage the theme of mother and child. This picture was probably taken in the late 1950s or early 1960s. In the photo we see Maloba supervising a modelling class. The class, and the instructor, don a Western-style outfit which was popular with the elite at the time: white short-sleeved shirts, khaki shorts, long stockings and black shoes. Being the instructor, the bespectacled Maloba is distinguished by a tie. He stands in front of a table holding a lump of clay which he works on a table demonstrating to his students. He turns his back towards a standing figurine of a mother, carrying a baby on her back, rendered in a static pose with limited attention to detail. It was probably a work in progress given the lump of unused clay at its base and the fact that it is in a trough rather than on the drying rack as is normally the case for finished works. The figurine is a depiction of a woman who turns her hands backwards in order to hold a baby and support it – a common posture in which women often strap and carry their young ones. The figurine testifies to the legacy of the symbolism of motherhood which Trowell initiated through her instruction and her own lino print.

Beyond teaching Maloba evolved the mother and naked boy child theme to a new level which Trowell had not predicted.²⁴ On 9 October 1962, four years after Trowell had left the Art School, Uganda gained independence. To celebrate the event, Maloba was commissioned to construct the national monument called the *Independence monument (8)* (1962). Made of concrete, the monument is in Kampala city centre adjacent to the Sheraton Hotel. It marked the beginning of a new era in Uganda's history embodied in mother-and-child symbolism.

The artist depicts a mother standing astride in a stable but stiff pose. She folds her arms at the elbows to support an erect boy child. Like the mother in Trowell's print her eyes are closed and her lips are sealed tight. She is selfless. In spite of her massive scale, she does not divert our attention away from the ecstatic child, whose eyes and lips are wide open in a jovial

mood. Evident in this monument, Maloba carries through the theme of mother and child which Trowell visualised and encouraged her students to model. He constructed femininity while affirming the woman's position as child-nurturer and caregiver. Far from his teacher whose representation was private/domestic, Maloba placed the theme of mother and child at the centre of the post-colonial state.

Sanyal (2000:118) writes that Maloba insists that we should view the monument only from the front. Following Sanyal, we immediately view the mother's face hidden behind the naked child. Its gender is unambiguously revealed: he is a boy. The mother's hands thrust him upwards as he raises both his hands in an expression of euphoria, while the mother remains passive, invisible and silent. All the visual signs in the disposition of these two figures constitute the boy as more important than the mother, a message Maloba probably wanted the viewer to take when he insists that the monument should be viewed from the front.

The mother is wrapped (or unwrapped?) in strips of traditional bark cloth. This traditional material which we also saw in Kawalya's work allowed the artist to remember the past in the celebration of the present (Sanyal 2000: 120). However, the act of wrapping recalls Jacob Epstein's *Lazarus* (9) (1947) confirming that Epstein's influence on the artist went beyond his early days to inform his later career and, indeed, an important national symbol.²⁵

Maloba studied in England at Beth academy in Wiltshire between 1948 and 1950 and from 1956 to 1958 he went to Camberwell School of arts and crafts in London. It is arguable that given his admiration for Epstein's works he probably viewed 'Epstein's new and old works' in an exhibition which was 'rotating in London galleries and parks in the 1950s (Danvir 1952:14). But this does not diminish Maloba's artistic independence and

individual interpretation of the subject. Besides, the issues that informed the work are essentially local.

Kyeyune gives an interesting reading of the monument which extends my discussion. He suggests that:

Maloba's depiction of mother and child on this occasion differs significantly from the earlier depictions of Virgin Mary and the child. In these casts, baby Jesus is always depicted tenderly and delicately held in the protective arms of his mother, in front of her chest, or as in many African societies where children are commonly strapped with a piece of cloth on their mothers' backs. Rather Maloba chooses to present the throbbing child as an assertive, radiant Messiah who symbolises a new Uganda, bursting with energy and high expectations for the future. Indeed the mother's eyes are gently closed as if to say, I am tired, I am stepping aside, but I am happy, because I have given forth a successor in whom my hope for the future is secured (Kyeyune 2003:95).

The Virgin Mary and the child informed the religious paintings of Trowell's students. Those exhibited in the *And was made man* exhibition hosted in London confirm Kyeyune's assertion. That the woman is stepping aside evoked the sentiment of the time that the colonial mother, Britain, had to give way to a new nation, Uganda, symbolised in a vibrant, jovial, unblemished youthfulness. The contrast between the mother and the child captured the euphoric mood of the time; it underpinned the high expectations in the new nation-state. Implicit in this work (and consistent with Kyeyune's reading), however, is the allusion to the representation of men as political actors and the women as marginal: the man is the successor while the woman is stepping aside. The artist symbolised the post-colonial male hegemony, which, like its colonial predecessor, excluded women from political power. This exclusion needs to be theorised because in doing so I begin to problematise the monument and its claim for equal representation.

Waliggo (2003:12) argues that for centuries, the world gave rise to prejudice against women. 'Myths were created about women's "weakness", docility, inferiority, weak intelligence, lack of inventiveness, creativity, and originality and their being second hand citizen...always in search for a man-master and hero.' Thus, in 1962 women received suffrage without substantive gains in power and authority. Instead, all trappings of the state were handed over to their elite male counterparts. The cabinet was male; only two women (Florence Lubega and Sogra Visram) joined the National Assembly dominated by 92 men.

Interestingly, in spite of this exclusion the new state was symbolised by a woman. McClintock explains that:

All too often in male nationalisms, gender difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men. Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit...Women are typically constructed as symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency (McClintock 1995:354).

McClintock's postulation seems to suggest that particular nations agree on their symbols. If this interpretation is correct, it can be said that McClintock does not tell us about the way national symbols, depicted in women to define the limits of the state, are contested. To demonstrate, there was reaction, mainly from conservative male traditionalist and ethnic nationalists in Buganda, that a man, Muteesa I (the Kabaka of Buganda), would have been the best representation of the new state. He is the one who invited the Whiteman, and the trappings of modernisation, to come to Uganda, they argued. They mobilised the community to contribute funds for the construction of an alternative monument.²⁶

McClintock however, rightly exposes how the use of women as symbols of the state is interlaced with a complex power economy. I would argue that seeing Uganda's *Independence monument* through McClintock's lenses

exposes its patriarchal biases. The claim for its universal representation emphasised in available official documents (and scholarship) loses ground as the monument's propagation of the exclusion of women from Uganda's political power and authority becomes evident. This reading unveils the gender biases implicit in the monument and which are often masked with patriotic fervour and nationalist zeal.

2.4. WOMEN 'TOIL AND SWEAT': REBECCA NJAU AND THE WOMEN'S VOICE

Rebecca Njau is a poet and wife to contemporary artist Elimo Njau (Trowell's student). In 1962 she published a poem on what she called the young and old women. It was published in the catalogue for the exhibition, titled *The artist's hobby* (1962) mounted by her husband Elimo Njau at the Uganda Museum to celebrate Uganda's independence and call for the Africanisation of art and art education.²⁷ Rebecca Njau placed women's productive labour, or what she called their 'toil and sweat', at the centre of Uganda's cultural debate.

Secondly, through her poem Rebecca Njau critiques the impact of rural-urban migration on traditional family structures.²⁸ She wondered 'what other joy is there' for women and families abandoned in the countryside 'when their men ride away at dawn', abandon their families and move to the cities in search of manual paid jobs. This rural-urban migration was a common phenomenon during colonialism. P'Bitek, in his *Lak Tar* (1953), had a decade earlier critiqued the way the colonial economy had forced many to migrate into the city in search of opportunities. It is here that they received meagre wages in exchange for their labour and lived under 'dehumanizing' conditions. What we do not see in p'Bitek and Rebecca Njau is the fact that the end of colonialism did not end the conditions they criticised. On the contrary, and as we saw in the last chapter, at the time of independence the post-colonial government favoured rural-urban migration.

The post-colonial debate in Rebecca Njau's poem informed other writers and playwrights – and Oko p'Bitek can be singled out for his work *Song of Lawino* (1966) and *Song of Ocol* (1967). It also informed a shift in the use of the woman figure in contemporary visual art as the new woman took the shape of a fierce modern girl.

2.5 THE FIRST POSTCOLONIAL ARTISTS AND THE FIERCE MODERN GIRLS

Cecil Todd succeeded Trowell in 1959. A graduate of the Royal College of Art in London, Todd taught art in South Africa for some time before he joined the Art School. He particularly detested Trowell's desire to link Uganda's modern art to past traditions. Instead, he emphasised academic dogma grounded in colour theory, drawing and Western art history. He was unwilling to compromise.²⁹ Todd recruited Jonathan Kingdon who was to head the school in 1973 when Todd left. Like Todd, was a graduate of the Royal College in London. Unlike Todd who was born in Scotland, Kingdon was born in neighbouring Tanzania and spoke Kiswahili the official language in that country. His views were probably located between Trowell's and Todd's. He respected academic dogma but was willing to compromise as a way of encouraging 'students to assert their individuality' (Kyeyune 2003: 137).³⁰ Todd and Kingdon taught alongside other African, Arab and European instructors³¹. However, the two take credit for having been responsible for the shaping of Uganda's modern art in the sixties until the early 1970s when they left the country as it descended into political anarchy. Laban Nyirenda was their student.

Laban Nyirenda was a native of Tanzania. He pursued a Diploma of Fine Art at Makerere Art School from 1961 to 1964 during which time he did his *In the bar (10)* (1964). The print demonstrates a mastery of skill and handling of media. In other words, unlike Trowell (and Fisher before her) who had emphasised individual expression and discouraged attention to

academic dogma during instruction, the Todd regime, assisted by Jonathan Kingdon, under which Nyirenda was taught, had a different agenda.

In the bar depicts a scene of five people: four males and one female. To the right of the foreground a man bends over the table to rest his head on his arms on top of a table covered with a patterned tablecloth. A large bottle stands next to him, being one of many littering the top of the table. He is evidently asleep. However, the presence of an open bottle next to him is a strategy used by the artist to persuade us to conclude that the man before us is actually drunk and the bottle is of liquor. He is in the company of others seated on the other side of the table. They are clustered together suggesting their collusion in a vice. To the left of the cluster a man sits with his head fallen to his right shoulder. He too is evidently drunk just like the man on the extreme right of the cluster who bends to the table resting his right palm on top of his head. The inactivity in the three men leaves the beholder to drift to the centre of the print, which is animated with what is obviously the core of the message the artist intends to communicate. Here a woman sits attended to by a standing man. She allows her head to fall backwards supported by her long neck adorned with jewellery. This suggests that the woman is tipsy but not as drunk as the three sleeping men. That she holds a bottle in her right hand suggests that she can drink more. She raises a glass using her jewelled left arm. She is, however, interrupted by a man who wraps his arm around her shoulders, draws close to her parting lips while raising his own glass. There is an obvious conversation between the two to which the beholder is invited but only as a witness.

It is clear that the artist placed a seductive woman at the centre of a male-dominated image in which he derided social vice. Nyirenda critiqued alcoholism and lewdness as elite Western values (which earlier Kabaka

Daudi Chwa had called foreignisation) which had corrupted African traditions leading to excesses among the African elite.

Elly Wamala (1935-2005) who enjoyed a music career spanning over four decades, was popular in the 1960s. Pondering on the issues in Nyirenda's work, he sang his *Ebinyumu Byaffe* (literally translated 'our merriment'). Wamala reminisced the 1960s as a period of excesses: over-indulgence in merry-making, recklessness, drunkenness, lewdness, promiscuity. This is what, in his *Song Lawino* (1966) and *Song of Ocol* (1967), also published in *Song Lawino and Song of Ocol* (1972), Okot p'Bitek rejected as an elitist arrogance with which Uganda's elite of the 1960s enjoyed the excesses of Western lifestyles and urban culture and ignored the rural poor. Instead of delivering on the promises they made at the time of independence they resorted to alcoholism, promiscuity, lewdness and adoption of Western behaviour. As he put it

They drink the whiteman's drinks
They close their eyes...
Each man has a woman
Although she is not his wife...
Women lie on the chest of men
They prick the chests of their men with their breasts...
You kiss her on the cheek as white people do
You kiss her on her open sore lips as white people do
You suck slimy saliva
From each other's mouths
As white people do...
Modern girls are fierce (p'Bitek 1972:44-45)

We have seen similar criticism in Sempangi and Nyirenda. It resembles the criticism expressed by conservative traditionalists (Kakande 2008:146) towards those Africans who had adopted Western culture. In response, radical traditionalists in the federal Buganda government, just like they had done with the *tabbulu* dance in 1916, passed a bill outlawing the adoption of Western dance, alleging that it had the tendency to encourage

promiscuity among Africans. It was argued that this was done to preserve African values.³²

Such criticism is sharp; its radical sentiments are obvious. It fails to acknowledge the contribution of colonial education to the African lifestyles for example. It underestimates the way Western and local cultures interacted leading to new forms of creativity in visual art, dress, music and literature. Like I said earlier, it serves a critical role of demystifying colonial modernity. It critiques the elites' insatiable indulgence in excessive behaviours and the sloth which accompanied it. Intriguingly, Okot places the woman at the centre of his criticism – a strategy we also confront in Laban Nyirenda's *In the bar*, Berlings Kaunda's *Village wedding* (1966)³³ and *Village Jazz* (1966)³⁴ among others.

Let me also add that those whom in the above excerpt Okot p'Bitek calls the fierce modern girls are those he calls elsewhere in the same book the 'modern women'. A modern woman, for p'Bitek, just like it was for Sempangi, is displaced. She is a 'beautiful girl ...who speaks English', wants to 'look like a white woman', has '...aborted many' times perhaps '...thrown...twins in the pit latrine' and insists that 'a beautiful woman must stay slim as a white woman (p'Bitek 1972:36-39). Given the fact that abortion had always been criminalised in Uganda, it is impossible to compare the rates of abortion among the elite and non-elite women. It is thus hard to confirm, with certainty, if educated women – according to p'Bitek those who speak English –are more predisposed to abortion. Neither is it likely that Okot p'Bitek based his opinion on scientific evidence. Instead, he fused his poetry into the perception that elite women preoccupy themselves with worldly things as opposed to fulfilling their normative roles. There is often the concern that such women control their reproduction in order to preserve their body shapes and advance their careers. Clearly, p'Bitek is tapping into a stereotype, which is tied to the representation of elite women as menaces.

2.6 ON THE URBAN 'CORRUPT' WOMEN: IMAGINING MODERN WOMEN IN THE 1970S

Severino Matti graduated from the Art School in 1968 before he lectured there in the mid-1970s. In 1968 he painted his *In the city* (1968). The painting is lost without a trace but I saw an image of it in Sanyal (2000). Despite its bad quality, it allows us to see a crowded city defined by modern high-rise buildings, cars and people. The mood in the painting is brisk but not tense as men and women cross a busy street competing for space with a huge traffic jam. According to a census conducted in 1969 the population of Uganda was 9,535,031. Males were slightly more than females: 4,811,428 were male, 4,723,623 female; the ratio of male to female stood at 102:100.³⁵ Uganda's population was predominantly rural with only 634,952 living in the urban areas (53.9% of whom were resident in Kampala). The census also indicated that the population of the country was 94.4% 'Ugandan' and 5.6% 'non-Ugandan' (whatever these two opposed categories meant).

Arguably then, the demographic picture in the country was more complex than what Matti showed. For example, it was common knowledge that 'non-Ugandans', especially the 'Indians', dominated the city – and this is partly why Amin expelled them in 1972 in order to create room for Africans. Yet we do not see non-Ugandans in the painting. What we see are black skins of men and women belonging to the same (middle?) class. To the left of the foreground two identifiably slim elite (or to use p'Bitek's word 'modern') women walk to the left. A man, wearing a London suit, walks between them to the right to join a large crowd of men and women emerging from an alley advancing towards an already overcrowded street in which women unrestrainedly mingled with their male counterparts, and a fleet of cars.

A problem emerged from the presence of elite women we see in Matti's work and escalated in the 1970s. Obbo (1980: 26-28) cautioned that 'the subject of female migration to the city is controversial ... in East Africa in particular ... because it corrupts their [women's] virtue, leads to marital instability and erodes traditional norms', resulting in the collapse of families. This view informed a cartoon published in the *Voice of Uganda* (11) (1975) in which we see a couple with two children. Its artist simply called himself Drinking H₂O.³⁶ A woman walks into the scene from the left. That she wears tattered clothes firmly tied at the waist, indicates her pathetic economic condition. Given Amin's economic adventurism of 1972 in which he 'nationalised' the economy, Uganda experienced dire economic stress, which forced many to tighten their belts. The cartoon could be a reference to this reality. The woman's bust and stomach have been exaggerated. This representation introduces humour; it also symbolises motherhood. The woman holds a *ddebe* (the aluminum tin to which I referred earlier) in her left hand; she is probably on the way to the well to collect water together with her two malnourished and impoverished children, identified as a girl and a boy. While on their way, the family encounters a man coming into the picture plane from the right. The boy drops his container and raises his hands begging for ten cents while the girl continues to carry her pan on her head while crying out 'Tata pa', which means 'Please father give me something to eat'; the girl's cry, in addition to the boy's begging for little coins (ten cents), confirm that the man in front of the woman and her two children is indeed the head of the family before us. He has been to the city which is confirmed by his dress code. He is an epitome of the excesses of modernity and the fashion trends of the late 1960s and 1970s. He is wearing a shirt with a big collar. He dons a trendy pair of trousers tight at the hips and loose at the bottom which give him an air of flamboyance and sense of alienation. He is also dressed in a raised pair of shoes, popularly known as platform shoes.³⁷ That his bell-bottom is embroidered with love symbols attests to his lewd behaviour and corrupt morals. His flair is in sharp contrast with the misery

experienced by the family he had abandoned to abject rural poverty. If Kawalya had imagined a rural, man-led family which later Trowell emphasised in her curriculum, what we see here was a radical inversion of roles. The man has abandoned his position in the family. Tension looms as the woman confronts him and in the process abandons the normative, subservient, conforming position she assumed in Kawalya's *Returning home*. She yells: '*my friend city life has spoilt you. You don't care about our kids, you come and give me more and more kids go back to your den in the city with bloody malayas...*' (my emphasis).

Let us pause and take stock of some important issues emerging here. Firstly, this cartoon probably reflects Rebecca Njau's critique on the disruptive tendencies through which colonial modernity had ruined families while affirming that they persisted into the post-colonial era. Its concerns were, however, immediate. As we read in the caption, the cartoon was an open attack on someone we do not see in the image but who is implied in the caption. This is the woman of the city, p'Bitek's fierce girl or modern woman but now being referred to as *malayas*. As we saw earlier *Malaya* is a local word for a prostitute. It is, however, also used in reference to women who go to the city and remain unmarried engaging in extramarital sex liaisons. Implicit in the cartoon is the widely held view that the modern woman menaces traditional family structures; her presence in the city leads to immense trauma for the traditional family. As such, the cartoon taps directly into the debate, which we saw in the previous chapter, under which Amin signed a decree constraining women's movement in the city.

Secondly, consistent with this debate and its artistic representation is the fear of UN Decade for Women. The *Voice of Uganda* published a cartoon on 29 April 1975 in which the cartoonist depicted this fear. It captures a woman who had upset traditional and religious mores (12). She wears a headscarf and loose skirt. Her chest is bare to expose her loose breasts and thick rosary. These two are not just beauty accessories. They are also

intended to reinforce the view that the woman before us is a mother; she is also religious. She sits comfortably on the ground, stretches and crosses her legs while grasping a drumstick in her right hand and lifting it towards her widely open mouth. Ready and eager to bite, she is interrupted by an angry man, her husband, who questions her eating habits.

Most ethnic groups in Uganda consider it taboo for women to eat chicken; eating chicken symbolises rudeness and gluttony. It is obvious that the cartoonist invoked this convention to expose how the woman had subverted acceptable behaviour. 'How dare you eat chicken Bena', asks the man now reduced to a pauper by the dwindling economic fortunes of the 1970s. 'This year 1975 is women's year', the woman responds. While refusing to take any orders from her husband, the woman reminds him that the international women's year sponsored by the United Nations had liberated her from past bondage and domination. 'I will do whatever you used to stop me from doing Golobas', she retorts, ignoring her traditional and religious obligation to obey her husband.

If the man in this cartoon still had some semblance of authority and power to question the woman, by 1976 all that was gone if only symbolically; the representations of the domestic women became radical. For example, *Voice of Uganda* published on 8 January 1976 a cartoon of a couple engaged in a violent feud (13). The woman is wearing a dotted skirt with a matching headscarf. Her upper body is bare like that of her sister published in the *Voice of Uganda* on 29 April 1975. She stands astride the feet of a man who is wearing shoes and thus belonging to a class above that of the barefooted woman. The man is crawling on his knees and supporting his upper body with his left arm while using his right arm to defend himself against the woman who viciously trounces him with a frying pan and drags him by the collar of his shirt. 'Take that, that and....you pig, never abuse my equal right again...hear?', the woman yells. 'Stop riding me Bena' responds the man, probably too embarrassed to look his wife in

the eyes or shelving his face from receiving direct blows from the frying pan. He finds the breath to remind his woman-now-turned-menace that the women's decade will not last forever. '1976 dawn[ed]'. He thus will 'fight ...back for husband right' and resolve the challenge imposed by his rampaging wife.

It thus follows from the above discussion that in the 1970s more mediums were used to diffuse the problem of women who abandoned their normative position. The devices used expanded from proverbs, legislation and song of the colonial era to include the press, cartoons, and the novel. It is arguable that the pointed attack on women liberties in Uganda's contemporary culture emerged in the novel before the press mass circulated it. Through Drinking H₂O's work the fear of non-conforming women received visual expression.

2.7 WOMEN AND WAR: THE MOTHER AND CHILD THEME REVISITED

Unlike the novel and comic strip, however, the visual arts were preoccupied with the two decades of tyranny, economic hardships, uncertainty, bloodletting, mayhem and the failure of the state which started in 1966 and escalated in the 1970s and early 1980s. Preoccupation with political ills diverted the attention of the painters, sculptors and other artists away from expressing anxiety and antipathy towards women's presence in Uganda's cities. Even though the construction of masculinity and femininity preoccupied mainstream debate and shaped Amin's decrees, it did not feature in high art. Artists put to work many of the resources developed since the mid-1930s but revised them to address immediate and politically important issues³⁸ for instance, mothers, children, the family, traditional narratives and symbols gained new and politically relevant meanings.

For instance, an anonymous painter did *The Dusk of Aminism*³⁹ (14) (1978). The painting presents an apocalyptic composition filled with utter

destruction and mayhem. Now, although it was unthinkable in 1975 when he hosted the summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and he presented himself as a powerful leader with invincible military might that Amin's regime could collapse, this was inevitable after Amin invaded and annexed Tanzania's Kagera salient (Kyemba 1977:45). This annexation invited the direct entry of the Tanzania Peoples Defence Forces into the campaign to oust Amin in November 1978. I argue that the artist enunciates Amin's inevitable collapse in the fallen general we see to the left of the painting. We also see bodies of humans,⁴⁰ elephants and giant birds strewn with broken debris. This is the site where two rampaging, rapacious beings tie everything in their way with huge chains while ripping it open using sharp blades. Unlike in Matti's *In the city*, we see here a city which is tense and confused. Thunderbolts shatter the sky while providing a background light against which we see an entire city being reduced to rubble by invincible forces.

Intriguingly, there is a mother to the right of the painting. She, like the rural women we saw in the cartoons, wears a green skirt while her upper body is exposed. Her breasts are full; evidently she has been breastfeeding an infant before being disrupted by events which changed her space and time. If Maloba explored the symbolism of a stable mother supporting a jovial child to image a new and hopeful post-colonial nation-state in his *Independence monument*, the anonymous artist did the opposite. Turbulence has disorientated the mother and upset the bondage which was the basis for Trowell's *Mother and child* and Maloba's modelling class and monument. Here the mother is completely helpless. She falls backwards letting go of her child who falls in the opposite direction. Arguably, this gesture symbolises hopelessness and the collapse of the post-colonial state. In addition this iconography points to a new step in the evolution of the use of the symbolism of mother and child in the construction of the state.

John Alacu pursued a related strategy. In his *Broken eggs (15)* (1979) Alacu engages a theme related to the rituals associated with women's fertility and child-nurturing. He presents an insect creeping into the scene where mothers celebrate the birth of twins. It spreads its antennae touching the fabric in which the mother has wrapped herself and the twins. Its scale is imposing but the fact that it does not interrupt the mother who continues to breastfeed her children confirms that the insect is not dangerous. Women, and a girl, arrive with gifts of essence, jewellery and farm produce. There is a ritualised performance involving drumming and prayer. Two birds hover above the scene carrying green leaves from opposite directions. Kyeyune argues that they are 'reminiscent of Noah's ark. They indicate that peace and reconciliation was possible in Uganda as was the case in Noah's time' (Kyeyune 2003:182). Probably Kyeyune overstretched the case for reconciliation because there was no reconciliation in Uganda or outside.⁴¹ I, however, suggest that we admit his statement in as far as it shows how the artist intended his painting to address contemporary issues and how religious narratives were re-appropriated in this enterprise. If theological interpretations would suggest that the Ark was a reference to the salvation of humankind from sin, Kyeyune submits that Alacu used it in reference to 'activities taken from daily life characterised by village rituals, urban living and delicately balanced between survival and destruction' (Kyeyune 2003: 182).

Destruction, recklessness and desperation are evident in what immediately follows to the left of the mother of twins. Here we see an anthropomorphic figure also attending the occasion. It spreads its claws touching the mother of the twins while it breaks eggs on the ground, an ominous reference to vulnerability, recklessness and destruction. To the right of this creature are childless women, one of them carrying a cat on her lap. At least she has a pet. She is therefore not as desperate as another woman, to the right, who is offering all her jewellery as she prays for a child. Nearby, a snake stealthily grabs a child gobbling it from under

the leg of its unsuspecting mother who fixes her hair as she sees herself in a mirror. There is a similar scene in *Mother's nightmare (16)* (1979) where Alacu creates a scary scenario in which a monstrous creature devours a child. According to the title of the painting, a sleeping mother is going through a terrible nightmare involving the loss of a child and thus the very essence of motherhood.

Rose Mbowa wrote about the way during this period theatre responded to the repressive regimes. She argued that two forms evolved to address the 'horrors unleashed by political repression': one involving 'farces and musicals'; the other illusive communicating 'at the inner level to its target audience through shared signs and symbols, while at the same time masking meaning from the ears and eyes of the state.'⁴² Kakande (2008:195) admits that a similar development evolved in the visual arts as contemporary artists attacked 'Amin's spectacular public image'. He uses Alacu's images to confirm his assertion. What must be added is that through his *Mother's nightmare*, Alacu politicised the rituals associated with child-nurturing while dealing with a 'frightening image of an evil regime gobbling up its own children' (Kyeyune 2003:182).

Arguably then, like with the anonymous artist and his own *Mother's nightmare*, Alacu's *Broken eggs* affirms that under periods of political uncertainty the symbolism of motherhood and the use of traditional rituals in Uganda's contemporary art gains new meaning. To demonstrate my claim there is another woman at the extreme right of the painting. She has hidden her child in a lidded basket. She is being dragged into the nearby bush by a blue-eyed monster. In the process the basket opens exposing the hidden child who is supernaturally being dragged along with its mother. The woman cannot help herself; she wails in front of another desperate scene in which a woman pleads with another creature which, after snatching her child by the leg, dashes into the nearby bushes full of other creatures, darkness and uncertainty. Also seen is a wild female

figure who puffs a large cigarette blowing huge plumes of smoke into the air as she strangles a baby with a rope.

State terror continued unabated until 10 April 1979 when the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) being the political wing of the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) overthrew Amin and forced him into exile. The takeover marked a brief return to normality. However, real and meaningful political sanity did not return to Uganda. The country quickly descended into dictatorship, misrule and total anarchy. In December 1980 Milton Obote rigged a democratic election and assumed the power that he had lost in 1971 to Amin. Yoweri Museveni mounted a popular rebellion, which Obote swore to crush at all human costs. In the process, his military committed many atrocities which Mathias Muwonge Kyazze summarised in his *Misfortune (17)* (1985).

Muwonge is a graduate of Makerere art School and he currently lectures there. He recollects that while on his way from home to Makerere University where he was a student from 1982 to 1985, he often encountered numerous roadblocks on the Kampala-Masaka highway manned by Obote's soldiers (Muwonge, interview 28 November 2007). Confronted by a strong rebel force and limited public support, Obote's soldiers mounted such roadblocks on all small and major highways across the country to screen and arrest rebels. This is not to suggest that the strategy was effective. In fact it had limited effect and the rebels knew this. As Museveni, the chief architect of the rebellion writes in his *Sowing the mustard seed: the struggle for freedom and democracy in Uganda* (1997), roadblocks were 'easy enough to bypass' (Museveni 1992:144). Besides, soldiers simply used many of them to rob from the population. 'Any soldier who needed money in an area of conflict would just pick an isolated strategic part of the road, put logs or chains across it, and wait for unfortunate travellers (Kasozi 1994:152). Most sadly, by 1985 the roadblock 'as a vehicle of repression had become an agent of death'

(Kasozi 1994:153). Located in the conflict zone Muwonge was no stranger to these agencies of death.

In *Misfortune* (1985) Muwonge captured an apocalyptic allegory in which sadistic creatures torment a naked woman. He deliberately accentuates anguish to provoke disgust from his audience. In the foreground, he depicts a reptilian creature emerging from the left of the painting to sting a badly mutilated human leg seen at the top of a pit filled with decapitated, decomposing, human body parts. It runs past a decomposing human head, which is melting, into the centre of the painting. Another creature charges from the left towards the centre wielding sharp blades. At the top insects tear through delicate larvae whose blood gushes towards the centre. On the right a fire blazes making its way to the centre while consuming everything in its path. All our attention is drawn towards the centre where a skeletal figure attacks a helpless woman ripping her apart and forcing her premature foetus to eject through her ruptured womb. The artist brings to the fore intense violence, recklessness and vulnerability: he incites aberration.

Muwonge's painting reveals socio-political iconography. He argues that in the painting he exposed the 'vulnerability of women during the Obote II regime' (Muwonge interview 28 November 2007), while critiquing Obote's second regime which was marked by misrule, pillage and torture. These two issues raise an interesting debate which merits our attention.

Firstly, it could be argued that the artist gave visual expression to the well-catalogued murders, mistreatment and sexual assaults women, and children, faced during Obote's second regime. For instance, the military used to open up wombs of pregnant women at roadblocks and during raids on villages. It was alleged that such women were carrying bombs hence soldiers had to open them up to ascertain if they were not rebel accomplices (Kasozi 1994:152). Many died in the process. Sometimes

mothers were killed and their children left in the wild. For example, the print media reported a boy child who had been left unattended somewhere in the Luweero Triangle (*Weekly Topic*, July 2 1986) – an area covering several districts in central Uganda which was the theatre of war. Apparently the boy survived miraculously because monkeys found and fed him until the end of the war. His mother was never found; she was killed most likely. This boy was lucky to survive because some children were murdered in front of their mothers. For instance:

...a three-month old baby was slashed to death at Namamve on the Jinja-Kampala road...because two hundred shillings were found folded within the baby's diapers. The mother was forced to sit down and watch her baby bleed to death (Kasozi 1994:152).

In addition, Gertrude Njuba is one of the women who fought the Obote regime starting in 1981. During our interview, she narrated an incident in which soldiers stopped a taxi which was transporting passengers on the Kampala-Jinja highway (linking Uganda to Kenya) at a roadblock. They forced every one out of the vehicle. There was a woman with a sick child among the passengers whom they wanted to retain at the roadblock while the rest continued with their journey. She insisted that her child was sick and that she therefore had to go with the rest. One of the soldiers said 'if this child is disturbing you let's help you' (Njuba, interview, 5 November 2007). He grabbed the sick child and threw it in a nearby river; the child was washed away downstream. Njuba concedes that little information is available on this woman because she was retained 'and no one knows what happened to her' thereafter (Njuba, interview, 5 November 2007).

Indeed Njuba, Kasozi and others who have made written accounts of the war hated the Obote regime. Obote's sympathisers have put up a spirited defence suggesting that it was the National Resistance Movement which Njuba, Kasozi and Museveni served which committed the atrocities in order to tarnish the government's image and rally support for the war. There is also a risk of what Moser and Clark call a 'stereotypical

essentializing of women as victims' of war (Moser & Clark 2005:4) as if men did not die and women, like Night Kulabako, a sub-county chief of Katabi, in Entebbe, were not allied to Obote and perpetuating terror, murder and extortion. In fact, Kulabako is reported to have set fire on one man, killed a pregnant woman and castrated a young male; she constructed a private prison at her house and detained people until they paid ransom (Kasozi 1994:156).

In spite of the likely criticism, however, these accounts are relevant. They catalogue the atrocities of the 1980s and help to contextualise the wider debate in which Muwonge's work was located. In light of Njuba's and Kasozi's views *Misfortune* becomes politically urgent. The painting begins to demonstrate how the artist used sexual violence and its impact on women, to represent and critique the wider issues of bad governance. In the process Muwonge revised and skilfully extended the use of the mother and child symbolism, which Trowell adored and Maloba had adopted in 1962.

In *Misfortune* Muwonge used the symbol of mother and child to show both violence and resilience. The badly mutilated woman braves the incredible pain projected on her face resulting from the tremendous tearing and chaining she is subjected to. Her right leg is tightly gripped between the robotic legs of the invading creature while her right arm and left leg are firmly tied to constrain and restrain her. And yet, ironically, the woman fights on with the only remaining arm which she uses to hold on to a rod. Kyeyune argues that:

As if to finally extinguish her, she is violently dragged to the grave below her, by a horrific and devilish skeletal figure whose claws dig and fiercely tear open her bleeding flesh. But she is determined not to give up...she bravely and spiritedly struggles to defend her life and that of her child, her future (Kyeyune 2003:186).

In light of Kyeyune's assertion it can be argued that Muwonge unambiguously used his work to contradict civility; his work questioned political insanity. While we saw in the *Independence monument* the artistic use of the mother and child, as a 'cherished allegory' (Sanyal 2000:192), to symbolise hope in the new nation state, in Muwonge's *Misfortune* the ruptured mother and still baby are deployed to make the case that by 1985, hope had been replaced by hopelessness, senselessness, torture and death. In short, Muwonge deployed the allegory of the mother and child to attack post-colonial ideology and critique dictatorship. His work elicits fear, vulnerability and death, rampant at the time. He, like Alacu, radically revised the theme and symbolism of the mother and child which Trowell had thought was ideal for the instruction of art and imagined as stable in her *Mother and child*.

The widespread terror portrayed in the aforementioned works ended in 1986 when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power and instituted reforms that saw women rise to new heights. If women and women issues had been sidelined at the time of independence the NRM put women's rights on the top of public discussion. Also, the change of regime freed the creative energy thereby inviting artists to respond in many different ways..⁴³ A combination of these two factors saw contemporary visual artists deliberately joining the production of gendered visual art on two fronts. On one front, contemporary visual art became a site for resisting women's claims for equality and self-actualisation; contemporary artists joined the debate we saw in Drinking H₂O's cartoons and p'Bitek's poetry. This movement contains much detail and forms the bulk of this thesis. I discuss it in chapters three, four and five. Artists also celebrated the gains women made towards realising their rights and liberties. Two artists need specific mention. Alex Baine did *Women's emancipation in Ugandan* (1989); Bruno Sserunkuuma made a group of pots called *Uganda Women in development* (1992).⁴⁴ I will not labour a discussion on Sserunkuuma's pots since they have been discussed in

Kakande (2008: 287-288). However in the next section I analyse Baine's work.

2.8 ALEX BAINE AND WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION PROJECT OF 1989

Alex Baine is a contemporary female artist who graduated from Makerere Art School in 1989. She has not done any other painting since her graduation. This is because when she left the Art School she got married and had to raise her children. In 1998 she was recruited by the *New Vision* as a graphic artist from where she resigned in 2003 and returned to Makerere University to pursue a master's degree in *Peace and conflict resolution* in 2005 – 2008. She currently runs her own company. It is evident that Baine's art career, like those of several other female graduates of the Art School, has been interrupted by many issues including family, business, further education and diversion into other professions.⁴⁵

While at Makerere Art School, Baine painted *Women's emancipation in Uganda (18a)* (1989). Three women sit in the foreground. To the left two are involved in mat weaving and basketry. To the right, a woman is cooking food in front of another woman who raises a pestle to pound dry ration in a mortar with a baby strapped on her back. Unlike the women in the foreground who are wearing *busuuti* she is wearing a *ssuuka*. She, like the other three, is thus identified as traditional just like the chore she is doing. A little girl sits next to the mortar. Without interrupting, she observes the different activities that the older women perform. Another older woman walks past her, balancing a pot on her head and carrying a baby in her left hand. Baine used local traditions as a source for her work. Many women do these things in the countryside. During periods of low agricultural activity, women make crafts as recreation and also to produce household items. In a recent interview she explained that the young girl is there to learn the different chores performed by the older women. Thus Baine, like the wider society, alludes to the widely held view that traditions are passed

on from old to young, mother to child. She gave visual expression to child-mentoring, an important form of informal education and transfer of indigenous knowledge which has kept many traditions in Uganda alive.

However, critics see these as perfunctory chores grounded in the belief that women's contribution to the rural/domestic economy has no monetary value. The patriarchal society perceives and applauds women who do domestic chores as wives and mothers who produce food and care for their households, nothing more (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:1). It takes them for granted. The mentoring cited here which assumes that girls inherit their mothers' trades is a process of socialisation that marks, maps and appropriates gender roles while marginalising women in Uganda (Matembe 2002:4). We will see in chapter five Kanuge using this socialisation as a device to counter women's claim for equality and self-actualisation.

Baine's painting, however, served a bigger role of seeing women's relevance beyond traditional spaces and chores. For example, the centre of the painting is guarded by a woman clad in full military uniform. She is energetic, carries a bag on her back, holds her naked baby against her chest using her left hand and holds a semi-automatic assault rifle in the right hand. A gun in Uganda is a weapon whose possession gives one immense power. Many presidents have relied on their monopoly over the gun to claim and assert their power. Baine's representation is therefore a giant step in the use of mother and child symbolism. She, unlike Maloba in his *Independence monument*, makes women possessors of the instruments of coercion, power and authority. The child in this case has become subordinate. Baine's woman is active in national politics and not passive like Maloba's.

Located in a different history, this figure immediately acknowledges the role of women (mainly the mothers) of Uganda who had participated in the

1981-86 armed rebellion that overthrew Milton Obote's second regime. It is a fact that during the rebellion, many mothers took up arms. For instance, Dora Kutesa and her husband Pecos Kutesa were active soldiers during the rebellion when they had a daughter. Nicknamed 'Sergeant' the child was born in the middle of heavy gun fire (Kutesa 2006:160). Gertrude Njuba is a decorated female officer in the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces. She left her children with her sister to join the force in 1981 when it was still called the National Resistance Army (NRA), the armed wing of Museveni's NRM. Joy Mirembe was the 'lady who braved the dangerous route of taking the [NRA] fighters to the bush' (Kutesa 2006:168). She died in the war zone while giving birth.

Next to the female soldier, the artist presents a medical facility with a patient lying in bed. A woman, dressed in a white overcoat with a stethoscope around her neck, stands and takes notes. She is a medical professional in a medical facility treating a patient assisted by a nurse. To the right of the treatment facility other women serve in offices: one is taking a telephone call, the other is placing files in a filing cabinet, and another is working on a computer as a man (probably a client) waits to take instructions from her. All this happens on the side of a dressmaker who works on a sewing machine tailoring flowing robes worn by female graduates who line up against a backdrop of a large building which is identifiably Makerere University administrative building. Some of them wear ceremonial robes which transform into curtains for a medical facility, a salient recognition of the role of women's education in transforming lives.

I have already pointed out that after taking power, the NRM proposed a policy of affirmative action, to increase women's enrolment in higher institutions of learning. Although initially targeting the intake at the prestigious Makerere University, the policy rolled out into all five public universities. Baine's all-women graduation procession may be criticised for supporting the very issue the policy of affirmative action intended to

address, namely: giving higher education to one gender. The work, however, adequately serves its role of celebrating improved women's access to higher education.

In the upper right corner of the painting, Baine depicts a woman standing on a podium addressing a public gathering cast against multi-storeyed buildings symbolising an urban area **(18b)**. Unlike the women in the immediate foreground who are dressed in traditional garb, the public woman, who in our interview the artist called 'a liberated woman', wears a modern dress. She is therefore symbolically distant from the domesticated women one sees in the foreground.

Baine's representation of women outside the rural domesticating space locates them firmly in the 'new generation of autonomous women' that emerged in Uganda in the 1980s through higher education. These women took specialised professions, maintained a public rather than private presence and participated in the acquisition and dispensation of state power. What Baine does not capture is the other fact that the women successes she celebrated attracted serious acrimony and resentment from men who felt threatened by women's advancement. In the next chapters, I extend my debate and demonstrate how this patriarchal response took visual expression.

The discussion in this chapter has shown that during the 1930s a new genre of contemporary art was born in Uganda through colonial and missionary education. The instructors intended to produce what they considered a true genre of African art inscribed in local traditions and forms of expression. Since some of the traditional themes explored had polyvalent meanings interlaced with appropriations of power in a domestic economy, the resultant visual expressions became gendered. Here lay the birth of a new genre of contemporary gendered art in Uganda before its

path was altered and mediated by different political changes which have affected the country since colonial times.

It has also been submitted and demonstrated that by 1975 the fight against 'free women' had informed the arts and received mass circulation through the novel, cartoons and the press. However, this debate did not attract many contemporary visual artists. The few who took part in it made oblique and subtle visual comments. Their criticism, if any, was not as sharp as that found in the laws, press, African novel and cartoons. The majority of the visual artists were preoccupied with the wider concerns over the health of the nation state; they problematised and re-appropriated traditions, the mother and child symbolism, and invented apocalyptic scenes to deal with the carnage of a brutal state. The NRM's assumption of power brought sanity while deliberately emancipating women. It also freed creative energy some of which was channelled to celebrate the new generation of autonomous women in Uganda.

Endnotes

¹ For more on class formation in Uganda see Mamdani (1999).

² Daudi Chwa grew up under the care of an English tutor John Sturrock. He absorbed the best in English aristocracy. He, however, wrote the article from a personal experience in contestation of what he perceived to be a skewed cultural and social development of Buganda and Uganda as a whole.

³ P'Bitek was one of the emergent radical Africanist scholars who had benefitted from colonial education before they turned to criticise it. Other scholars included Camara Laye, Chinua Achebe and Kenya's Ngugi wa Thiongo to mention but a few notables. P'Bitek wrote *Lak tar* (1953) in which he critiqued the effect of colonial modernity on African lives. He also wrote *Song of Lawino* (1966) and *Song of Ocol* (1967) in which he critiqued the behaviour of the African post-colonial elites who had betrayed the expectations of Ugandans.

⁴ For detailed information on Fisher's works see *A Life out of the Ordinary*, first published Monday 13 February 2006 by Martin Baines, which pays tribute to his mother, Geraldine Mary Gordon Baines, who died at Ashford Bowdler on 25 January, aged 98. See: <http://archive.ludlowadvertiser.co.uk/2006/2/13/9740.html> or accessed 2007/08/07

⁵ There is an interesting scholarship on this line of argument in Sanyal (2000).

⁶ Bark cloth is made by flattening the bark of a ficus tree into a brown, light fabric material using assorted mallets. It is dried, sewn together and worn. It is not clear when bark cloth usage started in Uganda and its origins are still debated among scholars and the Baganda (Lugira 1970:57, Reid 2002:72-73). Ganda mythology suggests that bark cloth was brought by the first king of the Baganda called Kintu, a mythical figure much adored by this ethnic group. Initially, bark cloth was a fabric worn by royalty (Roscoe 1911:403) before Kabaka Sematiko forced peasants to produce and wear it (Roscoe 1911:403-406; Lugira 1970:57; Reid 2002:72-73). However, there is evidence

to suggest that the tradition of making bark cloth and wearing it spanned the entire Great Lakes region by the advent of colonialism (Burt 1995:75-88). For recent scholarly work on the history of bark cloth and its transformations in Uganda, see Venny Nakazibwe's thesis titled "Bark-cloth of the Baganda people of Southern Uganda: A record of continuity and change from the late Eighteenth century to the early Twenty-First century" (2005).

⁷ The papers could have been baptismal certificates, which were, and are still, cherished by many Christians in Uganda. Those who carry baptismal cards are entitled to benefits including a descent burial honoured by a priest. Those without them are often shunned and despised.

⁸ The *kikoyi* is another stiff cotton cloth which is used as an undercoat to give the woman's body curves.

⁹ Luganda is the language spoken by the Baganda (singular o-muganda). Kawalya was a Muganda.

¹⁰ *Boma* is a swahili word referring to a strategically located, fortified, colonial outpost where most Europeans, resident in Kenya, lived.

¹¹ This community is the third largest ethnic group in Kenya's Machakos District..

¹² Unfortunately this archive is lost.

¹³ Mulago Hospital is the biggest referral and teaching hospital in Uganda. It is located in Kampala. It is here that Trowell's husband was posted as a lecturer and trainer.

¹⁴ See debate on the evolution of this market in Mamdani (1976:17-39).

¹⁵ For example see, among others, (Kaggwa 1934), (Roscoe 1911).

¹⁶ For more see (Ssetuba 2002).

¹⁷ Wrestling is a popular male sport in Uganda. Horses are not common in Uganda. They are associated with Europeans and the middle classes. Colonials had them; today we find them at affluent resorts like Speke Resort – Munyonyo. Men habitually sit in folded chairs locally known as *mwasajjute*. These chairs however have an important position in a household. Called *entebe ya nnyinimu* (in Buganda) or *entebe ya nnyineeka* (in Western and South-western Uganda), folded chairs are associated with male ownership of the household. They are not to be sat in by anyone else but the head of the house or his successor (called *omusika*) at his death. It is not clear what Trowell intended with men thinking. Although the representation of male thinkers was not new in modern art following Rodin's *Thinker* (1902) which Trowell was aware of, it cannot be said with certainty that she intended that her students follow Rodin.

¹⁸ Let me also add here that today guns have replaced spears as instruments of defence. However, many traditions in Uganda still insist that every man keeps a spear. There are important rituals attached to them. For instance, the Baganda perform rituals called *okwabya olumbe*. These are last funeral rights marking the end of the period of mourning for an adult person. For men, the deceased's spear is handed to his successor who must be a boy/man. Women/girls succeed women through rituals in which spears are involved.

¹⁹ A lot has already been published on Maloba's career in text books, journals, the press, catalogues and theses. I do not intend to repeat it here except in as far as it relates to the specific issues I discuss in this section. For more on Maloba see: Trowell (1957), Rajat Neogy (1963), Sanyal (2000), Kyeyune (2003) and Kakande (2008).

²⁰ Maloba was a professional student in the sense that he was not like the college students for whom, according to Principal Tomblings, art was a hobby course taken on Wednesdays. Maloba pursued art at a career level.

²¹ Gregory Maloba, *Death* (1941). Grovillia wood, 65cm, Uganda Museum.

²² For more see artist's explanation in Neogy 1963.

²³ Jacob Epstein, *Day and Night* (1928). London transport museum.

²⁴ Trowell was aware of this though. In her *African Tapestry* she conceded that although she could offer pedagogical, material support and self-reliance to her students, she was in no way able to 'tell how far they would go' (Trowell 1957: 110).

²⁵ *Lazarus* is a religious icon. Cited in the Bible (in John 11: 1-44), Lazarus represents devotion, obedience and faith. Epstein depicted Lazarus bound in his grave-cloths as he turns in response to Jesus' command to come out of the tomb. His face looks upwards while the entire body stands on a pedestal. I would argue that Maloba was aware of Epstein's *Lazarus* which was also published in *The journal of the Kenyan arts and crafts society* of June 1952 Vol 1 no 8.

²⁶ This would have been a community monument funded by private funds in contrast to Maloba's which was funded by the state. These aspirations were interrupted by the political turmoil which Uganda experienced in the intervening period of 1966-1986. In 2007, however, this dream was

revitalised although not exactly in its original form. With funding from wealthy Baganda, a monument, capturing Muteesa II dressed in his colonial military robes, was placed in front of the *Independence monument*. Done in a naturalistic style, the monument is immediately accessible to the wider public who are largely visually illiterate.

²⁷ After graduating from the Art School and as a result of ideological differences with the Todd-led administration which took over the school between 1959 and 1970, Njau was not accepted to join the staff there. Instead, he joined a nearby secondary school where he taught art to students many of whom joined the Makerere Art School.

²⁸ For more on how urbanization has altered the pattern of the community see Trowell 1957:155-164).

²⁹ For more discussion on Todd's ideological biases see Sanyal (2000) and Kyeyune (2003).

³⁰ For more discussion on Kingdon's career see Sanyal (2000) and Kyeyune (2003).

³¹ See Sanyal (2000) and Kyeyune (2003) for a complete list of all the lecturers who served under Todd, Kingdon and there after.

³² For more on this debate see (Kakande 2008).

³³ Berlington Kaunda, *Village Wedding*, (1966). Oil on board, MTSIFA Gallery.

³⁴ Berlington Kaunda, *Village Jazz*, (1966). Oil on board, MTSIFA Gallery.

³⁵ This position has changed over time. According to the last census done in 2002 the country has 95 males for every 100 females. See report published by Uganda bureau of standards (2002).

³⁶ Drinking H₂O did most of the cartoons in the *Voice of Uganda*. He was a contemporary Ugandan artist whose real name has remained obscure. This is because cartoon and satire are not taught as subjects at Makerere Art School since they are considered low art. However, many graduates of the Art School have done cartoons under pseudo names. They deploy the skills they gain in drawing, graphics, painting and design to develop personal styles. For example, Fred Sennoga graduated from Makerere Art School in 1987 after majoring in painting and graphics. He did most of the cartoons of the 1990s under the pseudo name Snoggie. Charles Onen graduated from the Art School in 1997 after majoring in painting and graphic design. He currently is doing cartoons for the *New vision* under the pseudonym of Mr. Ras.

³⁷ Platform was a reference to their raised soles that looked like platforms. Wearing these shoes also gave their owners (men and women) a sense of artificial height above their normal height. They looked as if they were standing on platforms. Platform shoes continued to be popular until the 1980s. Short people used to like them; the shoes would enhance their height.

³⁸ This point is also made in other scholarships; it is well articulated in Kyeyune (2003) and Kakande (2008).

³⁹ This painting is in the Makerere Art Gallery collection. Like its title, its author is not recorded. In his thesis Angelo Kakande gives it this title which, as he explained to me, comes from the fallen high-ranking military officer in the foreground.

⁴⁰ See photographs of Amin's massacres in Seftel (1994).

⁴¹ In fact, in his *Roots of instability* (1996) Sam Karugire writes that Ugandan dissidents failed to reconcile their differences until President Nyerere of Tanzania brought them together in the Moshi Conference convened on 28 March 1979 when the invading forces were on the outskirts of Kampala and only thirteen days before the collapse of Amin. Nyerere needed the meeting to map out a strategy and government that was to replace Amin. The conference led to the formation of the Uganda National Liberation Front being the political wing of the Uganda National Liberation Army. This umbrella organisation took power on 10 April 1979. However, political, religious, ideological and tribal differences re-emerged leading to the collapse of the first post-war Lule-led government after only 68 days. The next government collapsed 90 days later and was replaced by a military commission. The ruling class in Uganda had irreconcilable differences that were a source of instability and led to backstabbing, divisions, coups and coup-plots in the period 1979 to 1986.

⁴² For more on this discussion see Rose Mbowa, *Theatre and political repression in Uganda*, Indiana Press, 1996. Also available online at <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3820312> (accessed on 14/2/2010).

⁴³ There is a discussion on them in Sanyal (2000), Kyeyune (2003) and Kakande (2008).

⁴⁴ Bruno Sserunkuuma, *Uganda Women in Development* (1990). Earthenware figurines.

⁴⁵ For more discussion see Nagawa (2008).

CHAPTER 3

Women in the public space as agents of immorality and disease

When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in 1986, it initiated and implemented major policies that bettered the position of women in Uganda. As indicated elsewhere in this thesis, the NRM's policies led to the shattering of the glass ceiling and the opening of floodgates for women's access to new opportunities and spaces. A new breed of Ugandan women was born (Byanyima & Mugisha 2005: 202-245) and the numbers of women working outside their homes increased significantly (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:184). When they moved into the public space, women faced severe backlash characterised by 'resentment and aggressive and unethical forms of competition' (Byanyima & Mugisha 2005: xiv) from their male counterparts. In this chapter, I discuss the work of artists who have contributed, in individual but related ways, to the visual discussion on the *new woman*. I analyse how their themes of the materialistic gold digger, prostitute and vector for HIV and AIDS became convenient tools to fight autonomous women. I show how being *new women* themselves, two women artists have engaged themes similar to their male counterparts (and teachers) while pointing to the wider social problems that afflict society including women.

3.1 MUSANGOGWANTAMU AND THE SHAPING OF UGANDA'S

GENDERED ART

Francis Musangogwantamu (1929-2007), abbreviated as Musango, is a contemporary Ugandan artist and former student of Margaret Trowell. Trowell visited the religious order of the Brothers of Christian instruction at a place called Kisubi located on Entebbe road with an interest in recruiting students. 'A few of the Brothers were given the seemingly simple task of drawing a line. Musango was the only one who could draw a free line without a ruler.' On that basis Trowell offered him a place at the art school

saying that 'I bet one day you will be the Fra Angelico of Uganda' (Nagawa 2004:17).

Musango joined Makerere Art School in 1954 and graduated in 1958. He was one of the first three students who enrolled for the new Diploma in Fine Art introduced by Trowell in 1954. After graduating in 1958, Musango pursued further education in Europe and later became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Art. He taught and headed the Art School from 1986 to 1997. Until his death in 2007, Professor Musango (as he was known to his students) enjoyed a long career as an artist and art instructor. Kyeyune (2000:79) believed that Musango was an ardent follower of Trowell's pedagogy. He is the only student of Trowell who taught at the Makerere Art School until the late 1990s when he retired to join the newly created Nkumba University where he established an Art School and led it until the time of his death in 2007. He taught all the artists discussed in this thesis; he is therefore very significant in shaping all the artworks I discuss from this point onwards.

Musango painted *The birth of Christ (19)* (1958) capturing a rural scene dominated by a banana (locally called *matooke*) plantation set against a dark sky. The darkness of the sky, and the heavy shadows cast by objects on the ground, create a night-like, quiet setting against which the artist projects a curious crowd approaching an illuminated mother and child. The mother is dressed in a white *busuuti*. She faces us kneeling behind a child who is also wrapped in white fabric. Behind the mother on her right, stand men dressed in modern outfits such as shirts, trousers and hats. On the left of the painting a wooden frame suggests a traditional paddock in which two animals are seen. In the centre we see a modern structure alongside an African hut.

Musango also did *Eddembe libe ku ggwe* **(20)** (1983-1986). *Eddembe libe ku ggwe* is a Lugandan expression meaning 'peace be upon you'. In this painting the artist projects a Christ wearing an orange turban on his head. On top of the turban is a halo with words, reflecting the title of the work, written in orange and blue colours matching the robe he is wearing. He is clearly identifiable as an African man.

He also painted *The good shepherd* (1996)¹ before he did his last work, *Christ visiting Karamoja* (2003) based on the religious theme. *The good shepherd* is a mural that was commissioned by the Benedictine Fathers in Nairobi, Kenya. The work is hard to access. However, Nagawa (2004:20-21) quotes Musango to have described it as a mural in which the artist depicts a tall man standing among a herd of sheep holding a spear and a staff. Some of the sheep are satisfied after eating plenty of grass and are resting on their haunches probably chewing the cud. Others are still grazing while one looks directly towards the herdsman who, being a representation of Christ, wears a long white robe which is not traditional to the Masaai of Kenya. However, the sandals are identified as traditional to the Masaai. Musango argued that this work will for generations to come convey to local herdsman the message that Christ is an African. In *Christ visiting Karamoja* **(21)**, Musango depicts Christ wearing a thorny crown and standing next to a *Manyata* – a traditional hut among the Karamojong (people of Karamoja). The title, *Christ visiting Karamoja* confirms that Christ was visiting a place called Karamoja. Karamoja is in the northern part of Uganda. It is an insecure and undeveloped place notorious for cattle-rustling, war and hunger which have displaced many. It seems that Musango is suggesting that the place needs religious intervention.

The birth of Christ, Eddembe libe ku ggwe, The good shepherd and *Christ visiting Karamoja* represent four decades of Musango's artistic career. His enthusiasm to indigenise Christianity may 'be traced from Trowell' (Kyeyune 2004:29-30); his works demonstrate that, like other students of

Trowell, Musango based his art on religious and social narratives while fusing traditional and modern ideas – a strategy he pursued throughout 40 years of his artistic career.²

We saw in Chapter Two that based on Christian-Judaic normative values Trowell's instruction led to the placement of women in domestic and subordinate positions. Musango took this up. For example, in *To the well (22)* (1958) he presents three overlapping women in the middle of a rich landscape surrounding a water hole located in the right hand bottom corner. Two are draped in the traditional *busuuti* walking behind the third wrapped in the traditional *suuka* style. They balance metallic containers known as *debbe* on their heads. It is difficult to balance an empty container on one's head – more so an aluminium *debbe*. This is because, given its light weight, it may be blown away by wind. That Musango's women are strolling down a hill to the well would imply that they are balancing empty *debbes* on their heads. Yet they do not fall: this is a symbolic gesture which alludes to mastery of skill. Balancing items on one's head is a skill gained with experience. Clearly, Musango intended to show that the women before us have mastered the skill of collecting water to such an extent that they could even balance empty *debbes* on their heads. It is, however, unclear why the woman in front is also holding an improvised material in her hands. Equally ambiguous is the role of a tall wine bottle decorated with geometric African motifs and placed in the immediate foreground of the painting.

In Uganda, it is not uncommon to see women going to a well to collect water. Some have to trek long distances. If these are the women Musango refers to in this work, then the painting demonstrates in the first place that he reflected African themes in his art as Trowell would have liked. Beyond that, however, the painting confirms that the artist marked the sex, ethnicity and occupation of his subjects by using dress and normative

conventions. Thus, although richer in details and better in terms of understanding pictorial space and colour, this painting is ideologically close to Kawalya's *Returning home*.

Most importantly, four years before his death and battling ill-health, Musango revisited the ideology in his *To the well*. In *Daily chores* (23) (2003) he captures an obvious rural scene with two women in bent position, washing in front of an old structure. The style here is distant from that of the 1950s: it is clearly bold and impressionistic. His use of a clear blue sky and thick dabs of yellow remarkably shows the effect of a bright tropical sun on an open landscape interrupted by architecture, isolated patches of bare soil, short vegetation and rolling hills – a typically idyllic, rural landscape.

It is obvious from the title of the work and his visualisation of women locked in the act of washing clothes, that the artist reconstructed and legitimated ritualised traditional orthodoxies. Pictures with women engaged in 'traditional' women's work are commonplace in African art – and such images are produced by white and black artists. However, the fact that they are ubiquitous and banal does not make these images neutral. For example, in Uganda it is conventional to consider the washing of clothes, digging, cooking and child nurturing in a home as primarily woman chores. This is emphasised during rituals preparing women for marriage called *okufumbirira* among the Baganda, Musango's ethnic group.³ By placing women in the foreground of an isolated countryside scene, the artist confronts us with the normative role of women in a domestic economy.

Being one of the last works he did before his death in 2007, Musango's *Daily chores* foregrounds his idea of women in the domestic arena. However, as I demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, since the mid-

1980s reference to such chores has served a specific political goal in as far as daily chores have been emphasised as a 'set of expectations for women' (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:2) intended to challenge women's claim for equality and self-actualisation. Such criticism may be used against Musango's *Daily chores*; it provides a point of departure for a discussion of his *Love letter to Rose* (1987), *Sleep iv* (1987-93) *Sleep v*, (1987) and *Emptiness of lust* (1987-96) to which I turn next.

In *Love letter to Rose* (24) (1987) Musango portrays a reclining figure of a solitary woman wearing white underwear. Dominating an ornate bedroom, she supports her torso with her elbows cushioned by a soft pillow. She lies on her stomach and crosses her legs as she reads a document. The artist used heavy brush strokes and sharp highlights to construct and sharply contrast the round, almost metallic body of the woman with its environs. This renders the woman tough and youthful. The conventional imagination of women in Uganda – that is, the notion of being a woman – is inscribed in frailty. Here, one could argue, Musango does the opposite by capturing a tough *jeunesse dorée* who reads documents and does not live according to a set of prescribed expectations about women.

Letters can generally be used to circulate information; love letters are used to cement relationships among the educated and wealthy elite. However, their usage was not so widespread in Uganda by the time Musango did his work. This is because the 1980-1986 civil war had completely disrupted the postage delivery system and illiteracy levels remained high with women forming the majority of illiterates (Kwesiga 2002:3). Probably Musango's image highlighted the few privileged women who could read and write letters.

In Uganda, the notion of reading in contrast with household activities is often associated with men. For example, the *Weekly Topic* of December 30 1985 published a cartoon entitled *The burden of a traditional woman*

(25). It presents an industrious woman who is machinelike. She uncannily performs all domestic chores simultaneously, such as child nurturing, cooking and sweeping. On the right, a man is seated on a modern sofa reading a newspaper. He is obviously of the elite, wealthy and modern and thus wears modern accoutrements. It is clear that he owns the house and the industrious woman we see in the foreground. He crosses his legs to display his overall power and authority over the space and everything in it.

Kwesiga (2002:114) observes that:

Due to their lower levels of education, multiple roles as well as discriminatory customs and practices, women in Uganda tend to be less informed than men...have less access to...newspapers, television and radio – the key information sources in the country....

The fact that the man is reading the broadsheet while the woman is involved in the normative multiple roles defined by customs and traditional practices, confirms that the cartoon reflects the reality which Kwesiga paints in the above excerpt. The comic strip also affirms that because they have access to information, men in Uganda are aware of (and take part in) the shaping of mainstream public opinion and discourse while, drowned in daily chores, women are denied such access because 'cultural stereotypes view women as devoted mothers and dutiful wives'⁴ (Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974:1).

Since Musango presents Rose reading just like the man on the sofa and not doing domestic chores, he affirms that Rose is an elite woman distant from the machinelike woman portrayed in the cartoon. Hence it can be argued that the painting was informed by the new political reality through which the NRM prioritised women's education and enacted deliberate policies to increase women's access to education. As a result of these policies women served roles which were hitherto preserved for men. Musango's painting bears testimony to this fact.

However, while it is not uncommon for love letters in Uganda to be illustrated, there is something unusual about the love letter in Musango's painting. The available visual documentation is poor and cropped leaving out important details. The original work is currently not accessible but I saw it before the artist's death. It had a message encrypted into objects symbolising material things: dollar bills, houses and other improvised signs. Implicit in this symbolism is the material(ised) world which Musango's Rose is preoccupied with.

Bantebya and McIntosh (2006) argue that since 1986 material wealth in terms of houses, money, cars and land has been used to define and project the power of the emergent middle-class which has benefited from the NRM's economic reforms. It is equally true that women have taken part in the country's fast growing economy: they have acquired property and many are financially stable and hence independent. Against this complex debate Musango's symbols become encrypted representations of property and wealth. In addition to ornate beddings and curtains these symbols present Rose as a middle-class woman distant from the archetypal rural traditional woman we saw in *To the well* and *Daily chores*.

And yet traditionalists and conservatives in Uganda believe that women are not supposed to do the things Rose is preoccupied with. They have used acquisition and dispensation of wealth to criticise urban and elite women as being materialistic. Some women are not bothered by this negative stereotyping. For example, Nina Karugaba is a wealthy interior designer and property magnate who has accumulated a lot of property in Kampala. She built an impressive high-rise structure on plot 41 Jinja Road which accommodates her businesses. Located in the middle of town, it is named after her, Nina House. But the majority of women have reacted by stealthily acquiring property and registering it under children's names⁵ and other pseudonyms. This was captured in a popular vernacular newspaper called *Bukedde*, published on 12 May 2010. It carried a letter from a

reader complaining about women who hid their properties from their husbands. In a cartoon accompanying the letter, a satirist depicted a woman hiding behind a latrine. She is unaware that her husband is overhearing a conversation in which she uses her mobile phone to give instructions to her constructor. 'I will bring cement in the evening but I must go now because my husband might catch me making this call and know that I own property', she says before hanging up.⁶

As we saw in Chapter One, this debate, and the strategies women adopt in response to it, is in itself not new. It dates back to the 1900s; Amin exploited it to radically marginalise women through expulsion, rape and imprisonment. However, if there is no evidence to show that it informed contemporary artists before the mid-1980s, Musango's *Love letter to Rose* confirms that by 1987 the discussion over elite women and property had shaped contemporary visual art. Musango engaged the notion of reading-a-letter as a strategy to expose the preoccupations of elite women who had abandoned their conventional roles.

3.2 IMAGING THE 'DEFECTIVE CLASS': MUSANGO AND HIS STUDENTS

Catherine Namono⁷ who is a graduate of Makerere Art School, did postgraduate research from 1987 to 1996 under the supervision of Musango. In it she analysed *Love letter to Rose* as a didactic device intended to educate Ugandans, and women in particular, on immorality. She argued that this moral lecture was urgent because, as she stated:

With the desire to be modern, young women in society [resort] to prostitution which [is] endemic because of natural instinctive male demand and the regular supply of young women from a morally defective class of people, the urban proletariat (Namono 1996:107).

Namono does not clearly spell out how she systematically arrives at this meaning or how Musango served a benevolent duty using a solitary figure of a woman encased in a private space. She does not define her notion of

the urban proletariat, although the way she uses the phrase reminds us of the Romans where this notion was used to characterise urban population as a source of political uncertainty and instability in Roman civilisation. Women activists would reject her claim as a pejorative construct which conflates women's access to urban space, and quest for improved lifestyles, with moral degeneration. Namono's statement is also consistent with suggestions that men are not prostitutes. Rather, they are vulnerable to feminine wiles who seduce them into engaging in immoral acts (Eves 2003:229). Besides, the painting was never exhibited in such a way that it could be seen by Namono's urban proletarians. It remained in Musango's collection; its impact was limited to the artist's guests and students like Namono. That Musango personally supervised Namono's project, however, confirms that he tacitly approved of Namono's claim for his work. It is therefore arguable that the artist construes urban women as symbols of moral decadence.

It is not easy to find scientific data on the phenomenon of prostitution in Uganda around 1987. However, we need to remind ourselves that historically Uganda's debate on prostitution is not always based on statistics but rather on perceptions. Unfortunately such perceptions serve to fight against women who join the city as a public space. As we saw in Chapter One, these perceptions have been exploited to expel women from the city. I thus argue that read against Namono's claims Musango's *Love letter to Rose* amplifies the theme of urban prostitution to fight the emerging woman in the public space. The work showcases the interface between modern art and the debate on Uganda's *new woman* informed by the common perception that it is improper for any woman to take 'up any role beyond the [traditional] household' (Dijkstra 1986:211). This perception often translates into a patriotic and moral duty to save society. It is this duty, rather than Namono's claims that the work is educating society, that *Love letter to Rose* seems to serve.

Against this backdrop, it becomes important to unveil and expose the misogyny, couched in the moral duty to save society, which had permeated the country's cultural discourse in the late 1980s and which Musango veiled in his work. This misogyny was shaped by the fear⁸ for women who had gained material wealth and careers during this period. It echoed the harsh criticism against women who took up 'powerful positions' in Uganda's social, economic and political arenas following the NRM's Ten Point Programme and implementation of the affirmative action policy.

The fear for women resulted from the concern that non-conforming women disguised their chauvinism under calls for self-affirmation and liberation. It shaped public debate and culture. For example, the Maindu Actors performed a play called *A liberated woman* (1987). Staged at the National Theatre in March 1987, the play questioned the essence of women's liberation. It was not documented and preserved but the *Weekly Topic* of 11 March 1987 published a review of it which gives an idea of its plot. It is reported that the play opened with a group of women gathered for a women liberation meeting addressed by the 'guest speaker', Lady Firgil Mandy 'brightly dressed in tinted glasses, outrageous lip stick and high heeled shoes to give the audience [a feeling] of a ridiculous repulsive female chauvinism'. In placing the liberated woman (defined by the accoutrements of heavy make-up and Western fashions) at the centre of a generally traditional scene while reducing women's emancipation to female chauvinism, the actors intended to persuade their audience to see the *new woman* as an alien agent of Western cultural imperialism and thus a threat to the country's moral fabric. To build their case, the Maindu Actors accused women activists of importing incongruent Western ideas which would not 'solve problems of our own [African] societies' (*Weekly Topic*, 11 March 1987:10) but adulterate them. In the play women's emancipation was rejected as an antagonism set to engender an unhealthy atmosphere in which women abandoned their household responsibilities as wives and mothers. This, it was dreaded, was bound to

collapse the family and ultimately the state. Clearly, although locked into anti-imperialist propaganda, *A liberated woman* gained another equally important dimension. It became a powerful propagandistic tool in undermining modern women in Uganda.

If the fear and its attendant misogyny, explicit in the play *A liberated woman*, remained implicit in Musango's *Love letter to Rose*, it became sharp in his *Sleep v (26)* (1987). *Sleep v* was part of a series of paintings in which the artist interrogated the theme of sleeping as is evident in his two sleeping figures in *Sleep iii* (1987-95)⁹, abstract patterns in *Sleep iv* (1987- 1993)¹⁰ and *Sleep vi* (1987-2000)¹¹ in which he painted a nightly space with illuminated objects and grass. However, Musango's *Sleep v* is unique in its visualisation. The artist portrayed a reclining woman resting against pillows with her eyes closed. Her left hand covers or touches her left breast while her right breast is left bare. She spreads her legs open towards the viewer showing her white panty which serves to introduce a decorum of modesty and to render the work acceptable to a largely conservative Ugandan public. In this work the notion of sleeping gained some subtle erotic connotations. However, compared with his *To the well* and *Daily chores* in which he emphasised a work ethos, in this work Musango alluded to the contention that elite women are not productive; they are slothful and self-indulgent.

Emptiness of lust (27) shows a female figure filling the foreground. She faces upwards and wears thick make-up. She thrusts her head backwards causing her long, tinted hair to swirl. In Uganda, the chemical treatment of hair and hair extensions became fashionable in the mid-1980s. Because of their high price, only rich urban women could afford them and the wearing of Westernised coiffure became a beauty statement and a mark of high status. Clearly, Musango captured this development.

However, Musango's attention to hair reminds us of the late nineteenth-century Western cultural discourse in which women's hair was considered to be strongly ambivalent. On the one hand it was fetishised because it was believed to glorify a woman. And on the other, hair caused anxiety among men (Dijkstra 1986:229). It was an 'object of desire and fear' which attracted and repelled (Allen 1983:196). In the milieu of Art Nouveau, artists saw hair as the 'most effective lethal weapon' the *femme fatale* used to seduce men (Bade 1979:13). Intriguingly, a similar situation unfolded in Uganda during the late 1980s. As seen in *A liberated woman* (1987) women with long, tinted, straight, curled or braided hair were considered to be fashionable and beautiful, but also seductively destructive.

It can be argued that through his *Emptiness of lust* Musango tapped into this debate. This explains why the hair of his woman swirls into an aggressive storm which agitates the entire sky adding to the fluidity of the decomposing environment in which the woman stands. The artist uses several plots to convince his audience that the woman is immoral and materialistic. She is what Mullins (1997:17) would describe as being 'quintessentially vicious'. She occupies a strange, uninviting and uninhabitable space which contrasts starkly with her tender, light skin. Her eyes are closed; her lips part. The artist engages a surrealistic visual strategy to expose a sense of narcissistic self-indulgence and greed for fetishes and material things which have ruptured the woman's body. Shoes, jewellery and other synthetic objects ooze to the surface to unveil the major preoccupation of the 'material girl' before us. Her right breast metamorphoses into a gaping mouth coated with thick lip-stick. Her left breast is wrought in a belt diagonally fastened by the hand of an anonymous subject.

Placed in a wider context Musango's *Emptiness of lust* recalls the play *Ntabadde mu ddya* (1987) and the sexual politics which shaped it. Staged

at the National Theatre by Kampala Golden Performers in 1987, the entire play was set in a modern sitting room. Ntabadde was married to a young man called Donozio. The play characterised the couple as mismatched because Donozio is a humble gentleman who had a wild woman, Ntabadde. Throughout the play Ntabadde is depicted as the heroine of a hilarious comedy. She was an emancipated, seductive, 'beautiful, lazy woman merely obsessed with beautifying herself by conning money and favours from her several lovers' who became 'her victims' (*Weekly Topic*, 20 May 1987:10). Ntabadde is imagined as a vampire on the loose; men had to be warned. In other words, the play was grounded in wild imaginations; it constructed the notion that a woman who took control over her sexuality was a dangerous prostitute, a vampire, a vicious 'gold digger'. It was reported in the press that the play served to teach men not to marry debauched women such as Ntabadde.

These issues merit further explanation because they have continued to inform popular culture, the press and other forms of visual expression. For example, in 1989 they were at the centre of the play *The dollar* (1989). Performed at Theatre Excelsior in Kampala, the play showed the 'disgrace, power and glory' (*Weekly Topic*, 12 April 1989) associated with business women. It was performed by Jimmy Katumba and the Ebonies – a popular performing and music group of the late 1980s and 1990s. *The dollar* highlighted the fear that because of their insatiable quest for material things urban women had abandoned their prescribed roles as wives and mothers and resorted to the pursuit of wealth. The Ebonies presented wealthy women as immoral beings who are greedy, and the group wanted its audience to accept this view. Six years later, *The Monitor* of 8-10 February 1995 published a cartoon under the title *Gold digger on the prowl* (28) depicting a super-rich woman standing in an anonymous space. She puffs a cigarette and holds a bottle of liquor in her right hand. Her artificial nails are sharp and elongated. She wears a mini dress with matching high-heeled shoes. She also wears dark shades and jewellery,

has heavy make-up and a fashionable coiffure. To confirm that the woman is extremely rich, her handbag is overflowing with US dollars. All these are not mere beauty accessories, but devices the cartoonist uses to critique women who had joined the mainstream public and economic life of Uganda.

Women were largely absent from international trade by the mid-1980s. Their economic world changed significantly when the NRM took power and the formal economy became functional again. The number of women working outside their homes increased phenomenally (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:184). In the midst of women working in small scale production and/or retailing food, drink, cloth, or clothing, a new breed of entrepreneurial business women emerged. They took up positions in the middle and higher rings of society. Some benefitted from the educational opportunities available at secondary and university level (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:194); others profited from the peaceful environment made possible by the NRM government.

The majority capitalised on the shortages resulting from the harsh economic regime which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund imposed on Uganda in the 1980s (Tamale 1999:3) and taking advantage of the demand for consumer goods, women traders travelled to East Asia, the Gulf and Western countries to import clothes and cosmetics. The fact that the woman in the cartoon is loaded with US Dollars confirms her access to this global market.¹² Located in this environment women entrepreneurship blossomed; some women have amassed immense wealth. They lead lavish lives, own large estates in urban areas, drive expensive cars with personalised registration number plates. They formed organisations such as the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Ltd (UWEAL) and Uganda Women's Finance Trust (UWFT) among others (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006: 26). The cartoon

published in *The Monitor* of 8-10 February 1995 is steeped in this economic and political reality.

However, Uganda's new breed of career women entrepreneurs has been disrespected; they have 'faced severe criticism and sometimes ridicule mainly through the press' (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:197). For example, pejorative labels such as the 'Dubai women' have been conveniently deployed in reference to women who engage in international trade to question their sources of money; the very fact that some married women had gone into business has provoked concern (Bantebya & McIntosh (2006:172). Because of these two reasons, the rich businesswomen have been sexualised and accused of prostituting their bodies to all races and classes of people during business trips.

In the 1970s women fought similar labels by packing children in their cars.¹³ Related tactics were deployed in the late 1980s when some women incurred 'added expense' and travelled with their husbands during some of their business trips in order to allay fears and restore confidence (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:172). This, however, did not remove negative sentiments nor the stigma. The new mantra became 'prostitution, prostitution, prostitution' (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:173). It was used to qualify the notion that the entry of women into business (and their immense wealth) degenerated morals. Being economically successful as a woman became synonymous with a transformation from a good (natural) woman into an uncontrollable, licentious gold digger, a whore (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006: 173) – a construct which women have rejected¹⁴.

The above findings could also help us understand the caption underneath the cartoon published in *The Monitor* of 8-10 February 1995 which reads: 'Gold digger on the prowl'. In the West the gold digger represents a 'woman as the personification of everything negative that is linked to sex, ownership, and money' (Dijkstra 1986:351). In Uganda, gold diggers are

known as *Abakuuzi*¹⁵ (singular *Omukuuzi*). *Omukuuzi* was initially used in reference to women who engage in illicit polyandrous, heterosexual relationships for self-enrichment before it was generally applied as a label for 'militant feminists', 'materialistic' gold diggers who are 'not worth marrying'. Behind this set of issues (and plays such as *The Dollar*) is the perception that women's economic success results into moral decadence; affluent women are incompetent housewives. To confirm the popularity of this debate Charles Wachira wrote an article which was published in *The Monitor* of 20-22, September 1995 under the title 'Men still prefer illiterate wives' in which the author contrasted elite, urban, wealthy women with their rural, poor, illiterate sisters while suggesting that the latter are better housewives.

In short, the cartoon in *The Monitor* of 8-10 February 1995 shows that there was a wide debate in which Musango's *Love letter to Rose* was located. By linking these works into the wider cultural debate of the time captured in theatre, we access the complex gendered debate implicit in Musango's painting but explicit in the cartoon. These images, just like theatre, tapped into the fear towards high class independent, liberated and super-rich women that emerged after 1986. They conflated women's control over their mobility, sexuality and economic resources with the exploitation and loss of men's economic prowess and status (Bashin 1994:6-9). This anxiety is often informed by a gendered power matrix¹⁶ inscribed in the need to control (and police) women who are economically stable while asserting male power and dominance. Through drama this debate informed public culture; through the press it has shaped public discussion with equal force; clearly through Musango's *Love letter to Rose* it informed contemporary visual art.

Namono also argues that in *Emptiness of lust* Musango imagines the *new woman* as a vector for HIV/AIDS. Thus the painting was intended to warn

society about the potential for debauched urban women to spread diseases. She writes that

Musango displayed his ability to critically analyse change. Whereas he promoted the purity of form in the nude, he warned against misuse of that pure sensuous form that led to...destruction especially in our society where the scourge of AIDS was rampantly spread[ing]... (Namono 1996:108).

Again it is not clear how this complex argument can be deduced from a solitary female figure. It is true that in Western art, the convention of the nude positions the female form as an idealised rendering of beauty. It is nakedness which is subversive. Namono's claim for pure form is, however, contestable. In Uganda outside of the drawing class, the line separating the visualisation of the female nude and nakedness is blurred (and this will become obvious in Chapter Four where I discuss the *Nude exhibitions/shows*). While it can be argued that the painting strikes an identifiable moral cord, it is not clear how it is related to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

According to Wallman (1996:3) AIDS is an acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus which attacks the body's immune system. Unable to defend itself from invading pathogens the body undergoes a complex health condition characterised by ill-health resulting, if not treated, in chronic morbidity and socio-economic stress.

The earliest cases of HIV and AIDS infection in Uganda were reported on the shores of Lake Victoria in the mid-1980s. However, locked in myth¹⁷, misconceptions and denials¹⁸ no immediate steps were taken to deal with the problem. This is not surprising. In Uganda it is widely believed that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) stem from 'moral transgression'. They are seen to be what Ogden and Bantebya (1996:148-150) call 'illness as a moral category' and hence not discussed openly. Politicians contented that HIV/AIDS was a counter-revolutionary plot instigated by the

opponents of the ruling National Resistance Movement which took power in January 1986. As a result, AIDS-related illness and deaths were not publicly discussed.

It took the audacious intervention of Philly Bongoley Lutaaya (1951-1989) to unravel this plot, challenge the conservative actors behind it, and bring the discussion on HIV/AIDS into the public domain and mainstream discourse. Lutaaya was a Ugandan-born musician living in Sweden. He returned to Uganda in 1989 and delivered an emotional speech in which he publicly declared that he had AIDS. In his speech, also published in the *Weekly Topic* of 11 October 1989, Lutaaya argued that:

There is no sense in looking for guilt or origin when it comes to AIDS. What matters is that it can affect any one of us; you, your best friend, your neighbour, your children. What makes it so difficult to master this dreadful disease, for which there is no cure, is that it is so closely related to one of our most important desires, our sexuality. My message to all of you and especially the youth is therefore to learn as much as possible about AIDS and love responsibly...AIDS should not be fought by just a few, to be able to overcome it we have to fight together (*Weekly Topic* 11 October 1989:21).

Lutaaya used film and song to deliver his message to a wider audience. For example, on his album *Alone* (1989), he demystified AIDS and called for compassion towards those suffering from the disease. Although initially misunderstood¹⁹ Lutaaya's message and its delivery were effective. Tears were shed during his shows and speeches. His message that AIDS was not a myth but a sexually transmitted disease which could affect any sexually active person was finally accepted. His call to Ugandans not to stigmatise those who were already affected or infected – now referred to as 'AIDS victims' – was heeded. Consequently, people living with AIDS received compassion from non-government organisations (TASO among others). Myths and fiction about HIV and AIDS slowly gave way to calls for change in behaviour – or what Lutaaya called loving responsibly. During his concert at the Sheraton Hotel in Kampala, Lutaaya called on government to stop politicising the epidemic and rather concentrate on

treatment and prevention. Government accepted; it mobilised funds from local and international sources to disseminate information and research on AIDS.²⁰

In other words, the phenomenon of HIV/AIDS and its connection to Musango's work invites a deeper analysis than what Namono provides. She does not demonstrate how the above issues (or indeed any one of them) are infused into *Emptiness of lust*. But I suggest that we admit Namono's claim as a valuable point of departure for an analysis on how the fear for HIV/AIDS can be heightened to what Eves (2003: 249-264) called an apocalyptic scale before being deployed to fight the *new woman* through high art.

In summary, Musango's *Love letter to Rose* and *Emptiness of lust* confirm that, unlike before the mid-1980s, during this period the debate over independent wealthy women preoccupied artists' imaginations and received visual expression as well. Thus Musango opened a new chapter in which contemporary art joined the battle against non-conforming women. This battle was symbolised by the use of a materialistic *new woman*, who is imagined as a non-traditional, morally defective, urban woman, whose love for property leads her into selling her body and spreading HIV and AIDS disease. Starting with the 1990s these issues have been vigorously explored by Musango's students, Kizito Maria Kasule, Francis Xavier Ifee and Godfrey Banadda to whose work I turn next.

Kizito Maria Kasule is a graduate of MTSIFA where he also lectures and heads the Department of Fine Art. In his *Containing the gold digger on the prowl (29)* (1995) Kasule depicts a round frozen face peering through a gap framed by three anthropomorphic birds. The birds have long beaks and humanlike breasts on their chests and they have human legs. Since 1990 Uganda's artists have used marabou storks to critique avarice,

corruption and misdemeanour, poor service delivery and maladministration (Kakande 2008:220-230)²¹. During our interview the artist revealed that in this work he used marabou storks (which are locally called *kalooli*) to symbolise elite women who recklessly, and with insatiable greed, search for material things and hurt men's feelings (Kasule, interview, 2006). The painting is probably more subtle than the explanation offered for it. However, the explanation confirms that the artist depicted the vulnerability of men in his painting; his womanlike birds, or *women-kalooli*, are in fact representations of Uganda's *new woman*.

Dijkstra argues that representations of anti-feminine attitudes are part of a wholesale espousal of misogyny in which ordinary acts of love are seen as no more than submission of the soul to the materialistic enticements symbolised by woman's hunger for gold (Dijkstra 1986:398). Against this backdrop visual constructs are often famed for the excessive sexuality and powers of seduction of a woman which Dijkstra calls the woman's 'viraginity threatening' the opposite sex because it reduces real men to 'mock men'. Dijkstra concludes that 'it is clear that a fear of competition of the workplace lay behind much of the high minded arguments against the viraginous tendencies of the new woman' (Dijkstra 1986: 211-215). Although informed by local discussions, historically, culturally and geographically removed from Dijkstra's Europe and the United States of the 1900s, this analysis is relevant in as far as it unveils an ideological platform while demystifying the misogyny couched in high art. Seen in this light, Kasule's *Containing the gold digger on the prow* joins *The Dollar* and cartoons as an expression of the fear that women who own economic resources, their sexuality and mobility, can hurt men. Like Musango's *Emptiness of lust* Kasule's *Containing the gold digger on the prow* highlights the difficult challenge of sustaining polygamous male control over a new breed of non-traditional women.

Kasule also produced *Girlfriends (30)* (1995) in which he depicts three naked female figures floating in space. They wear heavy make-up like the woman in Musango's *Emptiness of lust*. They smile softly and close their eyes. This representation renders the women frivolous. A loose garment flows around and between them defining their tender bodies. The artist remarkably attends to the women's erogenous zones – the lips, the breasts, the navel, the genitalia, the thighs – which he moulds with strong highlights. Kasule states that the women floating in space constitute a symbolic gesture characterising women's inhuman nature (Kasule, interview, 2006). This is an interesting symbolism although it has no local precedents. But we learn from Dijkstra (1986:87) that the theme of women floating in space is not new; it became common in late nineteenth-century paintings when male artists portrayed weightless floating women. This representation was based on the premise that 'to walk is an act... [and]...a way of taking charge. And to the late nineteenth-century male nothing was as unwelcome as the thought of a woman – even as embodiment of nature – taking charge' (Dijkstra 1986: 87). The patriarchal male 'wanted to be in charge [it was his instinctive and natural] *right* to be in charge' (Dijkstra 1986: 87). Making a woman weightlessly float in space served that role if symbolically. It signified the woman's 'willing or helpless submission' while permitting the male to 'maintain his voyeur's distance from this creature of nature...which fascinated and frightened him' (Dijkstra 1986: 88-89). Put differently, artists can strategically mitigate the threat of women using nudity and weightlessness.

Francis Xavier Ifee (1958) is a graduate of MTSIFA. He is one of the few students Musango taught at secondary, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He is a prolific oil painter, water colourist and a graduate of Makerere Art School where he currently lectures. He has also served as Head of the Department of Painting and Art History and Associate Dean of the School.

Many of Ifee's pre-university paintings are lost without a trace. However, he has kept a visual archive of the works he did at the University which reflect one of the major preoccupations of Trowell's pedagogy, namely the use of modern materials and visual vocabulary to express traditional ideas.²² He executed paintings celebrating the way in which beliefs, attitudes, 'social behaviour, dress appearance and general lifestyle' of the Madi from Northern Uganda have been informed by contact with other cultures.

At postgraduate level Ifee completed a project titled *Painterly, creative images and symbols derived from Madi Culture* (1991) in which he interrogated ways in which 'visionary' art can be inspired by the artist's 'cultural background' and the socio-political environment in which the artist lives. According to Ifee high on his list of visionary art were Giorgione's *The tempest* (1508)²³ and Hieronymus Bosch's *The ship of fools* (1490-1500)²⁴ and *Garden of earthly delights* (1510).²⁵ Ifee argues that Giorgione and Bosch captivated him by the way they used art to critique what he called 'the moral decadence of society' (Ifee 1991:9).

Bosch's works contain social commentary. However, David Carrier (1993:130) reviewed *School of Giorgione* (1877) in which Pater made connections between Giorgione's *Tempest* and the making or hearing of music. Carrier was ready to accept that *Tempest* is a 'political allegory' rooted in Greek mythology. He, however, roundly rejected Pater's claim for the link between art and making of song as 'false and misleading' (Carrier 1993:130). Ifee's claim for the link between *Tempest* and decadence in society could be rejected for restricting the meaning of Giorgione's work. Yet this does not alter the fact that access to *Tempest* set Ifee off on a different path making political allegories.

Secondly, Ifee was aware that his Western predecessors were informed by their own space and time – for example he noted that 'Bosch's symbols

were only intended for his society and were understood by them' (Ifee 1991:12). He thus took up the Western strategy and critical stances but revised them using Madi themes and artefacts which he transformed into symbols committed to criticising moral decadence among the elite in Uganda. In the process his works gained a national, rather than strictly ethnic, character and relevance. It is, however, interesting to analyse how Ifee's committed paintings became gendered and misogynous.

In *Caught in action (31)* (1996) Ifee captured a scene in which an elite woman (recognisable by her braided hair) turns her face to the viewer. She is held by an unidentified man for whom she acts as a shield while protecting him from public view. The two are intimately involved in a sexual act. To the right of the painting is another man who is equally naked. He peers into the scene grinning, apparently waiting to take part in the act before us. Behind the couple is another naked 'green woman' who is spreading her legs to suggest that she is as immoral and licentious as the woman at the centre of the painting. She too is elite judging by her modern hair style and body leggings which are rarely used by traditional women. The scene is crowded and transformed into a sexual orgy in which courtesans attend to their client's desires. In explaining the work Ifee narrated as follows:

This woman is looking good but infecting people one by one. She is not alone. There are others there...all the women who do the same trade (Ifee, interview, 2009).

In light of the artist's explanation it could be argued that the painting reveals a concern over promiscuity which, by 1990, had become the main way of spreading (or, to use the artist's language, infecting people with) venereal diseases, mainly HIV/AIDS. Implicit in Ifee's explanation is a continental concern over the escalating problem of HIV/AIDS infection and its link with promiscuity. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch observed that 'around 1990, at least 80 percent of Nairobi prostitutes were seropositive

for AIDS' and that the picture in 'Kinshasa, Douala, Abidjan and elsewhere' was no different (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1994:128).

In our interview, Ifee explained that:

From the late 1980s I really wanted to answer burning questions about AIDS which questions I completed answering in 2002 after the Ministry of Health contracted me to do an illustration on AIDS control. After that I did not paint any AIDS scenes because I thought I had answered a question which was burning (Ifee interview, 2009).

Administered under the Ministry of Health, the Aids Control Programme uses donor and government funds in its campaign to control and treat HIV/AIDS in Uganda. Often it commissions artists to do thematic works on relevant HIV and AIDS-related questions, themes and topics. Unfortunately Ifee did not keep samples of his illustrations which have all disappeared. It is thus difficult to ascertain which 'burning questions' Ifee resolved through them. Clearly then, unlike Musango and Kasule, Ifee worked on the public campaign against the spread of HIV/AIDS. It could be argued that his paintings are part of this campaign.

What can be inferred from the paintings as he resolved the 'burning questions' (whatever they were) is that Ifee visually constructed a class of defective women who remain good-looking 'infecting people one by one'. First, from this construction it is arguable that his artworks are steeped in the countrywide discussion in which the word 'prostitute' has acquired particular connotations in Ugandan language. It has become shorthand for a non-conformist woman; it is part of an old scare tactic rooted in colonialism which has been intended to keep women away from the urban and public spaces.

Secondly, Ifee's explanation underpins a biased attitude which must be critiqued. On the one hand the artist imagines that the heterosexual man in his painting is the representation of society – or what he calls the 'people'. This representation, for Lerner (1986:220), is a 'conceptual error'

which makes the 'term "man" subsume "woman" and arrogate to itself the representation of all of humanity'. Thirdly, the artist revisits the strategy of reducing non-traditional women to reckless vectors of venereal diseases and a risk to public health which, as we saw earlier, dates back to the 1900s.

The prostitute i **(32)** (1998) is another work by Ifee presenting a contorted naked female figure. She wears modern hair styled in a long pony tail running behind her back to mark her as a sophisticated, urban, elite woman. Although she shares a backdrop with her sister in *It is my duty* **(33)** (1998) the two are representing different worldviews of a woman. In *It is my duty* the artist depicts a graceful, ideal woman. Her short hair and dress code confirm that she is rural. She bends down to pick up a basket of fruit, posing momentarily to watch her baby yawn. This gesture allows the woman to display selflessness and motherliness. This is a strategy the artist has deployed to convey the message that the woman before us has accepted her traditional position and role in society, namely that of a dutiful mother.

In total contrast to the woman in *It is my duty*, the woman in *Prostitute i* is marked as such by the use of make-up. She looks straight in the viewer's eyes not embarrassed by her athletic display of nudity which is taboo in Uganda. Her eyes glow; her lips part as if to communicate with the beholder. She is thematically close to her sister in *The prostitute ii* **(34)** (1998), an oil painting in which we see a single green female figure seated on a couch arranging her long braided hair in front of a mirror. She is preoccupied with makeup and thus, in Bosch's words, earthly delights. She wears red lipstick and black lingerie. Ifee explains that in this work he depicted

...the lady [who] earns her living by selling herself...now she is in the mirror preparing to go and sell herself. By doing so, of course, she is spreading the disease...the woman wears long braids to make her appear beautiful so as to attract men and infect them with AIDS (Ifee, interview, 2009).

It is difficult to see how such a complex social concern informed by the fear of a disease which overwhelmed the country's public health system and risked eroding all economic gains made between 1986 and 1999 can be pinned on a solitary figure arranging her hair in a mirror. However the artist's claims present two points for discussion. First, it demonstrates how the artist moved from a health campaign to using images to fight against elite women construed as having an insatiable appetite for the material world which we also see in his watercolour painting entitled *Need some money* (35) (1999). In this work Ifee presents a solitary nude female figure seated on the floor. She turns to the right sitting on her knees with her feet spread outwards. She tilts her head upright allowing her short, treated hair to fall backwards as she closes her eyes. In our interview Ifee told me that *Need some money* is about a modern woman who practices prostitution hoping to acquire wealth and modern looks.

Ifee was sensitive to the woman's vulnerability as seen in *The victim* (36) (1999) where the artist captures a stormy sky against which he presents two naked figures lying on the ground. One is identifiable as a woman. She screams as she touches her aching arm in front of a ghoulish figure. Ifee's use of elaborate texture harks back to the morbid themes of the 1970s and early 1980s, for example in John Alacu's *Mother's nightmare* (1979). The act of screaming has symbolic value too: it allows the woman to show her missing teeth which, together with textured skin and ruptured ground, are evidence of trauma. Further trauma derives from the absence of a second breast which, according to Ifee, has fallen off due to the intensity of the AIDS disease.

An awareness of women's vulnerability did not, however, stop critics of affirmative action from using AIDS as a tool to fight women's claims for liberty. Parikh (2007:7) argues that in Uganda HIV/AIDS is part of the political economy in which marital HIV risks are appropriated. In this appropriation women are accused of being carriers (rather than being

victims) of HIV/AIDS: they are the vectors. Men are never held responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS. In the process, concern over the spread of the disease has turned into what Obbo (1998: 208) calls 'the feminization of the AIDS pandemic' in which the *new woman* was accused of being the very embodiment of AIDS. It is in this context that a campaign was mounted targeting liberated women – especially women in public spaces – accusing them of spreading HIV and AIDS. This debate touches on two related issues which have shaped Ifee's idioms. The first one is the reference to a public woman as an embodiment of 'sexual pollution' (Gottlieb 1990:115) which always signifies the denigration of women in general. The second is that which Eves (2003: 231-235) recognised as the notion of the AIDS epidemic as a 'social phenomenon' deeply intertwined in socio-political negotiations and power.

Banadda (1958) is a graduate of MTSIFA where he teaches and served as Head of the Department of Fine Art for a long time. He is a prolific painter with a wide interest in his Baganda (Ugandan and African) culture. He engages mythologies to create images of women as cultural symbols. He is a student of Musango but he also received instruction from Ignatius Sserulyo and Pilkington Ssengendo, both of whom are students of Cecil Todd and Jonathan Kingdon. His work testifies to all these influences. For example, his reverence for traditions goes back to Trowell while his emphasis on colour theory and mastery of technique is probably Todd's.

Banadda painted his *Omukuuzi* (1995-2000) **(37a)** with great care and attention to detail, texture and pictorial composition. It is so complex that it, unusually, took him five years to complete and in the process the artist gave it other titles. For example, although the painting initially carried the title *Omukuuzi*, he subsequently exhibited it on a few other occasions under different titles. He called it *Reflections of nature* during one staff exhibition before titling it *Another day in paradise* during the 5th All artists' exhibition hosted at the Nommo Gallery in December 2002. This is not

unique to Banadda. Francis Ifee used the title *Do I make myself clear* (1997) during his solo exhibition *Images of reality from 1988 to 2002* hosted at Makerere Art Gallery in October 2002. However, during an interview in 2006, the artist renamed the same painting *Prostitute*. These are only two examples, but the issue of renaming artworks touches on other forms of political art in Uganda including the national monument, namely the *Independence monument* (1962). Contemporary artists either reread meanings or they alter titles to avoid controversy and sanctions but also to avoid disrupting their market (cf Kakande 2008). In spite of the name changes, however, the subject matter has remained the same.

Banadda's *Omukuuzi* (translated the gold-digger) is an image of a woman dominating the entire painting in a cross diagonal form. The figure is identifiably middle-class because although most women in Uganda have short hair, middle-class women buy hair extensions, imported from Asia, which they fix on their heads. We see this on Banadda's *Omukuuzi* where the woman wears a modern hair style that runs down her back to the hips. The hair style is complemented by heavily applied make-up accentuated with red lipstick as if to recall Musango's *Emptiness of lust*.

Omukuuzi has wide eyes with two overlapping irises (37b). Both irises have highlights suggesting the presence of an invisible light source that illuminates the scene. Banadda explained that the woman 'shares the pupils of a cat and a reptile' and that he used this symbol to show his concern over ways in which women can use their charm and sexuality to exploit men. To show this vulnerability and the exploitation which accompanies it, the artist spreads the woman's arms in different directions thus providing space for three birds to perch. One of the birds looks unique with a humanlike male face. It symbolises men who 'keep flying back to materialistic women for sexual relationships and in the process women take their money' (Banadda, interview, 2006). He argued that as a

result of this unbroken flying-back-and-forth men spend all their money on women.

First, the visual strategy deployed here has no immediate local precedents, but reminds us of nineteenth-century artist Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921) who, in *The supreme vice* (1885)²⁶, *The meeting of animalism and the Angel* (1889)²⁷ and *Medusa asleep* (1896)²⁸, constructed the beastly nature of women by linking them to animals. It also recalls Franz von Stuck's *Sexuality* (1897)²⁹ and Joseph Mullner's *Medusa* (1909)³⁰ in which the artists made associations of women with cats, reptiles, mermaids, vampires and disease. Bade (1979:6) argues that most of the animals used in that period were chosen for their repulsive characteristics – qualities which were also attributed to women. The artists wanted to depict the 'preoccupation with evil and destructive women...as the most striking features of late nineteenth century' cultural discourse. Bade sees this as 'a deep-rooted misogyny' of the period (Bade 1979: 6) inscribed in the visualisation of non-conventional women as perverse, vicious, subversive and dangerous to society. Banadda's concerns are local. However, Bade's criticism is helpful in understanding the politics behind his *Omukuuzi*.

Secondly, the woman's right arm terminates into an open palm which stops her from swiftly fleeing westwards thus allowing us to view her voluptuous body. Her left arm ends in long nails that sprout into decorative floral patterns which add to her beauty and flamboyancy. Both arms allow the giant figure to remain afloat in space. She does not look as weightless as Kasule's *Girlfriends* because her size is imposing; it overwhelms the land and actuarial environment captured in the picture plane. The act of floating, however, allows Banadda's woman to flirt with the audience and the man perched on her left arm who is now reduced to a dependant. Other women, some in seductive poses, raise their arms in a ritualistic

ensemble in which other amphibious creatures – tortoises, birds, plants, et cetera – partake in joyous harmony.

In *Dare to touch* (38) (2009)³¹ Banadda depicted a woman who sits attentively against a backdrop enriched with flower petals and buds. The artist continued with the symbolism of an erotic woman-as-a-plant which he started in 1995 when he did his *Fertility and elegance* (39a) (1995). Here he captured two heads of women with short braided hair, supported on long, elegant necks transformed into stems of flowers. They sprout from a deck of flowers some of which stay on top of their heads (39b). A subtle blue background rolls down into a simple horizon which allows the eye of the beholder to remain glued to the two emblematic female heads whose femininity is reinforced by the elaborate geometric patterns on the stems. The woman in *Dare to touch*, on the other hand, has a delicately round feminine body undisturbed by the strong texture resulting from the artist's use of thick colour mixed with sand. She wears varied shades of make-up dominated by a green tint. This shows her preoccupation with cosmetics and worldly delights.

The woman shifts her head to the left supported by a long slender neck. First, this shift creates movement and gives life to a woman sitting in an erect pose. Second, the posture is an artistic strategy demonstrating the artist's understanding of pictorial anatomy and composition. The woman also wears two types of gloves: one is rough and prickly like her hair. She wears it on her amputated right arm. The other is a latex grey glove holding a bouquet of flowers. This gives the decorum of high class to the woman. She also wears a white panty. Together with the bouquet of flowers, this accoutrement is a powerful emotive symbol.

In his catalogue in which he explained the technical and ideological issues behind this work, Banadda explained that the woman symbolises seduction (Banadda 2009:20). This is confirmed by his use of flower petals

to construct an erotic woman-as-flower-petals. He, like Kasule in his *Girlfriends*, also uses strong highlights to draw his audience's attention to the woman's sexuality and erogeneity.

He also wrote that the left 'gloved hand symbolises ... the culture of condom-use which is normally discarded unquestioningly as the relationship goes into charming trust, ending into infection with HIV' (Banadda 2009: 20). It can thus be stated that Banadda dealt with a problem concerning the recent increase in the number of couples infected with HIV/AIDS and its wider social implications.³²

Although, given the stigma attached to the disease, statistics are sketchy and inconclusive, current data indicate that there is more HIV/AIDS infection among married couples in Uganda than among the unmarried. This is a recent development which has complicated earlier (traditional) strategies deployed in HIV/AIDS prevention starting in 1990. By the year 2000 government and non-governmental organisations (mainly religious houses) encouraged Ugandans to get married in order to prevent HIV/AIDS. However, recent statistics have indicated an alarming increase in infection among married couples. This is because many married couples are unfaithful; they continue to engage in risky, illicit, sexual relations outside their marriages – through the phenomenon called '*having side dishes*'. And yet it is a taboo to insist on the use of condoms within marriage because it can be a source of mistrust and marital problems. Hence as a demonstration of trust many spouses do not insist on condoms which is so far the most effective way of preventing the spread of HIV among Ugandans who cannot abstain or practise fidelity.

To tackle this recent problem, government and non-governmental organisations have launched a multi-dimensional campaign targeting married couples. Government has drafted the controversial *HIV Prevention and Control Bill* (2009) which 'requires mandatory disclosure of

one's HIV status¹³³ to his or her partner. There is also a massive public health campaign to change habits. Codenamed RED, the programme uses massive billboards strategically located on all major roads, the print and electronic media, to fight extramarital relationships and the phenomenon of 'having side-dishes.'¹³⁴ Thus by putting latex on the left arm of the woman the artist invented a complex symbolism with which to address a concern which was of interest to his fellow artist Ifee.

Also, the artist uses the cactus-hair and cactus-hand-glove as devices to express the view that the woman before us is an unreliable (Banadda 2009:20), licentious, seductive, money-hungry vector of HIV/AIDS. He explained that the thickly painted lips in *Dare to touch* 'connote the *blood likely to be contaminated and the mercilessness of money-sucking....*' (Banadda 2009:20; my emphasis).

Lugira (1970:46, 47) argues that hair length and style frame personality, beauty and status among women in Buganda. Being a Muganda himself, Banadda is aware of this tradition. However, the artist went beyond this traditional appropriation of hair to demean and constrain Uganda's women. The artist explains that he used the cactus plant to construct and propagate the image of elite women who, for him, are 'often malicious ... snaky and hypocritical in character' (Banadda 2009:20). It is in this context that he transformed the woman's hair into prickly cacti rooted in her skull and towering into a massive superstructure. In other words, the woman in *Dare to touch*, just like her sister in *Omukuuzi*, is lustful, materialistic and 'will melt a man's heart' (Banadda, interview, 2009).

This work then betrays the artist's conviction that a liberated woman has so much 'powers that she can [transform the man] into a helpless' man (Banadda, interview, 2006). She is a materialistic gold digger who preys on her sexual partner and reduces him to a 'defenceless, unthinking and vulnerable' man – her very 'prisoner of sexual charm and erotic

enchantment' (Banadda, interview, 2009). It is very interesting to note that unlike in *Omukuuzi* where the male victim was weightless, dependent and present, in his *Dare to touch* the man is absent from the picture space. It is this absence placed against the artist's explanation that simultaneously transforms the beholder into both the witness and victim of seduction and erotic charm.

3.3 FROM A PROBLEM TO A VICTIM: THE *NEW WOMAN* THROUGH THE LENSES OF WOMEN ARTISTS

Rebecca Bisaso graduated from MTSIFA in 1989. Francis Musango was her teacher when she painted *Woman's burden (40)* (1989). The painting is not so much a display of mastery of the human figure, colour theory and perspective as it is an expression of a socio-political message.

By 1989 Uganda's economy had slumped due to war and misrule. Many Ugandans were destitute; government could not provide basic infrastructure and amenities. The artist makes reference to these conditions using a thick, yellow fog enveloping a sprawling slum characterised by dilapidated houses, poor sanitation and lack of basic services.

Cast against this backdrop is a giant female figure wearing heavy make-up. Like her teacher Musango and others after him, the artist uses the tropes of make-up and coiffure to define the elite class of the woman. Her hair is styled into tree branches on which wild birds perch and, just like the domestic birds on the ground, copulate. She holds a bank note in her left hand to confirm that unlike the traditional woman whose contribution to the economy is private and thus not monetised, her role in society belongs to the public cash economy.

The woman directs our attention, and that of a large crowd of men surging towards her, to the left. It is difficult to control the packed crowd

descending towards the foreground where there is still some open space. Thus the gesture does not entirely redirect the male crowd; some men are already preoccupied with the woman's body. This in a way creates a multiplicity of meaning for the work while caricaturing men's insatiable appetite for the naked female body which, as we see in Chapter Four, has been explored by male artists.

In the immediate foreground we see a man. He is not like his two counterparts standing to his right who are preoccupied with the woman's body. The fact that he turns his back towards us strategically serves two purposes. First, he remains anonymous as he uninterruptedly receives the giant woman's unstated message. Secondly, he takes with him the artist's audience by looking up at a curtain which has been perfectly drawn and fused into a metamorphosing, skeletal figure. The figure bends forward to draw our attention to a space where a couple is sharing an uninterrupted, intimate moment in bed. The lovers cover themselves – another strategy which allows the artist to communicate an obscene act without being offensive and vulgar.

Kyeyune (2003:188) argues that the image is that of a prostitute and that the crowd is queuing to sleep with her; that the 'oxygenated red of the voluptuous body of the prostitute that dominates the painting magnifies her irresistible charm, sensuousness and desirability to men who both infect her and become infected thereby'. I did not manage to interview the artist to obtain her views. While I cannot entirely agree with Kyeyune's reading, I concede that the painting raises a moral debate around issues of human sexuality. Bisaso's painting is couched in the view that when humans begin to behave like wild and domestic birds, they expose themselves to death. This message against illicit sex was important in 1989 when the country, following Philly Lutaaya's plea, was beginning to come to terms with the problem of HIV-AIDS.

And yet Kyeyune missed the gesture in Bisaso's painting together with its positive (if ambiguous) connotations. The woman seems to take the blame away from herself while pointing to human sexuality (represented by a couple in bed) and the search for material things (represented by the bank note). I argue that, unlike Musango and his male students for whom the woman was the problem since she was to blame for sexually transmitted disease, for Bisaso the woman was as much a victim as the men in the picture space. The poverty, lack of basic amenities, pollution and uncontrolled sexual behaviour seen in the picture were as much a problem for society as they were a woman's burden.

Bisaso uses parody to shift the blame away from the woman to the wider socio-economic hardships which turned many, including women, into destitute beings. She takes a large, female figure to dominate a space while playing a messianic role and duty before a vulnerable community, although her visual vocabulary (involving a naked body) could be criticised for having fed the woman's body to the male sexual gaze.

Maria Naita (1968) graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Fine Art degree in 1991 at MTSIFA where she also completed her Masters degree in 2000. Musango was one of her teachers in painting while Francis Naggenda influenced her sculptures. Naita's early works have been lost without a trace but the works she did in the late 1990s are available. They represent her exploration of Uganda's traditions and inquiry into the use of artistic media, assorted themes and form. She deploys skill and care as she handles her subjects and subject matter. Her forms are simple with varied textures and effects drawn from the materials or created through artistic innovation.

I refer again to Naita's work in Chapter Four. In this section I limit my discussion to her painting titled *Reading a letter (41)* (2010) in which Naita depicted two young women sharing a letter. The painting has a limited

colour palette handled with as much skill as that of her male counterparts. Naita pays attention to essential details and captures a specific moment rendering her message with precision. Unlike Musango's letter the contents (and subject matter) of the letter in Naita's work are private.

Seen against other paintings done in the same period it could be argued that her *Reading a letter* confirms that the artist has evolved a figural motif in which she wraps her subjects in headgears of varied sizes and weights. She does not mould forms. Instead she dramatises light to give effect to expression and character. Her women have warm faces bearing an uncanny resemblance with each other: they all have thick eye lashes, small sharp noses and lips defined by interplay of strong highlights and shadows. They have supple limbs that are held in different positions thus giving the women a sense of performance and mobility. Although largely missing in her sculpture, these attributes make Naita's paintings inviting to the beholder. They render the subjects in her paintings youthful, entertaining and flexible; they reinforce the socialising effect of Naita's paintings.

Naita uses her traditions and traditional artefacts to introduce multiple effects into her *Reading a letter*. She uses bark cloth to create a background. The green mat on the ground which provides a flat surface for the women to rest on enriches the texture of the painting, giving it a colourful tactile effect. By using her traditions to break the monotony in the background and foreground of her painting Naita gives them alternative meaning. Since women in Uganda are usually not agents of innovation and change, it could be argued that through formal art education Naita has been equipped to re-order culture thus rivalling her male counterparts.

Naita uses dress to identify the elite class of her female figures. Unlike the male artists Naita does not present elite women as self-indulgent and slothful. Reclined across the canvas, the women in *Reading a letter* direct

the beholder's attention to the letter. But whereas Musangogwantamu deployed the symbolism of reading letters to critique the materialism of bourgeois women, Naita does not reveal the contents of the letter. The act of reading a letter has become a process of internalisation where the two women are absorbed in their private mail. By leaving the beholder in suspense over what is in the letter, Naita allows the women in her painting to become privileged subjects with sole access to information. Thus if for Musango and his male students, the bourgeois woman was a solitary object of fascination and desire, for Naita she is a socialised subject with a right to privacy which must be respected. Reading a letter has no negative moral connotations.

Lilian Nabulime (1963) is a contemporary female Ugandan artist. She graduated in 1987 from MTSIFA as a sculptor. Since Uganda does not have a strong tradition in the sculpture of masks or figurative art Nabulime's practice is informed mainly by formal training. Using references to forms and styles from elsewhere on the continent she reinvents and reinterprets her sculptures into lived experiences.

There is no trace of Nabulime's early works before 1989-1992 when she completed a Master's Degree in Fine Art (MAFA) and sculpted *Kavuyo* (42) (1992). *Kavuyo* is literally translated as confusion. In our interview the artist explained that by 1992 she had developed an interest in using her art to comment on the socio-political issues that shaped her country. She maintained that *Kavuyo* symbolically represents the political turmoil which affected Uganda during the 1970s and early 1980s. This meaning is not immediately accessible in a piece of sculpture made out of the roots of a tree. What is clear, however, is that the work consists of a wide range of forms resembling reptiles and human forms intertwined and attacking each other. This creates the impression of a kind of battle for survival.

It is unclear when Nabulime moved from the wider political history of Uganda to focus on the historical circumstances that affect women in the country. In our interview Nabulime explained thus:

I want women to be emancipated through art. When you just talk or give them literature they won't understand because the majority are illiterate. Through art, women can be educated. If more women artists come up and produce art with strong messages to liberate, educate both women and men, the struggle [against women's marginalisation will move] faster. Through art, one can effectively communicate socio-political messages across a diversity of tribes ... languages and cultural bases. Art can transcend the temporal limits ... languages and speech, and that's the challenge I would like to portray in my sculptures. (Nabulime interview 15 May, 2011).

Nabulime believes that art in general (and sculpture in particular) is a universal language which speaks across sexes, tribal differences and classes. In a country still struggling with high levels of illiteracy, Nabulime is of the opinion that art can offer a better form of instruction. Although her position is disputable I suggest that we adopt it as a context for the analysis of her works.

Believing in art's ability to emancipate society (both women and men) Nabulime has used her art to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS. Nabulime's campaign started with a personal story in which her husband died of HIV/AIDS. She was fortunate in never contracting the disease. Following this traumatic experience Nabulime went to the University of New Castle and pursued a PhD in which art became the voice for those suffering from all problems associated with HIV/AIDS: degrading treatment, stigma, poverty, death, exclusion, etc. Nabulime specifically sought to develop sculptural forms which can communicate HIV/AIDS awareness. She experimented with different concepts and materials generated from learning about the lives and experiences of women living with HIV/AIDS and organisations involved in HIV/AIDS-related activities.

After completing her doctorate Nabulime returned to Uganda and hosted the exhibition entitled *Sculptural expressions: women and HIV-AIDS* (2009) at the Makerere Art Gallery. During the show she exhibited *56% infection (43)* (2004) – an installation of 100 bowls made out of a coarse jute fabric, 56 of which were filled with wheat flour, nails and yoghurt. She kept the bowls under conditions where bacteria and moulds contaminated them causing the yoghurt to decompose. The bowls were ‘symbolic of female anatomy and the uterus’; the decomposition represented contamination of the woman’s body (Nabulime interview 12 October 2011). Thus Nabulime’s claims for the symbolism of her work have no traditional references. The work is based on the artist’s invention and her awareness of the wider discussion on the plight of women living with HIV-AIDS in Uganda. Her contention that infection with HIV/AIDS is tantamount to contamination has often been used to stigmatise and exclude the very victims she seeks to emancipate.

As I indicated earlier Nabulime hopes to make her work accessible to the illiterate but clearly her installations are very complex and layered with meaning. Even the educated visitors to the gallery missed her social comment as many mainly praised the beauty of the work. In other words, Nabulime’s style and representation were successful as art yet inappropriate for any public awareness campaign targeting the illiterate. A similar criticism applies to the fact that the exhibition, just like the doctoral project before it, were all located in elite spaces: Makerere University and the University of Newcastle. Hence Nabulime’s artworks, despite her claims for socio-political activism, are too deeply steeped in aesthetic concerns to be effective as an awareness campaign.

Another work by Nabulime entitled *Vulnerability (44a)* (2003-2004) is close to *56% infection* (2004). It is an installation in which she used bowls filled with pigment, nails, *(44b)* latex, foil, food wrapping and colourant. Some bowls were turned upside down representing abstinence; one was filled

with yoghurt representing a woman's vulva in which sperms have been deposited rendering the vulva, and thus the woman, vulnerable (Nabulime interview 10 November, 2011). As in *56% infection* the yoghurt was contaminated with bacteria and moulds which, for the artist, communicates infection. Arguably then in *56% infection* and *Vulnerability* the artist is inverting the narrative of infection in which men accuse women of being vectors. Nabulime is accusing the heterosexual male instead; for her the woman is a vulnerable victim.

In 2011 Nabulime collaborated with Nicole Fall, a visiting professor from USA, on a work entitled *AIDS virus (45a)* (2011). Nabulime's contribution was a mask mounted on bark cloth and a wooden support. The mask represents a veiled woman. Hung like a painting, Nabulime's mask looks down to direct our attention towards the organic shape placed lower down in front of the mask. This work which was made out of clay and painted with a variety of colours was Fall's contribution resembling plant life **(45b)**. As Fall explains, the work is open to interpretation: it represents a woman waiting; it represents a flower-like image but in 'fact it is a vaccine'. The combined effect of the work, however, is hope for a vaccine. Thus in *AIDS virus* Nabulime and Fall moved away from accusations and counter-accusations to suggest solutions, however futurist and idealist.

In this analysis of specific works I have demonstrated that from 1987 Uganda's modern art tapped into the backlash against the *new woman*. A complex visual vocabulary emerged in which critical public health and socio-political concerns were fused and transformed into a pointed device to fight women's claim for equality through modern art. I argue that in the process of participating in a complex debate on how to control women's sexuality and mobility, the work I have analysed has become an 'iconography of misogyny' (Dijkstra 1986:viii) through which the *new woman* has been denigrated and visualised as a ruptured, contorted, decomposed, narcissistic, self-indulgent, vicious agent of gluttony,

exploitation, vice, disease, destruction and moral degeneration. Implicit in these imaginations is the ambivalent perception that Uganda's *new woman* is a seductive but exploitative, malignant and destructive gold digger whom the patriarchy must restrain and contain. Interestingly, as male and female artists joined the debate Uganda's visual art has become the site for constructing and challenging such ambivalence and its attendant restraints and controls.

Endnotes

¹ Francis Musango, *The good shepherd* (1996). Oil and acrylic on the wall. 900x450cm. The Monastery Cathedral of the Benedictine Fathers, Nairobi, Kenya.

² Uganda has no national archive. It is often the case that the personal collections of the country's artists are scattered and lost upon their death. This happened in the case of Fabian Mpagi (sculptor and painter), Lutwama (painter), Gracie Masembe (print-maker) and Kakooza (sculptor), to mention but a few. Thus the catalogue, titled *Francis Musango 40 years 40 exhibitions* (2004), is probably the only surviving resource that can illuminate Musango's entire career. It accompanied the last exhibition he held. It was hosted at the Nommo Gallery (Kampala) to celebrate Musango's forty-year contribution to contemporary Ugandan art. Mounted three years before his death, the exhibition showcased Musango's religious iconography, social narratives and works that critique the elite women.

³ For more on traditional marriage among the Baganda, see Sir Apollo Kagwa's *The customs of the Baganda* (1934: 98).

⁴ Also see Okin (1989)

⁵ Under the headline "Does he know about that property?" (*New Vision* 22 January 2012) Vicky Wandawa wrote that one of the strategies women have devised to stealthily acquire and manage property is to register it in their children's names. Namyalo, a lawyer and lecturer at Makerere's Faculty of Law, acknowledged that this is a common practice even among lawyers who should know better. She, however, argued in a lecture delivered on 9 November 2011 that this is a mistake which might lead to women losing their property.

⁶ This is a literal translation. In Luganda the woman said that '*olw'eggulo ngenda kujja ndeete seminti. Bye ggwe...omwami wange anansanga n'okunsanga nategeera nti nzimba*'.

⁷ Namono is one of the few women art historians in Uganda and is currently working towards her doctorate at the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa).

⁸ For more discussion on the fear of women see (Wolfgang 1968).

⁹ Francis Musango, *Sleep iii* (1993). Oil on canvas, measurements unknown. Reproduced in the catalogue *Francis Musango 40 years 40 exhibitions* (Kyeyune 2004:9).

¹⁰ Francis Musango, *Sleep iv* (1987-95). Oil on canvas, measurements unknown. Reproduced in the catalogue *Francis Musango 40 years 40 exhibitions* (Kyeyune 2004:9).

¹¹ Francis Musango, *Sleep vi* (1987-2004). Oil on canvas measurements unknown. Reproduced in the catalogue *Francis Musango 40 years 40 exhibitions* (Kyeyune 2004:9).

¹² Uganda uses the Uganda shilling as its currency. Given the country's low export base and the unfavourable terms of international trade the value of Uganda's shilling to the US Dollar is low and fluctuant. Because Uganda's economy is import-oriented and in order to facilitate their trade, local businesses exchange their money into US Dollars. By portraying a woman carrying Dollars, this cartoon alludes to this reality.

¹³ I mentioned this earlier in chapter one.

¹⁴ For example, Jackie Chandiru sang the song *I am not a gold digger* (2011) to oppose this construct. Sang in Luganda and English the song addresses the fear that affluent women are reckless gold diggers: "I am not a gold digger...*Njagara omukwano*" (I am looking for love and affection), Chandiru argues.

¹⁵ *Omukuuzi* is a noun from the verb *okukuula*, a Luganda word which denotes extraction. For example, a dentist is called *omusawo w'amannyo* but because visits to the dentist often result in extraction, a dentist is called *omukuuzi w'amannyo* (translated: the extractor of teeth). However, the link between liberated women and the notion of *Abakuuzi* has another problematic history. It is likely that the debate on traditional healers who brutally extract teeth from newly born babies could have informed the negative connotations in *omukuuzi/okukuula*. During the nineties, medical reports identified an alarming rate of deaths resulting from the myth which conflated the fact that some children were born with teeth with the deaths of some of those children. This myth ignored the fact that such deaths resulted from diarrhoea, malnutrition and infection. Because of this ignorance some children did not receive appropriate treatment and died. There was an intense campaign, on the FM stations and in the print media, to de-stigmatise babies born with teeth and stamp out the practice of extracting teeth by traditional healers, called *abakuuzi b'ebinyo*. As such, the term *okukuula ebinyo* (the brutal extraction of children's teeth) as opposed to *okukuula amannyo* (the respected profession, dentistry) gained a pejorative connotation. It is not clear how this negative term came to be used to designate women who engage in relationships outside of officially sanctioned marriage. It is, however, clear that because of its problematic sources it was intended to scare men and stigmatise casual sex (the so-called away-matches).

¹⁶ For example, we see in a cartoon in *The Monitor* of 1-4 November 1996, a police officer in Dubai city dragging a woman, dressed in a short dress. The cartoon visualised the crackdown on Ugandan (and other) non-Arab women who were considered a threat to the morals of the Emirs of the United Arab Emirates. This crackdown, and its moralist undertones, received wide coverage in the local press. It involved the arrest and deportation of 35 Ugandan women from the Arab nation in the mid-1990s.

¹⁷ For more discussion on AIDS as a myth see (Sentag 1988).

¹⁸ First there was the myth that AIDS was a disease which affected prostitutes and those living in Uganda's squalid slums in urban and semi urban areas (see Wallman 1996).

Second, as we read in the *Weekly Topic* of 14 January 1987, was the myth of statistics. Some scientists reported that by 1987, 10% of the sexually active Ugandans had been affected with AIDS. This was because 'the average Ugandan has sex with high frequency and with a great number of different partners'. This resulted in all sorts of fear and suspicion among couples as Uganda was nicknamed 'the new AIDS belt in Africa'.

Thirdly, there was the 'black face' of AIDS which annoyed many Ugandans. It led to denials and diverted public attention and debate from the problem in their midst. For example, in the *Weekly Topic* of 21 January 1987, it was reported that the British media had advised 'all British people who had had sexual intercourse with any one from Africa, South of the Sahara...not to donate blood in Europe'. Implicit in this call was the suggestion that 'the entire African population south of the Sahara are AIDS carrier suspects' and hence the British were vulnerable because 'the virus could be passed from every person who comes from south of the Sahara into the blood of the British'.

Moreover, it was suggested in the *Weekly Topic* (21 January 1987) that AIDS was genetically engineered and spread 'through hospitals'. This was part of a carefully planned and well-orchestrated 'biological warfare research in which Europeans [plotted] to exterminate all Africans'.

In response, there were calls for government to expel all European doctors in the country. Amidst this political debate, the chance to deal with the problem was lost; nationalist fervour overwhelmed reason and rationalism. As reported in the *Weekly Topic* (14 January 1987), the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, while addressing a press conference in Harare (Zimbabwe), denied that there was any outbreak of AIDS or any epidemic in Uganda. He did this despite the fact that his health minister had insisted that AIDS had 'become one of the country's major health problems' and that 'there is no national pride whatsoever in hiding the prevalence of AIDS'.

¹⁹ For example, the artist was dismissed as a liar seeking to exploit the epidemic to sell his album.

²⁰ See *Weekly Topic* of 11 October 1989:21.

²¹ Mutebi Fred is Kasule's contemporary. He has used this symbolism more than other artists. For example, in his *Kakuyeye* (2001), *Parting ways* (2005), *Third term wooers* (2005), among others, Mutebi used marabou storks to critique the way corruption, greed and selfishness have ruined governance in the country. These works were part of the discussion in which multi-party democracy was, through a referendum, reintroduced in Uganda in 2001 before the country took a

dangerous path marked by the removal of presidential term limits from the 1995 Constitution of Uganda.

²² The fact that the catalogue (called the guide book) accompanying his work records that he read Trowell's *Tribal Crafts of Uganda* (1953) confirms my assertion.

²³ Giorgione, *The tempest* (1505). Oil on canvass, 77 × 74 cm, Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice.

²⁴ Hieronymus Bosch, *The Ship of Fools* (1490-1500). Oil on wood 58 x 33 cm, Musee du Louvre, Paris.

²⁵ Hieronymus Bosch, *Garden of earthly delights* (Triptych) (c.1510). Oil on panel. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

²⁶ Fernard Khnopff, *The supreme vice* (1885). Crayon. Reproduced in Dijkstra (1986:330).

²⁷ Fernard Khnopff, *The meeting of animalism and the angel* (1889). Reproduced in Dijkstra (1986:288).

²⁸ Fernard Khnopff, *Medusa asleep* (1896). Reproduced in Bade (1979: 8).

²⁹ Franz von Stuck, *Sexuality* (1897). Reproduced in Dijkstra (1986:312).

³⁰ Joseph Mullner, *Medusa* (1909). Sculpture. Reproduced in Dijkstra (1986:288).

³¹ He exhibited *Dare to touch* in the prestigious annual *Different but one 13* hosted at Makerere Art Gallery in February-March 2009.

³² For instance *The New Vision* of 8 February 2009 reported an incident in which a 'couple in their early 20s allegedly committed suicide after discovering that they were HIV positive'.

³³ The problem of HIV transmission sometimes borders on criminality. For example, on 12 June 2010 *The monitor* published a catalogue of acts of indiscriminate spreading of the virus which need to be punished. A man in Mbarara is reported to have boasted of how he intentionally infected over 100 university girls with HIV. Another prominent businessman in Teso is alleged to have intentionally transmitted the virus to a large number of female residents simply because he has a milling machine where he takes advantage of desperate women who take their produce for grinding. There was also a case in which an HIV positive priest allegedly raped a girl and infected her with HIV. Also see 'HIV transmission criminal liability counter-productive' in *The Monitor* of 9 June 2010.

³⁴ The origins of the term 'having a side-dish' are unclear. It is, however, used in reference to any extramarital relationship. RED is intended to fight the practice of having extramarital relations because they have increased the rate of HIV transmission among married couples. RED stands for 'Reliable, Exceptional, Dependable'. It is a programme funded by a joint partnership between the Government of Uganda and non-governmental organisations. It is coordinated by the Uganda AIDS Commission, a statutory body responsible for the treatment and control of HIV/AIDS transmission in Uganda. RED encourages faithfulness; its mantra is 'it's within your power to remain faithful...'.³

CHAPTER 4

Sexuality as/and careers? Artists and the feminine bodies of the 1990s and beyond

In this chapter I analyse works done by artists Angelo Kakande, Fred Kizito Kakinda, Robert Ssewanyana, Patrick Lwasampijja and Gerald Mwebe among others. This investigation is important because in contrast to what we saw in the previous chapter, we see here a subtle, veiled, different, but related, visual strategy in which the fantasies of women's sexuality and beauty have been constructed, re-invested and deployed to resolve the menace of the *new woman*. If the artists we investigated in Chapter Three suspected the *new woman* of being a beautiful, propertied, money-hungry vampire (the gold digger) capable of spreading AIDS through prostitution and hence harming the man's sexuality and virility, the artists examined in this chapter do not have such concerns. Instead, for them the *new woman* can be tamed if exploited through the sexual gaze. In this chapter, we explore how this perception transforms the bodies of elite women into objects of sexual desire and gratification and how such a trope has been inverted by Maria Naita, a contemporary woman artist. I begin by sketching the problematic shared perception and debate which started in the 1990s before I demonstrate how it informed the artists I have selected.

4.1 THE DEBATE OF THE *NEW WOMAN* IN THE 1990S AND BEYOND

The year 1994 was a watershed year in the history of the *new woman* in Uganda. It was in November of that year that Specioza Naigaga Wandira Kazibwe was appointed Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda. She was the first woman ever to hold this portfolio in Uganda's history. Her appointment drew two major responses. On the one hand, women activists welcomed it as a climax of the process of women's emancipation which gained momentum starting in 1989 when the Affirmative Action Bill

was promulgated. For them, Kazibwe became the embodiment of women's triumph over domination and marginalisation. She, as we read in *The New Vision* of 15 March 1995, became 'the role model' of women's empowerment'. Her success story ceased to be a personal achievement and biography; it began to symbolise shared progress – a chronicle of the fulfilment of a long awaited women's dream. On the other hand, however, Kazibwe's appointment coincided with a problematic discussion in which eroticism became a powerful tool which was deployed to cow women who joined the public domain.

Interestingly, this debate informed visual representation. For example, on 30 November 1994 *The People* published a cartoon in which Kazibwe was depicted wearing a miniskirt. Its long slit draws the reader's attention to Kazibwe's round thigh. She briskly strolls past a man towards an open door, eager to take up the office of the Vice-Presidency (46). Unable to stop her, the man freezes and turns his head to pursue her with his bespectacled eyes. He fixes her into a sexualised gaze. 'Could it be thigh power at work?' he asks.

Implicit in this cartoon is a moral and ethical critique on the track record of the ruling National Resistance Movement. The NRM introduced a no-party (also called the movement) political system in which leaders are elected, appointed and promoted on 'individual merit'.¹ However, its administration has been criticised for harbouring tendencies of favouritism and nepotism. The media has often raised such criticism. Arguably, then, these issues shaped this cartoon; the satirist questioned the meritocracy of the NRM's movement-style democracy, or 'movementocracy' (Mukwya 2004:8-35) as it has also been called.

Beyond its ethical and moral critique, however, this cartoon brings forth a set of gendered issues which are critical to the understanding of the works I analyse in this chapter. Firstly, it is grounded in the fear of the women in

the public space. Rebecca Kadaga is the Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda. She is a female lawyer and one of the three women who have occupied very powerful positions in Uganda's power hierarchy – the other two being Laetitia Mukasa-Kikonyogo (Deputy Chief Justice) and Specioza Kazibwe (former Vice-President). In our interview she agreed that in a country where the domestic position of a woman is always emphasised, it is true that Vice-President Kazibwe's unprecedented entry into the office of the Vice-President was a threat to men and that 'there were many, many attempts to resist her authority or undermine her' (Kadaga, November 2007). Admitting Kadaga's explanation permits us to infer from the cartoon that Kazibwe's entry into a powerful office provoked fear, was resisted and she was denigrated.

Secondly, the cartoon interlaces the state, body, sex and power. The notion 'thigh power', which lies at its core, was coined to demean educated women (see for example *The Monitor*, 29 June - 2 July 1993). Largely men use it to express the contention, and concern, that women cannot compete with men; they are always recruited and promoted in exchange for sexual favours. Ultimately, men questioned the NRM's policy of affirmative action. They argued that rather than delivering women's freedom and liberty as it had claimed, the policy simply allowed elite women to have sex with powerful men and to artificially join the ruling class in the process. As if to confirm my contention, the press lamented during the Vice-President's swearing in that 'Spe² the political bride...is going to spend much of her time with President Museveni and less time with Mr Kazibwe, the husband' (*The Monitor*, 28-30 November 1994:11). Another paper reported that 'Kampala elite women like Kazibwe have managed to sleep their way round and have in turn been distributed in positions of power more as a symbolic action than dedicated commitment to liberation of women from masculine domain' (*The People*, 3 August 1994:4). As such, there have been rumours that President Museveni had an extramarital relationship with his Vice-President because of which he

appointed her as Vice-President. Although unsubstantiated, these rumours have multiplied since 1994 and they continue to circulate.

Thirdly, implicit in this cartoon are doubts on women's professionalism, ability to serve in the public space and level of intellectualism. Alluding to this view, and the shared perception which shaped it, *The Monitor* presented a cartoon of a woman removing her skirt for a super rich male who is smoking a pipe in a posh office space **(47)**. The man tells the woman to 'pull it [the skirt] down faster if you want promotion soon!' (*The Monitor*, 8-12 October 1993:20). Headlines like 'Women politicians keep your thighs tight' (*The Monitor*, 1 October 1993:15) and 'Stand up women with your clothes on' (*The Monitor*, 31 August – 3 September 1993:3) must also be mentioned; they all questioned women's intellectual prowess using the sexualisation of their bodies.

Fourthly, Kazibwe's cartoon brings to the fore the use of the mini skirt to demean elite women and immobilise them. As we saw in chapter one, Amin turned the miniskirt into a device to demean urban women and circumscribe their mobility, freedom and access to the city. Although the political conditions of the 1990s were different and far removed from Amin's era, the miniskirt we see here served a related purpose. It was a pejorative device used to define and undermine women in high positions and to question their claim for liberty and equality. This attitude shaped an article on page 3 of *The Monitor* of 31 August– 3 September 1993 accompanied with a cartoon of a woman wearing a mini skirt strolling on the city streets **(48)**. She is carrying a book marked with 'women's lib' (short for women's liberation). She is being directed by a signpost marked: 'women liberation'. Her upper body is clad in a formal jacket to confirm that she is middle class while her skirt has been torn into two parts and reduced to a mini to expose the woman's thighs and sexuality. This was intended to depict the gesture of 'tearing down the liberation flag of the new Ugandan woman'. The woman flags up part of her torn skirt. Two

middle class men, identified as such by the way they are dressed in London suits, look on. Perplexed, and disdainful, they discuss the woman's insane act and its impact on the sane, moral, ethical, educated public which the two men represent.

Writing in the *Monitor* of 31 March, Olivia Kigozi (2002:2) explains that a skirt acquired a symbolic value when women moved into high positions. For example, she overheard a group of men engaged in a discussion in a restaurant during a lunch break: '...you mean you work in a department headed by a woman? I wouldn't like to be led by a skirt.' Kigozi was concerned that 'the pity is that few' recognise such skirt-related public preoccupations as sexist remarks being fired at women: '...believe it or not, acts such as these portray sexual innuendos and are harassing behaviours of men towards their female counterparts,' Kigozi intimated. Sylvia Tamale extends this debate. She, like Kigozi, locates the power economy behind these visual representations and the satire they portend. She argues that the sexualisation of the 'woman who had ascended to a position of power in this fashion was the media's way of downsizing her to make her less threatening' to the male patriarchy (Tamale 1996:190).

Kigozi's and Tamale's postulations are important for my debate. They affirm that Kazibwe's and related cartoons are grounded in a mass-circulation, and mass-consumption, of a carefully orchestrated strategy which the patriarchy has conveniently deployed to sexualise, marginalise and subordinate women who join the public domain. They are inscribed in the struggle to maintain the balance of power. They are interwoven into the rhetoric which has 'stereotyped [women] as stupid as evident in brazen statements claiming that women never think beyond the bed they sleep on and unlike men their brains lie between their legs' (Mukama 2002:148). The cartoons, I argue, comprise a visual device which male artists, trained from Makerere Art School (and all the cartoons I have referred to were done by graduates of this art school), have used to tame Uganda's *new*

woman and thus maintain 'the status quo through trivialization' (Tamale 1996:185).

Trivialising women's intellectualism and public presence was strategic. Tezra Jamwa is a Ugandan woman who participated in the framing of the 1995 constitution of Uganda. Tamale quotes her to have said that:

During the CA, I was very disappointed with the press. We were portrayed very, very negatively; they wouldn't talk about our positive contribution in the House but would report on our physical looks. *The Monitor* went as far as giving us nicknames. I was the "Yellow Pumpkin", Rhoda Kalema was the "Grandmother." Hope Mwesigye was called the "Most Beautiful", yet she made some of the most brilliant contributions in the CA. Janet Bagarukanyo was described as always dressing like a member of the "Mothers Union" and Beatrice was the sleeping beauty (Tamale 1996:190).

The women mentioned in the excerpt above have been important figures in Uganda's political landscape as legislators. Clearly, the press used epithets like 'grandmother', 'pumpkin', 'mother's union' and 'most beautiful' to denigrate them. It intended to trivialise women's public presence; it diverted public attention away from their intellectualism and legislative contributions. The strategy was three-pronged: trivialise women, disappoint them, neutralise their political power and threat.

Located on this ideological platform, the media shifted focus from the important issues which women in 'big offices' championed. By the mid-1990s it focused on their sexual appeal; it depicted women in public offices as 'sex objects' (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:234). For example, *The Crusader* of 14 June 1997 published a story on the advantages of physical fitness in which it claimed that Vice-President Kazibwe '...is endowed with a bounteous bosom, a feature that is highly regarded in the beauty world as an attribute of sex appeal'. Tamale gives another example of a Member of Parliament, who whenever she would stand up to make a contribution in the House, her male counterparts would objectify and eroticise her body: 'look at her bum! Oh yeah, believe me...Ah this one is

too beautiful to be here, she should be home taking care of her man' (Tamale 1996:133).

It is true, and Tamale makes this point, that women parliamentarians negotiated their way round the trivialising effect of these epithets and labels. This, however, does not take away from their intended political purpose which needs explanation. To begin with, they suggest the veiled ways in which the media mitigated the spectre of the new breed of women leaders using subtle, but effective, devices.

Secondly, they foreground men's preoccupation with elite women's breasts, haunches³ and overall sexual appeal which informed an unprecedented rise in the mass-circulation of images of elite women characterised by youthfulness, firm breasts, round thighs and big buttocks.⁴ As a result of the newly introduced press laws through which the NRM guaranteed press freedoms, Kampala's streets received shocking publications of women sometimes scantily dressed, but often naked. In the mid-1990s Edmond Kizito published explicit images showing the 'sexual appeal' of university and middleclass girls in his *Chics Magazine* and later in *Spices*.⁵ Local vernacular newspapers such as *Bukedde* and *Orumuri* joined in. Today tabloids such as *Red Pepper*, *Entango* and *Onion* have become popular because of their graphic representation of young women in sexually explicit positions – I will return to them later on in this and the next chapter.

In the light of the above two issues, women and women issues became marginalised. For example, the leading English daily, *The New Vision*, had played a key role in advancing women issues in the early 1990s. However, by the mid-1990s the women's page on which important women issues were discussed (by women activists) had been abandoned. Its place was taken by articles focusing on 'appearance, shopping...social relationships' (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:234-235), fashion and beauty contests. The

archetypal image of a woman who is frivolous, preoccupied with 'beauty, looks, romance and relationships' took centre stage (Mukama 2002:148). These were veiled powerful devices through which stereotypes of beauty became convenient tools which men used to impose and enforce silence and compliance on women who had abandoned their normative duties (Tamale 1996:132). In other words, women's beauty became an instrument of male domination (*The Monitor* 8-10 May 1995:9).

It was important that I isolate, unpack and theorise this gendered debate because the five artists I have selected have in many complex ways tapped into it (and the ideology it propagates) to construct the woman as an object of sexual desire and gratification using contemporary art. Let me now demonstrate starting with Angelo Kakande.

4.2 ANGELO KAKANDE AND HIS IMAGINATIONS OF THE NEW WOMAN

Angelo Kakande (1966) is a graduate of Makerere Art School where he currently lectures. In 1989-93 he pursued a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) degree at Makerere Art School majoring in ceramics and painting. In 1997 he completed an MA (Fine Art) degree at the same Art School specialising in ceramics before proceeding to the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa 2002-2008) where he completed an MA (Arts) degree and a PhD in the History of Art.

As is the case with many contemporary artists in Uganda, few of Kakande's early works have survived. The artist, however, contends that a combination of formal education, literature and interest in Uganda's politics has influenced the styles, figuration and themes in his compositions: he views 'art as politics' (Kakande, interview 2006). This explains why his idioms fuse into Uganda's socio-political debates. However, Kakande believes that 'political art is first of all art and then politics.' Hence alongside being expressions on political matters, his artworks demonstrate

attention to technical skill, draughtsmanship and a sophisticated control of the medium. Although he has many works in his collection and has held several exhibitions, I am interested in the gendered paintings and ceramics he did in the 1990s. Below he takes me through his early works which can help us to trace the earliest forms of his gendered works and positions.

4.2.1 Imaging the domestic nurturers: Kakande's vision of a good woman

It's a man's world (49) (1992) is a large painting in which the artist used masks and traditional symbols such as shields, huts, walking sticks and geometric patterns. The painting has limited depth except for two door openings which open up to idyllic green scenery. A woman, located in the centre of the painting, enters a tiled interior fused into a gendered space. There is an imposing masked man to the left who wields immense economic power symbolised by a walking stick which transforms into a herd of cows. At this point the painting reminds us of the ideology behind Kawalya's *Returning home*. Kakande confirmed my contention. 'This is the man here', he explained to me before talking me through the painting in the following way:

This man is all-powerful and he loves his possessions. He is wealthy; he keenly observes his sphere of influence...Look at what is in his sphere: women, babies, cows, shields...in short power. Beautiful women, they close their eyes, their necks are long and adorned; they nurture. Which other world could this be other than a perfect, stable man's world...you see? (Kakande, interview, 2008).

Implicit in this narrative are two gendered aspects: First, the artist affirms that in a perfect stable world controlled by an omniscient and omnipotent male, women exist as beautiful, passive nurturers. Like cows, they are possessions. Secondly, but mainly as a result of the assumption that they are possessions, women must be subordinate to men. Tamale explains that Uganda's male-dominated hegemony considers women as property of men and therefore of a lower status (Tamale 1996:5-6). Arguably, then,

this painting is important for the rest of my discussion because through it the artist revealed, in no obscure terms, the ideological position which he took in the paintings and ceramics in which he 'attempted to resolve' (Kakande, interview, 2008) the challenge of the *new woman*.

Kakande revisited the domestic woman nurturer seen to the extreme left of *It's a man's world* in his *Obedient servant (50)* (1992). This is a black-glazed ceramic figurine in which he captured a woman fused into a mortar. As he explains, 'she lifts the pestle to prepare a meal for the family. It is a cultural thing, you know?' Kakande is correct to assume that many cultures in Uganda (and indeed elsewhere) consider the preparation of food as a woman's, and not man's, chore. This ideology also informed *Tamed (51)* (1993) in which a woman is frozen in the act of grinding. She has a long piece of material rolled around her head into a headgear which flows over her undraped upper body. She bows her head eliciting a sense of calmness and passivity. Her rich garment which leaves her long feminine legs uncovered contrasts with part of the rock on which the woman sits holding a grinding stone. She is in 'her rightful place. Is she not?' he asks (Kakande, interview 2006). Propagating this ideology, Kakande has used culturally determined attributes like closed almond eyes, long neck, thick lips, sharp nose, round full breasts, fashion and exaggerated haunches to reconstruct beauty as a stratagem to tame the *new woman*.

4.2.2 Breaking the barrier: Kakande's women on the move

It's a taboo (52) (1995) is a ceramic tile panel in which the artist recalled the figuration of elite women who walk past frozen men seen in the cartoons I discussed earlier in this chapter (see figs **46** and **48**). He depicted a portrait of a woman wearing a traditional garb called a *busuuti*.⁶ She walks away from a group of men facing a serene rural horizon interrupted by traditional huts. For the artist this act was taboo and he explains why:

That the woman had abandoned her traditional seat and left it unattended for men who pocketed their hands was, according to me, unacceptable. What about the food crops she tended? What this woman was doing was unprecedented; it was unacceptable (Kakande, interview 2006).

This claim should only be admitted as a point of departure for the artist's creative expression. It is not entirely correct that women's movement from the rural into the urban areas during the 1990s was unprecedented (cf chapter one). It may be true that women, and not men, take care of food production. However, it is also not entirely correct to suggest that women rejected their conventional roles entirely in pursuit of a career (Obbo 1986:178-85). Instead the artist propagates a well rehearsed assumption that the rural home is a woman's traditional seat; the kitchen is a woman's space. This is the set of issues behind the artist's *Chitchat i* (53). Here Kakande depicted a group of women facing a productive and self-sustaining 'village covered with banana plantations' – a literal translation of what the Baganda call 'ebyalo ebigudde akaleka' (Kakande interview, 2006). He further explored this theme in his *Chitchat ii* (54), capturing women with long necks chatting, unaffected by the heavy loads of 'the bumper harvest' which they balance on their heads. Arguably then, through his chitchat series, the artist takes part in a discussion on the normative position of the woman in Uganda. He constructs an ideal world premised on economic and social conventions of food production, a rural and domestic lifestyle. The artist alludes to ways in which the rural agricultural economy is sustained by women. He critiques men in the rural areas who resort to alcoholism and non-productive activity – a critique which is common in traditional music called *Kadongokamu*.⁷ This, however, should not mask the way he trivialised women networks and reduced them to small-talk or chitchat or *olugambo* (rumour-mongering) which is a despicable vice in Uganda.⁸

Intriguingly, as we see in *It's a taboo*, the NRM policy of affirmative action saw women breaking barriers in two ways which have informed the artist's work.

Through deliberate policy the NRM increased women's access to the public space: women advanced into new territory; they walked beyond their normative spaces as we see in *At the cross roads (55)* (1996). This work arose from a series of drawings which the artist developed starting in 1994. It is a complex tile panel in which he juxtaposed 'a less productive urban and the productive rural' space. To the left we see a generic city with modern architecture and cars. Here we see a woman who is obviously middleclass: she is dressed in a pink modern dress and she wears high-heeled shoes. She freely makes her way through a male-dominated, affluent, urban space reminding us of Matti's *In the city* to which I referred earlier.

At the centre of the composition, the artist placed a woman recalling the woman in *It's a taboo* although here she carries a 'leather handbag instead of a basket' (Kakande, interview, 2007). She walks towards us 'ignoring a well-tended banana plantation, the staple food (called *matooke*) in Buganda, and a healthy herd in the background'. These two devices are deliberate: they are intended to give an aura of rural scenery; they create an impression of a woman abandoning the countryside. There is a notion of mobility in this work which Kakande further explored in *On the move*.

In *New arrivals on the scene i (56)* (1996), Kakande presents a solid monolithic female figure in terracotta. She is dressed in *busuuti* which, as it is the tradition, she has tied with a long loin at the waist. She tilts her head terminating the upward thrust. This contains the woman's upward movement; it breathes some life into what would have been a static, rigid pose. It, however, in a way kills the robustness with which the woman projects from a bud of a flower at her feet. Although this representation

has no local sources and precedents, it symbolises rebirth. The flower sprouts from a book which symbolises education. The link between women rebirth and education powerfully reiterates the developments in which, as we saw in chapter one and elsewhere, the NRM government promoted girls' and women's education since 1986. Kakande, (interview, 2008) argues that 'I thought women also need education'. On the one hand, this statement suggests that the artist conceded to the inevitable: the right for women's education, which is enshrined in article 30 of the 1995 constitution of Uganda, cannot be reversed. But it could also suggest that the artist is not after all a hardcore, anti-feminism activist. It could be said that his attitude to women's issues is sometimes mixed which explains why he was able to identify gendered images in his doctoral thesis and recommended that they should be looked into (Kakande, interview 2008).

On the move (57) (1996) is a sculpture of a female figure glazed in black. That she turns her head sideways, and has no arms, is an artistic strategy which demonstrates the artist's understanding of the human figure and the role of figure drawing in the shaping of the artist's career. Her posture, gesture, movement, dress code and position on a platform present her as a modern woman while preserving her feminine quality. The artist's attention to limited detail allows us to access, and concentrate, on the woman's fleshy, rounded curves, especially around the hips, and femininity. We, however, need to unmask the source of this attention to rounded, feminine bodies with big haunches while exposing the ideology behind this work.

In *On the move* the artist is 'deliberately not valorising a slim body' he explains. This is because an ideal woman's body in Uganda is not the 'small one; the big one is preferred'. Obviously his woman is rounded but is no where close to the big women seen on the streets of Kampala.. However, what he is alluding to is the fact that there is a stigma attached

to 'small' women. Part of this resides in the fear that being slim is an outward index of a woman's positive HIV/AIDS status or malnourishment. Although unsupported by scientific proof, the view that thin women are either malnourished or sick or infertile is popular especially in the Bantu-speaking areas of Uganda. But there is also a widely accepted convention that having large haunches increases a woman's sex appeal and fertility. In fact among the Baganda (Kakande's ethnic group), the condition of obesity among women, whose health-related challenges are currently a matter of concern⁹, is a synonym for being feminine, beautiful and fertile. Arguably in *On the move* Kakande subtly taps into this culturally accepted definition of a woman. Seen in this light Kakande's work becomes an interesting site for an on-going discussion on elite women. Clearly the artist intended to propagate the sexualisation of elite women's bodies although it can be said that his critique is subtle and does not degenerate into the kind of personal attacks we see in the comic strips depicting the Vice-President or indeed those we later see in the works of Ssewanyana, Kakinda and others.

4.2.3 On fashion-conscious amazons: Kakande's portrait of fear

In 1993 Kakande painted *L'amazon s'annonce*¹⁰ (The amazon announces herself) (58) (1993) in which the artist uses a rich greenish hue to capture a woman whose physical features are not different from his other works. Her eyes are enormous, oval and closed; her breasts are full and round. The right breast is bare while the left breast is seen through a transparent blouse. If in *It's a man's world* the woman was an appendage to the man's sphere, here she buoyantly dominates her own sphere. The artist used a surrealist style to depict a woman who 'is beautiful', as he explains. She wears thick make-up, jewellery and a rich coiffure which is nicely groomed and braided. 'All these are statements of affluence and elitism', the artist elaborates. Her face is inscribed in the shape of a heart. 'That one recalls Chagga masks from Tanzania', he adds. Arguably then the artist drew on different sources to construct the woman.

Kakande is a Muganda (plural Baganda). Traditionally for the Baganda thin lips (called *obumwa obw'ekyupa*) a sharp nose (called *ennyindo endaalo*) and almond eyes symbolise the beauty of a woman. In his *L'amazon s'annonce* the artist paints eyes that are conspicuous, oval, and closed. These eyes are a recurring feature in a large number of the artist's works. The Baganda conflate shyness with being romantic: a woman who closes her eyes sends an erotic message; closure of a woman's eyes is a form of flirting. In fact, in the early stages of a woman's life, mothers, and later on paternal aunts or *Ssengas*, instruct and enforce this mannerism of socialising women through a strict regime of shyness. Aloysius Lugira explains that shyness evokes a sense of submissiveness, which in turn makes a woman appear youthful, beautiful and erotic to the heterosexual male (Lugira, 1970:62) – something which the artist is aware of and deliberately propagates in his work.

Light falls on the self-proclaiming Amazon from an invisible source. On the one hand, it accentuates her youthful, smooth body and light complexion. On the other, it lays bare the artist's intended message, namely:

She is *femme feroce*, yes. She is the ferocious woman whom we the Baganda call *empalakitare* or *nnakapanka*. She has a war trumpet. She is charged and in charge of her body and everything. She commands her space, she takes no orders from anyone. Although her eyes are closed she is unapproachable. She is beautiful, yes, but she will scare and repel any intending partner (Kakande, interview, 2007).

The Baganda use the term *empalakitale* to denote an impossible woman who threatens the establishment. *Nnakapanka* has similar connotations. However, Ssekamwa (1995: 28) observes that the word *nnakapanka* developed in 1910 from a Luganda proverb: '*Nnakampaka ng'omukazi asoma ebbaluwa*'. For Ssekamwa, the proverb refers to a woman who has access to education and subverts traditional orthodoxy in the process. It was a critique on women who had received colonial education. A woman

labelled *empalakitare* or *nnakapanka* is thus feared; the two are negative terms. Kakande admitted that he is aware of this negative tone.

I grant that the figure is in itself not so scary and intimidating as the artist would want us to believe. However, his explanation motivates us to look beyond the aesthetic and begin to unravel the political intentions of the artist. The claim in which the artist makes reference to loaded terms (*empalakitale* and *Nnakapanka*) pins a powerful label of viciousness on the woman before us. Two interesting things emerge in the process: firstly, the interplay between oral tradition and visual text, which Trowell preferred during her teaching, finds its way into the work of an artist who graduated three decades after Trowell had left the art school. Secondly, the strategy has transformed the work into a powerful contraption through which ferocity, beauty, fashion and a woman's sexuality are interwoven to construct a dreaded Amazon.

We must also internalise Kakande's title. First, it presents an independent fashionable woman who is sexually appealing as we see in her blouse revealing her erect breasts and the way she directs us to them using a trumpet. She seems to possess a force around her which although able to render her body inaccessible and physically impenetrable, cannot save her from our powerful, ordering gaze.

Secondly, the word Amazon in Kakande's title has its history in the classical legend of a tribe of warrior women who cut off their right breasts to improve their fighting skills. In ancient Greek mythology, the Amazons were agents of conflict and vengeance against men. They were described as living apart from men in an all-female state from which they 'were at eternal war with men' (Palgia 1990:78). In the twentieth century, Amazons were typically depicted in literature and art as an alien adversary that threatened the masculinity of heroes (Macdonald 1987:1-24); they were caricatured as 'over-masculine', unnatural women who rejected marriage

and impregnation (Kirk 1987:27-37). As such, the typical goal of heroes was to defeat and humiliate the Amazons as a way of reasserting their own, masculine self and superiority. Amazons represented fear; they showcased dreaded women.

In spite of his reference to Greek mythology, the issues Kakande is attending to were local; they were discussed widely during the 1990s and beyond. For example, it was reported in the *Weekly Topic* of 8 March 1990 that by becoming more masters rather than servants women were acting in a non-traditional way and threatening men. On 29 November 1995 *The New Vision* published a cartoon depicting a woman wearing a suit with matching high heeled shoes. She sits in a modern office under the title *Now women are above us (59)*. The office contains facilities such as a chair, desk, telephone, computer and fan. She talks over the phone while crossing her legs. This gesture of crossing legs is often done by men to show that they are in control. So she is portrayed in a similar manner to indicate that she is in control. Moreover, there is a self-portrait on the wall. Often times it is mandatory for public office to display the portrait of the president. The office woman forfeits that and instead uses her own portrait. By displacing the male head of state she places her mark on a public space while projecting her symbolic power. This device added to the fact that her desk is marked 'director' identifies her as the boss while simultaneously placing the men in the cartoon into subordinate positions. This display of power prompted the two men, now pushed to the background, to say, albeit begrudgingly: 'now women are above us'.

I argue that this is not a concession. Rather it is sarcasm laced with fear. The cartoon is grounded in the fear of women in high offices which preoccupied men in the 1990s. Justice Laetitia Eulalia Mukasa-Kikonyogo is the Deputy Chief Justice of Uganda. During our interview, she alluded to my contention arguing that:

You see, among the educated class we have noticed that there is that subtle discrimination against women and, of course, at times men also become envious and they will want to see women under their supervision. They don't want to see women in positions of authority ... prejudice is still there and people still feel that high positions should go to men (Mukasa-Kikonyogo, interview, 2007).

These issues can be inferred from the cartoon in the *New Vision*.

Secondly, this cartoon reflects the debate in which the *new woman* was associated with masculinised acts and objects such as offices, war trumpets and guns, books, briefcases, cars, sitting in public spaces, and strolling to towns in order to show that she was equal to men. It is here that we trace Kakande's war trumpet and its use in gendered art: he uses it to persuade us to believe his point of view that liberated women wield menacing power and authority. The immensity of this 'girl-power' worried men – and this is obvious in the cartoon.

In *The Monitor* of 31 January - 2 February 1996, Joseph Mumbere explained why men had reason to worry. Under the headline 'We are in trouble with our women', Mumbere recounted that he had

been an ardent supporter of the emancipation of our women and strongly welcomed NRM's affirmative action in that field. However ... I am alarmed at some of the things some of our women are getting up to ... today we see and read of women who are managers, politicians, or ministers becoming a big problem for their husbands. They are always taking unnecessary meetings ... which go on till 2:00 am. Really, (is) it African for a married woman to wake her husband? Is this what we call women emancipation? I think as a society we are losing our way (Mumbere 1996:6).

Mumbere's concern was not isolated. *The Monitor* of 27-29 May 1996 warned that 'women should ... note that excessive show of power and authority will often act as a repellent and keep people especially the opposite sex away from them'. To capture this anxiety a cartoon was published in *The Monitor* of 3-5 June 1996 under the title *Who's gonna get my beer and snacks?* (60). The cartoon depicts a career woman

abandoning her domestic space and roles. The man seated in the sofa looks back to say that 'At least wait until the game is over before you leave me ... Who's gonna get me my beer and snacks?' as the woman strides towards the exit carrying two brief cases. The woman ignores his plea and walks to the open door. In the process, she abandons her marital responsibilities and their sole beneficiary, for example, her husband's plea for attention. Commensurate with her departure were two things: First, Uganda's *new woman* subverted prescribed expectations of a woman in a traditional household. Secondly, she inverted them. In the process she dispossessed and forced the man into a lower rung while assuming a new position at the pinnacle of the 'new' and unorthodox political order. In other words, the cartoon conflated women's emancipation with a rejection of their normative roles; it foregrounded the fear that affirmative action had upset the companionship between women and men in homes; it was disruptive.

This disruption caused by women becoming public figures engendered problems.¹¹ And why was it problematic? This is because, as Kakande explains, some 'fundamentals' were being abused:

You see, some years have gone by now. But I must say there is something important which I thought then. I said to myself: yes it is true that affirmative action was irreversible by 1994. Women had made significant inroads in the public space. You need to understand, however, that in spite of this reality some fundamentals could not be ignored. What about beauty? What about the very notion of femininity and ... the very notion of being a woman? Weren't all these going to be compromised under the guise of women activism? I felt the need to intervene visually (Kakande, interview, 2006)

Earlier in the discussion on Kazibwe, we saw how imaging women as beautiful and sexually appealing was part of a campaign to silence women in public offices. I argue that Kakande's emphasis on attributes of femininity, dress and beauty defined on men's (and not women's) terms was part of this strategy. His work marked his entry into a polemic debate on women's activism and affirmative action. Fundamental to this debate

was the need to protect the interests of the patriarchy and maintain the status quo. In support of this claim, I bring his *La liberté voluptueuse* (The voluptuous liberty) (61) (1993) into discussion. It is a ceramic figure with a green earthenware glaze in which the artist imag(in)es voluptuousness as an attribute of an erotic but liberated woman. She dons a modern outfit and her hair is plaited. She is youthful and bathed in a vibrantly fresh green colour. She is voluptuous; her breasts are full and round. She has a well-defined visage whose attributes can be traced back to the ganda symbolism of the beauty of a woman which I mentioned earlier. She is silenced: her lips are tightly closed. And why must the *new woman* remain simply voluptuous, blind and mute? Kakande explains:

This one is not your sun-battered rural woman. No, she is modern. She is middleclass. She is elite. She is emancipated. You must understand that I was trying to do something vital here. It was a social responsibility. You see, the woman who through Museveni's affirmative action emerged in 1989 was losing – yes losing – something important namely: her African beauty. She was going too far and I thought: no woman, *sois belle et tais-toi!* (Kakande, interview, 2008).

In making this sculpture, the artist wedged his idiom into the debates seeking to silence the *new woman*. This explains why, unlike in Baine's mural *Women's emancipation in Uganda* (see fig 19a) where the *new woman* is defined using public gatherings, higher education, demonstrated technical skill, public presence and the ability to break barriers, Kakande's woman is defined in terms of physiognomy, fashion and looks couched in African beauty – where African beauty means anything which is immutably traditional.

Kakande translates *Sois belle et tais-toi* as 'woman just be beautiful, bounteous, sexy and shut up' (Kakande interview, 2008). This view locates Kakande's gendered idioms in the debate I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Seen against this backdrop, *La liberté voluptueuse* gains a political (con)text. The work fuses into the strategy used to trivialise women's contribution to public debate which I unveiled

earlier on. It demonstrates how the artist visually reconstructed the *new woman* as he reconfigured the politics she was upsetting. Acceding to this claim allows us to decode the meaning in the artist's vow to intervene using his art.

In *La séduction réclamée* (62) (1995) the artist presents a portrait of a woman. Her dress code recalls the Nigerian outfits that were embraced by most elite women in Uganda starting in the early 1990s. Her headdress is inflated and decorated with a light brown ribbon matching her fair skin colour. She wears an oval mask. Masks are recurring in the artist's body of works. Now, a few communities in Uganda have a rich tradition of making masks – for example the Batooro, Basoga, etc. However, this tradition is not as rich as that in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo. Nevertheless many contemporary artists use masks (some invented, other borrowed from Congo) in their work to give it a sense of African identity. I however argue that the way Kakande uses the mask in his works serves another role of maintaining silence among women. This may be explained by the way all his women are tight-lipped.

La séduction réclamée has closed beady eyes. She has a wide chest draped in thick (almost metallic) blue drapery. She exudes an irresistible persona and sense of calm. These attributes in addition to her pink bangles are effective devices which radiate the woman's seductive femininity. If in his *L'amazon s'annonce* the artist imaged a woman who repelled the heterosexual male, here, as implied in the title of the painting, the artist has salvaged the woman's attractiveness, ability to seduce and availability to offer sexual pleasure – a theme he also takes up in his *La séduction intensifiée* (The intensified seduction; 1996).

Kakande's *La séduction intensifiée* (63) is a portrait of a woman which demonstrates the artist's attention to detail and control of the medium. The woman dons a complex drapery, again drawing on Nigerian dress codes.

She has a long neck enhanced with a scarf. Like her sister in *La séduction réclamée*, she wears a big headdress and, like the Amazon in *L'amazon s'annonce*, a dangling earring on a mask like face. His intentions of introducing a face/mask seem not different from his *L'amazon s'annonce*. Her lips are exaggerated and accentuated with lip stick to create a sense of sexual desire and intense arousal. These attributes and accessories render the woman in *La séduction intensifiée* rich, middle class, 'extremely sensuous, seductive, inviting, available and generally good and acceptable' (Kakande, interview, 2008).

The other debate is on Kakande's use of dress and fashion. *Dressed to kill (64)* (1997) is a ceramic figurine of a woman wearing a patterned headscarf, a modern dress and a patterned wrap which accentuates her feminine, 'round bottom'. She has a strong sense of vitality and movement as she strides to display her tender youthful body. *Dressed to kill* would ideally refer to a fashion statement which makes a markedly favourable impression. Many elite women (and men) in Uganda are particular and keen about the kind of fashion statement they make; they spend a lot on imported clothes and accessories. Kakande is aware of this convention; he foregrounds it in his figurine.

However, sometimes the issues of fashion, and being fashionable, have stirred a gendered political debate in Uganda. Women who have used fashion to display their freedom, liberty, creativity, invention and individuality have been rejected as outlandish, materialistic 'time-wasters' alienated from their Ugandan society; their ability to perform in public office has been contested. For example, women in high positions were warned to:

Dress like a parliamentarian but don't overdo it; the lip stick and perfume you wear should not act as a constant reminder to the man sitting next to you that he is sitting next to a beautiful woman (Tamale 1996:108).

In other words, men have conveniently conflated women's fashion statements with men's sexual arousal; and then they worry that women's attention to fashion breeds loss of public morality and order. Implicit in such views is the blur between dress, dressing, eroticism and erotica. With the title of dress to kill, and in the context of this explanation, Kakande's figurine becomes a subtle commentary on elite women's preoccupation with fashion and beauty.

4.2.4 Sightless bodies, objectified women

Owing to the new political structures, increased access to education and better socio-economic fortunes which the NRM put in place, women moved from their domestic confines to the public arena. Tripp argues that this movement, and the public presence that followed it, was 'almost mandatory, suggesting major changes in political culture' (Tripp 2003: 11). Although lauded by many feminists and rights activists, I have already demonstrated that this vertical mobility provoked anxiety which attracted the artist's attention.

In *The succulent wears perfume (65)* 1994 Kakande demonstrates mastery of skill and handling of media – two areas which are often emphasised in the training offered at Makerere Art School. He depicted a sole image of a woman half-wrapped in blue-green, loose muslin. She floats over the entire format. He uses luminosity and sharp contrasts interrupted with delicate shadows to give his visual statement clarity and to provoke and guide the viewer's imagination. He does not only 'signify a pre-existing subject who is elsewhere' (Sheriff 2005:123) and supreme to the preordained web of social relations, but he reconstitutes such a subject availing her for the consumption of the powerful male gaze.

The woman's coiffure is stretched towards the top right corner. It seems to be held by an invisible force allowing the woman to display her fetishes of elegance, glamour and beauty: the jewellery, the costume, the cosmetics.

She has a delicate, smooth skin. Her head is turned and seen in a profile recalling Egyptian figurations. To begin with, the pose (just like its surrealistic style) is in tandem with the curriculum of art history offered at Makerere Art School through which the artist was exposed to classical Egyptian art. The pose thus allows us to see how the artist uses other cultural experiences to enrich his creative enterprise and extend the margins of gendered contemporary Ugandan art. Moreover, the pose invites us to see the woman's round breast which is believed to enhance the woman's sex appeal.

Kakande's *The succulent wears perfume* holds a small perfume bottle (shaped like a gourd and decorated with a cowrie shell motif) against her cheek. This gesture, together with her bejewelled, elongated, feeble and frivolous hand and fingers, eroticises the woman's body. It transforms the woman into an object of male sexual desire and exploitation. It also brings out the artist's conviction, as well as society's, that the elite woman has nothing better to do than body care, coiffure and manicure. She hardly does constructive work; she is slothful (translated *ngalobunani* in Kakande's region).

As such, in spite of her resonances in Egypt, Kakande's representation is grounded in local cultures and gendering. The artist attends to the body and body-decorations enhanced with improvised motifs and cowrie shells¹². His woman uses essence kept in a local gourd. This has a deeper symbolism. Lugira argues that a well shaped gourd is always appreciated as a measure of the femininity and beauty of a woman (Lugira 1970:69). As such a red gourd is used as a symbol of a woman's beauty and similes such as *mumyufu ng'edeku* and *mulungi ng'endeku* (literally translated, she is as beautiful as a gourd) are often used to describe and ascribe feminine beauty. The artist is aware of these constructs: 'I often refer to them in my work' (Kakande, interview, 2008). These artefacts are decorative, but reveal the woman's preoccupation with the material world.

Put simply, whereas most elite women use Western accessories to define and represent themselves, Kakande draws on local (Baganda) resources to invent and localise elitism among women in Uganda. This explanation separates Kakande's woman from those we saw in chapter three; it allows the artist to expand the visual vocabulary used to define the *new woman* in Uganda. It presents the local (probably ethnic) resources the artist used to construct and circulate the woman's outlandish sexuality, eroticism, femininity and beauty.

The Luganda Daily, *Bukedde*, has created a popular column called *Ssenga*. *Ssenga* is a paternal figure who initiates girls into adulthood in Buganda. The paper is aware of this traditional role. Its *Ssenga* teaches lessons on marriage, relationships and sex, sometimes using graphic language. In *Bukedde* of 16 July 2008, *Ssenga* prescribed that in order to improve a woman's appetite for sexual intercourse (translated from the Luganda *okucamula*), Baganda men should call their women using body parts such as beady eyes, fair-skin, big-haunch and so on (translated from the Luganda 'oyinza okumuyita okusinziira ku bitundu by'omubiri gwe gamba nga maasombira, bulawuni, kabinandoddo...'). All of these conventions are seen in Kakande's *The succulent wears perfume*. His woman's closed eyes are beady to resonate *maasombira*. Beady eyes on a woman are 'believed to increase the woman's sex appeal', as he explains (Kakande, interview, 2008). Her skin is fair – a reference to *bulawuni*. She has exaggerated haunches – a reference to the *kabinandoddo*.

The artist wants his audience to access the woman's soft, rotund, sensuous body. To do this, he leaves much of the woman's body bare; he exposes the woman's erogeneity. He depicts the woman stretching her right hand backwards and uncovering her round hip. There is a dominant presence of a cowrie shell which points to the value of the haunch—the 'thigh power'. Thus the gesture of uncovering and the presence of a

cowrie shell serve to valorise the woman's body. Through them the artist persuades his audience to believe that the essence of a woman is her femininity and her sexuality. The artist decisively translates the woman into a kind of fetishised sex object also seen in other works like voluptuous.

Kakande's *Voluptuous (66)* (1995) is a small ceramic figurine, glazed in a black colour. The work represents a youthful woman who is naked except for a small piece of muslin that hangs loosely around her genitalia. This allows the figurine a degree of modesty without losing the seductive appeal. The artist exaggerates and elongates the woman's body – a theme he takes up in a number of works he did in the mid 1990s including *Lady with a long neck* (1996), *L'icône i* (1996) *L'icône ii* (1996) *Madonna with a long neck* (1996), *Self indulgence* (1996), *Serenity* (1996), *Head with a long neck* (1996), *Head with a long neck and braids* (1996), *Head with a long neck and scarf* (1996) *Self indulgence* (1996), *Serenity* (1996), *Head with a long neck* (1996), *Head with a long neck and braids* (1996), *Head with a long neck and scarf* (1996) and *Erotica* (1995-1997) all objectifies the woman.

The symbolism of long necks also seen in *Lady with a long neck (67)* (1996), *L'icône i* (The icon i; 1996) **(68)** and *L'icône ii* (The icon ii; 1996) **(69)** needs explanation. It compellingly illustrates the artist's awareness of the Karen-Padaung natives of Burma, in Thailand, and the Ndebele women in South Africa, who use brass rings to elongate their necks in order to appear beautiful. It also demonstrates his use of Western sources. For example, his *Madonna with a long neck (70)* (1996) demonstrates his awareness of Girolamo Mazzola's *Madonna with the long neck* (1535)¹³ and the gendered politics in it.¹⁴ But the issues at the heart of his works are entirely local. Ugandan women improve the beauty of their necks using body tattoos and necklaces. There is a common belief that long necks (translated from the Luganda *ensingo ennangavvu*) enhance

women's beauty, femininity and attractiveness. Among the Baganda, for example, it is a convention that long necks symbolise feminine beauty. 'I think I entirely agree with the Baganda: long necks are beautiful', the artist explains (Kakande, interview, 2006).

Equally worth mentioning is the way in which the artist used women with long necks as display items to decorate the interior while interiorising the woman into a domestic space. For example, in *Self indulgence (71)* (1996), a figurine glazed in grey-black, we see a bust of a woman mounted on a mahogany cabinet. She has an oval small face and her eyes are closed. Her full and youthful breasts are exposed. She stretches her left arm backwards to massage the back of her neck with a piece of cloth. This gives her a kind of erotic self-indulgence although it also avails the woman for our gaze which she seems to be unaware of. He also did *Serenity (72)* (1996), *Head with a long neck (73)* (1996), *Head with a long neck and braids (74)* (1996), *Head with a long neck and scarf (75)* (1996), five differently textured heads with long necks mounted on mahogany cabinets in which the artist exposed the ostentatiousness of the *new woman*.

The heads remind us of the fin-de-siècle during which French visual artists, from both the avant-garde and the academy, converged on the preoccupation with images of maternal bliss and interiorised femininity. Silverman argues that this was in response to the challenge imposed by the '*femme nouvelle*', or *new woman*, who was perceived as threatening to subvert women's [normative] roles (Silverman 1991:148). The product was the construction of women as objects of the interior: woman became an 'ornament of the home' (Silverman 1991:150). A new genre of French decorative art emerged in which the woman became an officially sanctioned decorative motif. Visual art took part in a sustained campaign to restrain rebellious bourgeois women, resolve 'the menace of the *femme nouvelle*', reconfigure the power matrix and maintain the status-quo.

Arguably, Kakande and his works are located in a different time and place. But clearly, he also reduced the woman to interior ornamental motifs (as he states in his MA thesis). Kakande explains that he 'intended these works strictly for the interior, the bedroom' (interview, 2008). Therefore the artists' inclusion of the cabinets makes them perfectly suited for the interior, thus enforcing the artist's strategy. However, his explanation serves an interesting purpose: it confirms that through his works he restricted women to the bedroom – a strategy which in Europe served to resolve the menace of the *new woman*. On the other hand Kakande presents cabinets with locks. The locks tend to personalise the cabinets as property of the artist; they further remove the woman from the public space while asserting her position in the private space.

Erotica (76) (1995-1997) is the largest figurine Kakande has done so far. The title *Erotica* and the contrapposto pose of this sculpture have classical origins. 'Yes I am fascinated by classical images and I looked at them in available literature before, and during, the time I made this work', the artist explains. *Erotica* is an over-life-size, domineering, ceramic sculpture depicting a 'youthful and marriageable woman'. She is energetic and sophisticated; her hair is plaited. Her countenance is clearly defined and realistic. To preserve her femininity and deter her from repulsing the heterosexual male, the woman in *Erotica* looks sideways as she displays her round, full breasts, a waistline interrupted by a navel (a symbol of erotica), and sensuous, large hips covered in thick fabric.

Drawn from classical nymphs, *Erotica*, just like other works in the artist's gendered production, shows his attention to the woman's physiognomy. As a way of influencing 'how we see the female body and what it means to us' (Betterton, 1987: 8), Kakande's visual strategy serves men's sexual fantasies. It also opens a discussion on other artists who, in a more forceful and vulgar way, used eroticism and erotica to control the *new*

woman by reducing her to a pinup and blurring the unstable line separating contemporary art and pornography.

To state it clearly, if for Ifee the *new woman* endangered male sexuality and risked to threaten posterity, it is clear that Kakande found a way round the impasse. His visual language articulates a rich, middle class woman who has been relocated to the interior through art. Like the French artists of the fin-de-siècle, Kakande visually resolved the problems imposed by his own *L'amazon s'annonce*. He repackaged Uganda's *new woman* rendering her sensual and inviting: a highly libidinous sex object. In doing so he recovered male sexual power and control over the *new woman*, albeit symbolically.

4.3 THE FEMALE NUDE: FROM PORNOGRAPHY, TO HIGH ART, TO SILENCE

In a cartoon published in *The Monitor* of 20-22 November 1995 (77) we see a youthful woman wearing long braids, dangling earrings and jewellery around her small long neck. She has firm, round breasts. She walks across a male-dominated urban space. To identify the space and to confirm that the female figure in his representation is an elite Ugandan woman, the cartoonist uses a signpost marked 'Kampala Road', a street in Kampala's central business district where affluent and middle class women do their shopping. The satirist gives the woman a small waistline which is accentuated by a tight, black mini skirt and matching high-heeled shoes.

Betterton contends that the visual representation of exaggerated '...buttocks and thighs emphasise[s a woman's] sexual availability' (Betterton 1987:154) for men. Her argument is admissible. In Uganda, youthful women with big, round haunches, in addition to 'big' legs are highly prized in terms of bride price.¹⁵ As it is obvious in Geoffrey

Lutaaya's music video *Nassanga* (2006), they are greatly admired¹⁶. Aware of this convention, the satirist exaggerates the woman's buttocks stressing her radiating immense sexuality which attracts a group of men of varied ages and social classes. The group pursues her aggressively. Some fall, others gasp for air as they trail the woman who strolls to the right of the picture plane.

Writing in *The New Vision* 10 September 2001, one Harry Sagara explained what causes this frenzied male fascination with buttocks:

For many Ugandan men, a woman with a good butt already has 60%... the strongest force in this universe is not dynamite, it is not the atomic bomb and it's not even TNT but it is called the bum power. In order to believe me, get a normal man, take him to Makerere university main gate on a busy day and see whether he can walk past a beautiful girl without staring or commenting on her bum. I have done this experiment and an average man is so obsessed with women's bums that were they edible (literally) there would be no famine in this world. Though irresistible, bum power can mean to be very dangerous....

To illustrate Sagara's contention, a cartoonist did an image of a female student walking into the main gate of Makerere University **(78)** (2000). She wears braids, a tight sleeveless T-shirt and jeans as well as flat sandals. Her eyes are big (beady) and half-closed. She has a long neck; her breasts are round and perky. They rhyme with her small waistline which allows her buttocks to extend outwards as she holds them with her small hands. She walks to the left leaving a trail of utter distraction. 'Who can resist a second glance at a shapely rump?' the headline reads. Two men run into road signs and hurt themselves. In the middle of the road, we see a conversation between two men and a security officer which has been disrupted too. They turn to look. A dog is persuading its master (called Afande, a Swahili word for master) to break the silence and 'say something' to the woman. This irony humanises the dog while ominously placing the woman, with which it shares a shadow, into a subordinate position. The shadow transforms the woman into a bitch: a sex object. To

confirm this reading, a man is overwhelmed by his erection. He holds his crotches unable to control his libido.

We are told that what we are witnessing is the response of an average man to the passing-by of a female student of Makerere University. Interestingly, this public obsession with educated women as sex objects which informed the media also shaped the visual arts. By the mid-1990s a link had emerged between the artistic and the popular image of the educated women in Uganda. Kakande explains how this link unfolded:

You see, the media demystified the body of a woman and mass circulated it. Starting in the late-nineties, we saw a massive consumption of pinups and pornography. Although I did not intend to mass-circulate my women I could not avoid the vogue. I bought this stuff. I read a lot of it, I still do. But you must understand that I was not alone ... I can confirm that many artists based their work on mass-circulated pinups (Kakande, interview, 2007).

The issues in this statement merit elaboration because they help us to understand how contemporary Ugandan art was informed by the biased sexist reporting on women through which the media reinforced the gender hierarchy in Uganda's patriarchy (Tamale 1996:185).

In the late 1990s *Bukedde* published suggestive photographs of young women. Published for the population in western Uganda in Rukiga, Runyankore Runyoro, Rutooro, and other languages spoken in the area, *Orumuri* published images and sexually explicit commentaries about women. Due to objections from moralists, women rights and religious activists, *Bukedde* and *Orumuri* were forced to tone down in the late 1990s. A void was then created which was later filled by tabloids such as *Spices*, *Red Pepper*, *The Mirror* and recently *Onion*. *Red Pepper*, which has been most consistent, was launched in June 2001 as Uganda's 'first tabloid newspaper'. In its first issue, it vowed to cater for male sexual fantasies supplying its heterosexual male audience with graphic photographs of erotic, young women. It created two illustrated pages titled: 'meet one of the world's sexiest women' and 'women you must meet

before you die'. Here it published naked women positioned in erotic poses. In addition, the *Red Pepper* specialised in pornographic pictures of women, with their legs set apart to expose their bosoms and genitalia sometimes covered in comic cat and butterfly shapes.

Red Pepper reported on public sexual orgies. For example, it covered a scene in a place called Kimombasa (a sprawling slum in Kampala) where illicit sex was routine (see *Red Pepper* 25-31 July 2001:16). It reported that in this locality bars staged public sex competitions. It used pornographic images to illustrate and spice its story. It also gave immense publicity to the nude dancers performing in different night bars in Kampala (*Red Pepper* 18-24 July 2001:15). For example, in July 2001 it captured in graphic detail the *Shadow's Angels* performing at *Will's café Kabalagala*, a bar located in one of Kampala's affluent suburbs. It narrated how the erotic *Shadow's Angels* entertained their male audience and aroused them sexually forcing many to 'hold their crotches' (*Red Pepper* 18-24 July 2001:11).

The *Shadow's Angels* was one of several dance troupes which, conscious of the growing market for nudity and striptease, engaged in nude-dancing. Often led by men (for instance, the *Shadow's Angels* were led by a man called Roger Mugisha alias the Shadow) this group performed in bars and other public places. The second group was called *Amanda's nude dancers* led by a maverick man who called himself Amanda. The other group that gained notoriety was the *Amarula Queen Dancers* based at Hollywood Theatre in Kibuye, another Kampala suburb. In its issue of 16-22 August 2001, *Red Pepper* gave a detailed account of why the *Amarula* group was popular. They performed lap dances to arouse men sexually; the men fondled the dancers and all this went on in front of cameras.

Nude dance, commonly called *kimansulo* (literally translated as exhibitionism), has attracted immense debate. I do not intend to get into its

complexities, moral codes, ethicality or foreign sources. Rather, I intend a discussion on two things. Firstly, like many such spectacles, the *kimansulo* and mass-circulation of nudity downgrades women. It exploits women's sexuality to feed the insatiable male gaze and libido – all of which are obvious in the aforementioned. Secondly, this discussion on the consumption of sexually explicit representations of women shows how the *kimansulo* and tabloids are part of a wider campaign through which nudity has been demystified and the naked woman taken from the reclusive night bars popular in marginal spots of Kimmombasa slums on to the main streets of Kampala (including the legendary Kampala Road). As Kakande rightly points out, this demystification has been explored by contemporary artists who, more than himself, have supplied pornographic images through which they have eroticised and objectified the bodies of elite women.

Fred Kakinda (1969) is a graduate of Makerere Art School and currently lectures there. During his graduate research on *A Case Study of Life Drawing at Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art (MTSIFA)* (1998) he investigated problems which hampered drawing at the Makerere Art School with a view of finding solutions for them (Kakinda 1998:6). He hoped to 'propose new grounds where drawing as the "grammar of art" would be strengthened and its scope as a medium of expression and as a source of knowledge would be appreciated' (Kyeyune 2004: 9). In the process he created many drawings, experimenting with different surfaces, methods and media.

However, there is something uncanny about Kakinda's choice of poses. He depicted women in sexually explicit poses. Some kneel, squat, lean against walls and chairs while others lie on their backs with their legs spread. For instance, in *Reclining beauty i (79)* (1998), Kakinda presents a woman leaning against a wall to accentuate and expose her exaggerated bare buttocks; in *Reclining beauty v (80)* (1998) he captures a female

figure lying on her back. She is anonymous and slender. Her breasts are full and round; her legs are wide open. The image is erotic as the woman's pose is suggestive and inviting.

His *Kimansulo* series are graphic. They tapped into the public taste for nudity created by the press and nude dances. The title of *Kimansulo* comes directly from the nude-dances called *Kimansulo* to which I referred earlier. In *Kimansulo i (81)* (1998) and *Kimansulo ii (82)* (1998) Kakinda drew naked female figures. He attended to subtle curves, smoothness and definition of form. The artist denies that he attended any nude-dances. Instead he was 'fascinated by the whole thing' as and when it was reported in the printed and electronic media (Kakinda, interview, 2006). This then confirms that his kimansulo-series slid from pornography to art; they strode the line separating high art and low art. It suggests that the press informed and enriched Kakinda's fantasies about women's sexuality and he used this knowledge to enrich his practice. It proves that although figure drawing in Makerere Art School is traditionally based on models posing in structured sessions and drawing classes, Kakinda broke this tradition. His drawings are also drawn from the mass-circulated images of naked women.

To serve the insatiable appetite for nudity the Nommo Gallery hosted *The First Exhibition of Ugandan Artists on "The Nude"* (2000). The show was generously funded by the Italian Embassy. During its official opening, Emmanuel Mutungi, the Director of Nommo Gallery, argued that through the show Uganda's artists demystified the human body. Why and how? Mutungi gave the following explanation:

The Ugandan artists must believe that the human body is a thing ever created and is a sign of beauty not shame. They are out to express the emotional feelings; their understandings their interpretation [sic]and more so to create a dialogue where such issues could be addressed for the good of our society (Mutungi 2000: no page).

Actually Mutungi's suggestion that the images on show were based on individual expressions is valid. However, he left unattended the question of which common good had to be urgently addressed using nude, in fact pornographic, images in a country where pornography is taboo, at least officially. This question sparks denials and ambiguous responses from participating artists ranging from educating the public about morals, to art for art's sake. However, it can be answered using the images in the catalogue in which one finds male artists celebrating the power of male sexuality as we see in Ernest Kigozi's *Two men*¹⁷ and in Samuel Kakaire's *Sistine chapel*.¹⁸ Many others exhibited their obsessions about the woman as a sex object – for example, Franco Kayiira in *The nude*,¹⁹ Fred Kizito Kakinda in *Ecstasy*²⁰ and Clovis Mutebi in *Unleashed*.²¹ Put simply, the exhibition helped to legitimise men's sexuality and circulate the image of the woman as an object of men's sexual gratification. The 2000 Nude Exhibition was ranked a huge success: it attracted a number of artists (including the autodidacts) and visitors. This prompted the gallery to organise a second show, *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition* in September, 2001.

Like the first show, *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition* (2001) showcased a variety of images. Some artists celebrated masculinity, for example Samuel Kakaire's *The posing body builder*,²² Dan Sekweyama's *Warrior*,²³ Andrew Kijjambu's *Muscled power*,²⁴ and Harunah Lubwama's *Male nude*.²⁵ Some depicted sexual acts. Their exhibits bordered on pornography, for example Daniel Birungi's *Think twice*²⁶ depicting a man stimulating the breasts of a willing woman and Mawazi Lulagala's *Through the walls*²⁷ depicting a naked man caressing a naked woman. Other exhibitors were less graphic but they still insisted on the availability of a woman for sexual exploitation which is often taken for granted. They depicted sexualised women using suggestive images and titles, for example, Joshua Agaba's *I am ready*,²⁸ Maganda Ivan's *Feel me*,²⁹

Godfrey Mucuunguzi See me,³⁰ and Peter Kibiyita's *How am I*.³¹ Robert Ssewanyana's *Here I am (83)* (2001) requires specific mention.

Ssewanyana (1973) graduated from Margaret Trowel School of Industrial and Fine arts in 1997. He also lectures there. In *Here I am (83)* Ssewanyana represents a single figure of a voluptuous woman seen from the back. Done in pastels on paper, the image presents a modern woman represented as such using the following devices. She wears high-heeled shoes. Her skin is fair. She wears a blue head scarf and has long plaited hair tied with a ribbon. She is anonymous. She squats in an uncomfortable position allowing her matching blue panties to hang between her legs. These devices betray the artist's wild imagination about the bodies and sexuality of Uganda's elite women.

Artists and critics have consistently justified the enjoyment of the nude by appealing to abstract conceptions of the ideal form, beauty and aesthetic value. We see this in Mutungi's statement above. Launching the second show, Robert Sserumaga, the director of the National Theatre, in his speech emphasised that the artists are 'pleased to present to you, with the most innocent of intentions, the nude exhibition' (Serumaga 2001: no page). Also, Nakubulwa Kabuye (an intern at the Nommo Gallery) wrote in the catalogue explaining how nudes 'spice' the visual scene and were part of the emergent wave of public appreciation of 'the undraped figure in a fuller version' (Nakabuye 2001: no page).

These explanations might be true, but they do not point to the politics implicit in the nude shows. Writing in the catalogue for the second show Kasule argued that the 2001 nude show was a starting point for the collapse of the legitimacy of formal art institutions. It permitted 'self-discovery'; it freed contemporary artists from the shackles of sanitised aesthetics which for him were a form of 'visual enslavement perpetuated by our art education system' (Kasule 2001: no page). This statement is

probably extreme in as far as it proclaims the collapse of the academy – including Makerere Art School – which has not happened a decade after the nude shows. It is, however, a useful point of departure for our understanding of the fallacy of nude art in which sexualised bodies of women are depicted.

Secondly, feminist scholars argue that the act of viewing nude art reinstates (and re-states) male power; they render visible the relationship of power and subordination involved when a male artist depicts the female body (Lesser 1991). They explain the triangulated power economy linking art, gender and power which informs the production and exhibition of nudes. By accessing this power economy we begin to apprehend the basis for what Kabuye called the public craving for the full version of undraped female bodies; we appreciate why Patrick Lwasampijja's *Mystery woman* (2001), exhibited during the 2001 nude show, gained immense popularity and provoked a bum-power syndrome close to that seen in the cartoon accompanying Sagara's story both published in *The New Vision* 10 September 2001.

In *Mystery woman* (2001) **(84)** Lwasampijja depicts a naked, life-size woman. A commentary published in *The New Vision* of September 14, 2001 identified her as an 'impressive ... village belle'. There is limited evidence on this sculpture to suggest that she is straight from the village. Her plaited hair and heeled shoes are all markers of affluence associated with the middle class. Thus, the press review suggests that the sculpture elicited multiple meanings.

With her right leg and arm forward, the mystery woman strolls towards the beholder. She is, however, not frightening to the public gaze. On the contrary, during the nude exhibition of 2001, *Mystery woman* was received as one of the most 'alluring' works (*The New Vision* of 14 September 2001). I posit that this is because the woman is blindfolded. This strategy

also allows the beholder to explore the woman's femininity and access her sexuality. Reduced to an object of sexual desire and gratification, the mystery woman begins to arouse shared, heterosexual, male fantasies about the elite woman's body. In fact, during the 2001 nude exhibition, *The New Vision* reporter photographed elite men (identified as such by their suits and neck ties) fondling the sculpture, an affirmation of the way the artist had transformed the woman into a fetishised sex object which served the expectations of the powerful male gaze.

This was not limited to the nude shows. For example, between 23 August and 11 September 2004, Kakinda mounted his *In Images of Uganda: Kakinda scans his artistic background* (2004) exhibition at the Nommo Gallery. In an interview with George Kyeyune who wrote an essay in the catalogue, Kakinda admitted that his works were a response to the expectations of the male gaze, which has an insatiable appetite for 'breasts and the behind (read buttocks)' (Kyeyune 2004:14).

Located in the same milieu where the distinction between high art and pornography ceases to exist, are Mwebe's drawings. Mwebe (1962) is a graduate of the School of Commercial Industrial Art and Design which Musango established at Nkumba University when he left Makerere's Art School. During his three-year graduate course, Mwebe did a project titled *Experiencing with tones as expressive force in drawing* (2004). Fred Kakinda and Francis Musango supervised it. Mwebe hoped to investigate and educate others on 'tonal drawing and its relevance to the articulation of human form' and visual expression. His point of departure was: 'can life drawing be a way for the artist to express thoughts and feelings about things through tone?' Mwebe developed his answer using 'a nude female human form' (Mwebe 2004:6). He produced images of naked women depicted in provocative poses. He gave them titles such as *Striptease*, *Undressing*, *Girlish*, *Unsettled*, *Admiration*, *Dancing nude*, *Fixing up*, and *On the mat*, among others. Clearly, then, Mwebe's idioms went beyond

the dictates of art education, formal and technical expediences. His art served the demand for pornography. For example, in his soft pencil drawing, *Undressing (85)* (2004), Mwebe depicts a woman kneeling down. She faces the viewer as she begins to undress exposing her naked body. *Striptease (86)* (2004) displays a topless woman with long hair flowing down her back. Using both hands she pulls her trousers down. Mwebe went on to draw a *Wriggling nude (87)* (2004) which portrays a woman twisting her body in different directions. The action, like in *Striptease*, renders her an erotic naked woman. The notion of wriggling arises out of the suggestive pose which, together with her closed eyes, transforms the woman into a subservient sex object.

In the write-up accompanying his work, Mwebe does not explicitly tell us why an artist would use 'a nude female human form' to capture, in graphic poses, what he calls an expressive force in drawing. Nor does he tell us why an artist would invest his thoughts and feelings (Mwebe 2004:7) about things (whatever those are) through a naked female figure. And Mwebe is not alone in this. Neither Kakinda nor Ssewanyana or any of the other artists who featured in the nude shows, give a clear explanation; at best, they are evasive. A sense of embarrassment clouded my interviews with Kakinda and Ssewanyana, for example. I suspect this was because they were being interviewed by a woman although other explanations cannot be ruled out.

In his book *The Nude* (1956), Clark traces the history of the male and female nude from Greek antiquity to European modernism. Through this narrative, he wrestles with the competing drives of sensory and contemplative pleasures, trying to hold them together in a balanced combination without allowing either impulse to dominate judgement. He observes how the female nude takes on symbolic importance in the high art tradition and enters the public position and psyche through which it influenced British culture but mainly as pure artistic form (Clark 1956:6).

However, feminist art historians such as Rosemary Betterton, Lynda Nead, Helen Macdonald and Griselda Pallock, among others, have criticised the values that Clark's conceptualisation of the female nude enshrines. As if to answer him back Betterton argues that 'no nude images can ever entirely escape the circle of voyeurism and exploitation which constitute male power in representation' (Betterton 1987: 251). Betterton argues that the female nude is a fascinating and disturbing symbol in Western visual culture. It is a particular construction of female sexuality which signifies male sexual desire; the privileged position assigned to the nude in the fine arts taps into a whole range of representations which exploit female sexuality in pinup, pornography and advertising (Betterton 1987: 252). Macdonald agrees, postulating that nakedness is the most potent visual sign that a body is available for sexual encounter with another body (Macdonald 2001:7). Nakedness thus articulates subordination.

Although Western in their theme and content these feminist thoughts are useful. Kakande explains that through the nude the artist in Uganda symbolically 'tames the un-tamable' (Kakande, interview, 2008). In the light of Betterton's and Macdonald's postulations, his assertion should be admitted. It highlights the soaring appetite for the demystified nude circulated in Uganda's modern art, nude shows and some print media. It persuades the view that although formal teaching uses the nude to improve the students' visual vocabulary and address technical issues of figurative art-making, access to naked urban women circulated in the media has provided a convenient route through which visual art has become a site for dealing with the threat of the *new woman*. In the process the high wall separating art from trash has collapsed. '[T]he generic categories of cultural production' (McNair 1996:2) have been decisively reshaped and questioned; graduates of the country's leading Art School, their students, and the national gallery (and Nommo Gallery is the only national gallery in Uganda) have 'transformed *haute couture* into

pornography' (Kakande, interview, 2008). As Nead rightly observes, one of the principal goals of the female nude has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body (Nead 1992:4, McDonald 2001). And this has been particularly so in Uganda's visual discourse.

4.4 RECLAIMING THE *NEW WOMAN*: MARIA NAITA'S ENTERPRISE

In works commissioned by the state Maria Naita conveys her subject matter in a direct manner. For example, when she created the *Heroes monument (88)* (2007) together with the Kann Artists, she captured a juvenile male soldier charging towards Kabamba Barracks (in Western Uganda). Done in the image of President Yoweri Museveni, the monument represents the historical moment when Museveni led a group of rebels to attack Kabamba Barracks in 1981 thus launching the guerrilla rebellion through which he took power in 1986. The monument confirms that Museveni is the embodiment of the National Resistance Movement and its ideology. The artist also executed *The stride (89)* (2007) together with the Kann Artists.³² This work represents a family striding forth and waving the official symbol of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm) which was hosted in Uganda in 2007. Another work of Naita is *Building the nation (90)* (2007) which was funded by the Rwanda government in memory of the genocide but also to allow the country to move on. *Building the nation* consists of a woman and a man literally laying bricks thus making a fresh start. Leading a country which is split along ethnic and class lines, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) has used this message as a way of helping Rwanda to recover from its divided (and divisive) history. Naita thus captured the propaganda of the ruling RPF. Being public monuments, these three works are done in a naturalistic style to allow their propagandistic message to be immediately accessed by the wider public.

Naita's personal works are not as naturalistic and direct as the aforementioned. In style they display a mixture of expressionism,

modernism, surrealism and realism. The subjects are largely women whom she gives attributes of individuality, personality and femininity. This approach has been common since the late 1990s when the artist used assorted 'body decorations ... [to] enhance tactile and visual beauty on a female sculptural form'. She created female busts that 'engender erotic feelings and tenderness', this being her construction of 'female character' (Naita 2000:16). This evidence suggests that by the late 1990s Naita was not far from her male counterpart Kakande; she objectified women availing them for the sexual gaze.³³

After 2002, however, Naita revised her subject matter. Being one of the few artists in Uganda who depend on selling their art, her works have to suit market expectations. She thus also selects genre themes to sell to the tourist market. Most important to my discussion, however, are her works dealing with the career woman. In these feminist paintings and sculptures Naita appropriates traditional aspects to identify her subjects as feminine, Ugandan or African.

For instance, *Bukedde (91)* (2002) is a wooden carving of a female bust. The woman wears heavy headgear and a delicately embroidered fabric made of metal. By mixing wood and metal, the organic and non-organic, Naita recalls the technique which Francis Naggenda has explored since the mid 1960s by draping her woman in a metallic fabric. Although the artist apparently struggled to capture the face and its details the racial profile of the woman before us is clear. The metallic fabric is not entirely successful from an aesthetic point of view but its functionality is unmistakable. The artist generally succeeds in stretching the limits of the materials (wood and metal) while creating rich textures and details without significantly interrupting the femininity of the woman before us.

In *Abakyala bayimuke (92)* (2002) Naita demonstrates her continued experimentation with a combination of materials and techniques. She

depicted the upper body of a reclining woman who supports herself with her right hand in a movement which reflects the act of waking up. The artist engages an elaborately ornate fabric and headgear to construct affluence and locate the rising woman in the middle class. The phrase '*abakyala bayimuke*' literally means 'women wake up' in Luganda (a language spoken by Naita's Baganda community). Thus Naita accessed this traditional phrase to make a call on women in Uganda to rise and claim their rights. A related message can be found in the sculpture entitled *Abakyala mwetegeke* (93) (2002). Made out of wood and metal, the work represents a woman in the act of dressing up or styling up. She momentarily closes her eyes allowing her hands to feel, arrange and tie her headscarf crafted in a lavishly textured fabric. *Abakyala mwetegeke* is a Luganda phrase which translates as 'women must get prepared'.

Millennium woman (94) (2000-2002) is a woodcarving enhanced with copper sheet and welded metal. The artist's reference to classical Egyptian figurations is unambiguous. She does not engage the textural details we find on her *Bukedde*, *Abakyara bayimuke* and *Abakyala mwetegeke* although she still uses a generous headdress to construct influence, affluence, elitism and sophistication as attributes of a non-traditional woman.

Let me thus observe that in certain ways Naita could be criticised for using traditions and traditional stereotypes to propagate against career women in Uganda. She cannot escape them as long as they are important for the market which searches for something Ugandan. However, she deliberately goes beyond traditional mores and confines to make a case for modern women. By giving her works unmistakable titles she is attending to a call – a call to women to fight for their rights and take up career prospects.

The call (95) (2011) is one of a series of five paintings done in the period 2009-2011 in which the artist has explored the theme of flute playing while expanding her oeuvre. In this work, Naita depicts three women playing a non-conventional flute held across a horizontal space.

Francis Xavier Nnaggenda explored the same theme in his *Flute player (96)* (1998). Towering in space, done in wood and covered with copper sheets, Nnaggenda's work is a gigantic representation of a youthful male playing a traditional flute. It, however, directs our attention away from the musical instrument to the youthfulness of a naked figure. In the process the flute, and act of flute playing, represent purity in the human subject. This sculpture was a complete departure from the work of Fred Mutebi who, by 1998, had become disappointed with the governance of his country and was to use flutes and flute playing to critique bad governance in Uganda.³⁴ However, it is also clear that in his work Nnaggenda used flute playing to identify and define masculinity – a reflection of his traditional Baganda practice where flute players must be men.

Naita inverts this tradition. Veiled in white ornate scarves, Naita's figures are identifiably young and feminine. She presents the positive socialising effect of the flute and flute playing. Three women play a single flute but to ensure harmony only one of them is controlling the notes. Thus the painting is not normative; it does not follow a well-defined path in which playing a flute is done by one person. Rather, it elicits a non-conventional form of entertainment in which innovation, appropriation and combined effort have extended the borders of available cultural experiences, practices and forms of expression if symbolically.

It is this departure from normative principles which she further develops in her *Women on the move (97a)* (2011). Done in monochromatic yellows, the painting lacks fineness but this does not distract from its message which is well-defined by bold outlines and specific motifs. The picture

plane is split into two horizontal spaces minimally interrupted by straight and undulating lines which define the patterns of the clothes. The larger section at the bottom consists of a vast emptiness surrounding two young children peering through an open space **(97b)**. They are vulnerable and left to the protection of a cobweb which, adorned by cowrie shells, serves multiple roles: it occupies the children (or at least one of them); it prevents them from running away; it has a decorative effect and animates the painting.

The cowrie shells, however, also carry an important symbolism. By 1800 cowrie shells were a medium of exchange facilitating the slave economy. Following the colonisation of Uganda by the British, however, they lost economic value. They were initially replaced by the Indian Rupees and later the Uganda Shilling which is still the national currency. Shoved to the margins of the colonial economy, cowrie shells gained symbolic value. They are presently a medium of divination; they have apotropaic value and are used to protect children and adults alike.

In Naita's *Women on the move* the cowrie shells seem to project this recent appropriation and symbolism. The children at the centre of the work need protection as their mothers traverse the upper section of the painting. This upper space is filled with immense human activity resulting from a crowd striding across the picture plane. The activity is heightened by intensely decorated fabrics which seem to serve an artistic strategy: they counterbalance the emptiness in the larger section of the painting. According to the artist the fabrics symbolise non-traditional women walking across a space. However, the women are barefooted – not a conventional manner to represent elite women.

The motif of bare feet has multiple meanings including the opposite of the artist's explanation. In this case it could be argued that the artist uses feet to define the movement of her subjects in time and space. Moving in one

right-to-left direction, there is no sense that the crowd will ever return. Separated from the children in the lower section it appears that Naita's women are moving without, and at the expense of, their children. As we saw in Chapter One, this has worried most patriarchal men. Elsewhere in this thesis I argue how conservative men have used varied mediums including art to express their concern that women's movement is inimical to families.

Being a wife and mother herself, Naita believes that women can combine motherhood and a career. The two roles are not mutually exclusive. What is important is for the career woman 'to manage her time' and employ helpers whenever necessary (Naita, interview, 2011). Naita employs two housemaids who are given specific instructions on how she wants her house to be kept and her children taken care of. Like Margaret Trowell before her (see Chapter Two), she has literally freed her hands and invested her energy into working on her career without compromising the happiness and safety of her family. She has held regular exhibitions in national and international spaces. She is one of the two Ugandan women sculptors (the other being Lilian Nabulime) who are exhibiting their work regularly. Thus Naita's work is linked to her view that women's movement, as a result of career development, is not dangerous for families. It is a positive thing.

Unlike her public works which are propagandistic, naturalistic and accessible to the wider (especially the urban) public, Naita's gendered works are only publicly exhibited in galleries. Access to such works is limited to the few enthusiasts and the visually literate who have the capacity to interpret art. Her most recent exhibition at the Kabira Club was dominated by expatriates whom Tricia Glover had personally invited. Moreover, such works do not sell easily: all the artworks discussed in this section are part of the artist's private collection.

Seen in this light, Naita's *Women on the move* cannot claim to represent or speak to all (or even the majority of) women in Uganda. Rather, her work is a visual statement in which the artist has inverted the construction of the career woman as a *fallen woman*. She agrees that the *new woman* is mobile and therefore free. Like Alex Baine in 1989, Naita believes that career women such as herself have made giant strides across, and beyond, the traditionally mediated socio-economic terrain where their potential is confined to care-giving and child-nurturing. The career woman has escaped such traditional baggage, signified by the traditional pot strategically placed in the right foreground of her *Women on the move*. This, however, does not mean – as many male artists seem to suggest – that career women ignore their maternal duties. They are still effective mothers and their families and family values are not at risk. Naita does not believe that pursuing a career means that a woman must abandon her family. Such a view would contradict her traditional and Christian values.

In this chapter I have extended the thread which emerged in the last chapter, namely, that after 1986 contemporary art joined the battlefield of words and images. I have shown how the wall separating high and low art in Uganda collapsed. I have observed that in a country where images of female sexuality are multiplied endlessly as a spectacle for male pleasure, they reinstate relationships of sexual power and subordination (Betterton 1987). I have discussed artworks in which interiority, coiffure, mien, bounteousness, youthfulness, voluptuousness and women's erogeneity were used as voyeuristic symbols to image men's fantasy towards women's sexuality. This is the frame in which I have interrogated selected eroticised paintings, ceramic figurines, tile-panels, drawings and sculpture done by male artists. Retracing the gendered questions they raise (and often help to resolve), I argue that these art forms (some subtle, others bordering on pornography) are complex devices which male artists have used, in different but related ways, to mitigate the *new woman's* claim for equality; they are mediums of taming the *new woman*. The attributes of

women's beauty and femininity they circulate are, just like their sources in the print media, not neutral. They are veiled means to recapture the sexuality of the aberrant *new woman* and silence her. Aware of these issues a woman artist has deployed the skills she gained through art education and has inverted traditions and conventions to call on women to fight for their rights and build careers without abandoning their roles as care-givers and nurturers.

Endnotes

¹ President Yoweri Museveni was the chief architect of this system. For more on the complex ways in which individual meritocracy was put to work, see Yoweri Museveni's *Sowing the mustard seed* (1997:209-211).

² The name for the Vice President, Specioza, was shortened as Spe and often times many Ugandans referred to her as Spe.

³ For more discussion on the myth about haunches see Estès (1993).

⁴ On erotic imaginations see Hudson, L & Jacot, B. (1991)

⁵ In 1998, Kizito published a picture of a one Kajoba, an undergraduate female student at Makerere University, that was most shocking and controversial. It occupied public debate for weeks forcing the University to consider revising its laws on dress and dress codes which it later did in 2007.

⁶ For a detailed explanation of this garb see Chapter two.

⁷ Kadongokamu is a genre of traditional music. Sung among the Baganda, it involves the use of modern and traditional instruments. It is very popular because of its social and political commentaries.

⁸ Tamale (1999) Mukama (2002) and Batebya (2006) argue that men have a tendency of reducing women's discussions to useless participation in cheap talk and rumour-mongering. The baganda call it *lugambo*.

⁹ The number of women suffering from obesity in Uganda has been on the rise since the 1990s; currently women suffering from obesity-related ailments are more than men. A study, published in the *New Vision* of 28 March 2008, showed that 'there are more women diabetics (55%) than men (45%)'. Professor Marcel Otim of Mulago Hospital explained that 'women have slightly more obesity than men and that was why we see diabetes more in women than men'. The problem has resulted from women's changing socio-economic fortunes: 'as people earn more money, they can afford things like fast foods, bread and sugary products. Every party you go to, soda is served. This leads to obesity...'. In other words, women's quest for, and attainment of, socio-economic success has come with health-related challenges.

¹⁰ *L'amazon s'annonce*, like many other titles we are about to see, testifies to how the artist uses his titles in different languages to define his intentions. Kakande's native language is Luganda. He, however, speaks French and English which is the language of instruction in Uganda. He also speaks Runyankore-Rukiga: two languages spoken by the Banyankore and Bakiga of western Uganda. He therefore has access to many cultures, outside of his own, which has enriched his visual expression.

¹¹ I will come back to this thread in the next chapter to show how it ripped households apart thus attracting the attention of John Bosco Kanuge.

¹² Introduced to Buganda through contact with Arab slave merchants in the 1800s, cowrie shells were used as a medium of exchange. They lost their economic value during colonialism. They were replaced by the Indian Rupee in the early twentieth century before the shilling was introduced. Today, the national currency is the Uganda shilling. Cowrie shells are called *ensimbi enganda* (literally translated, the money which is typical for the Baganda). They have cultural

significance and are used in traditional rites and ceremonies. In most contemporary art, they are used to symbolise true African economic value.

¹³ Girolamo Mazzola, *Madonna with the long neck* (1534). Oil on wood, 216x132 cm, Uffizi, Florence. (Reproduced in Gardener 1996:764.)

¹⁴ Mazzola (also known as Parmigianino) was an Italian mannerist painter. He based his work on religious themes. Mazzola's *Madonna with the long neck* depicts an elegant, graceful, committed, fecund and caring mother. She has a small oval head. This, in addition to her long, slender neck and the unbelievable delicacy of her fingers are all principles of mannerism (Gardener 1996:764) which were used to construct and restrain non-compliant women (Dijkstra 1986). Parmigianino gave the Virgin Mary beauty and passive virtues which were used in gendered discourse to create an archetype against which women modelled themselves and in the process remained confined to their domestic spaces. Like their Western sisters, Ugandan women have been asked to model themselves on the Virgin Mary (Matembe 1996 and Musisi 1999): meek, graceful, subservient and thus contained.

¹⁵ Bride wealth, formerly known as 'bride price', referred to the presents given by the family of a prospective husband to the family of the prospective wife. The nature of these gifts varied between the country's ethnic groups but might include cows, food and beer; later money was sometimes expected. Traditionally, if the wife left her husband, her family had to return the bride wealth to her husband's family. Women activists argue that seen in this context the payment of bride price marginalises women. It reduces them to exchangeable commodities; it traps women in abusive marriages. Supporters of the practice reject this criticism. In 2009 activists under their umbrella organisation, the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), petitioned the Constitutional Court to outlaw the payment of bride price in Uganda. As it was reported in the *New vision* of 26 May 2009 their petition failed.

¹⁶ In the video we see a woman with rounded curves and big haunches. Named Nassanga, she represented an ideal, beautiful, Muganda woman being stalked by an identifiably wealthy, urban man. Scared of the man, she runs to seek protection from her parents. As tradition would insist, her father intervened with a big stick recalling the one we saw in Kawalya's *Returning home*. Forced to submit, the stalker agreed to pay a bride price in exchange for Nassanga and a marriage was arranged. The song reiterated the institution of traditional marriages. It became so popular that during its official launch Lutaaya's song attracted a 'crowd [which] was one of the largest at Hotel Africana' in 2005 as reported in the *New Vision* of 26 July 2005. Nassanga became the archetype of a beautiful woman. When David Lutalo later released his music video *Kapapaala* (Woman with big haunches; 2008) showing a woman who did not have a big body, bums and thighs like Nassanga's, his video was rejected. On 30 April 2008 *Bukedde*, a Luganda newspaper, reported that the public in Kampala attacked and insulted Mariam Nakibinge, the woman who featured in Lutalo's *Kapapaala*, for not having been the right woman for the video. Under intense pressure, Lutalo himself was forced to find the ideal Nassanga-like woman. *Bukedde* of 9 May 2009 published graphic images of a fleshy woman skimpily dressed to expose her big thighs and bums, dancing on the stage with Lutalo much to the approval and excitement of the crowd.

¹⁷ Ernest Kigozi, *Two men* (2000). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The first exhibition of All Artists in Uganda on the nude*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 4 September to 18 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

¹⁸ Samuel Kakaire, *Sistine chapel* (2000). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The first exhibition of All Artists in Uganda on the nude*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 4 September to 18 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

¹⁹ Franco Kayiira, *The nude* (2000). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The first exhibition of All Artists in Uganda on the nude*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 4 September to 18 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²⁰ Fred Kizito Kakinda, *Ecstasy* (2000). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The first exhibition of All Artists in Uganda on the nude*. Kampala: Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 4 September to 18 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²¹ Clovis Mutebi, *Unleashed* (2000). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The first exhibition of All Artists in Uganda on the nude*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 4 September to 18 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²²Samuel Kakaire, *The posing body builder* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²³Dan Sekweyama, *Warrior* (2001). Sculpture, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²⁴Andrew Kijjambu, *Muscled power* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²⁵Harunah Lubwama, *Male nude*. (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²⁶Daniel Birungi, *Think twice* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²⁷Mawazi Lulagala, *Through the walls* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²⁸Joshua Agaba, *I am ready* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

²⁹Ivan Maganda, *Feel me* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

³⁰Godfrey Mucuunguzi, *See me* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

³¹Peter Kibiyita, *How am I* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *The Nude 2nd Annual Exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 23 August to 11 September. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

³²Naita founded this group in 2002 in order to mentor upcoming artists including relatives.

³³It could also be argued that by 2001 Naita had developed interest in Kakande's work. In 2001 she bought *The best is at home* (2001), the single tile Kakande had exhibited in The nude exhibition (2001) at the Nommo Gallery. In this work Kakande represented a woman in an anonymous space. She kneels on one leg and stretches the other while wrapping herself in a decorated fabric. Kakande attended to the femininity of the subject whose body he defined by using gentle round curves.

³⁴For an exhaustive debate on Francis Nnaggenda's work see Sanyal (2000) and Kyeyune (2003). Also see Kakande (2008) for a discussion of Mutebi's critique on bad governance.

CHAPTER 5

Asserting womanliness, restoring male power: Kanuge and the menace of the *new woman*

Woman ... [is] my central theme: what she does or her relationship with men, activities [which] she is involved in...[her] emotional aspects, her woman-ness which involves ... having ... traits or qualities that a culture regards as especially characteristic of or ideally appropriate to adult women....[To] suggest that a woman has to be womanly is usually a term of approval suggesting the display of traits admired by society such as self-possession, modesty, motherliness and calm[ness] (Kanuge, interview, 14 October 2006).

During a discussion I had with him in 2006, John Bosco Kanuge (1968) made the above remark. In this chapter I interrogate the ideology behind this and related statements as I analyse his prints of women as domestic bodies. Although he is prolific and has produced a large repertoire of prints, I purposively select and reread a few to assess the complex ways in which a visual statement inscribed in domestic and idyllic spaces, can be deployed to challenge women's claim for equality in Uganda. This analysis is important. Firstly, I probe other devices which, in addition to materialism and erotica, artists have deployed to silence the *new woman* in Uganda, thus extending the debate I have engaged in this far. Secondly, I use discussions with the artist to explain the gender biases that have framed visualisations of the 'maternal image'. I thus tap into what Sanyal calls the 'unrealized potentials that further research can explore' while shedding new light on what Sanyal calls the 'use of such devices as the maternal figure ... in visual representations to make [visual] statements'. However, if for Sanyal the use of the maternal figure in Uganda's contemporary art was about 'unforeseen circumstances' (Sanyal 2000: 229), I look at situations where such usage is deliberate, pointed, gendered and intended to participate in the raging debate

on the menace of the *new woman* in Uganda. I also show how a print medium moves beyond decor to fuse into, and circulate, mainstream debates on women in Uganda.

5.1 KANUGE'S GENDERED PRINTS: THE EARLY PHASE

Kanuge joined Makerere Art School in 1990 to pursue a degree in Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) specialising in print-making before attaining a postgraduate qualification in the same medium at the same institution. Currently, he is a master-printer and has attended international workshops and conferences on print-making. He lectures at the Department of Industrial Arts and Design (Makerere University) where he also serves as Head of Department.

Like many other artists we have seen this far, Kanuge did art before joining Makerere Art School. In fact, it is because he scored high marks in art during his secondary school education that he gained admission to Makerere Art School. However, many of his pre-university works are lost without any trace of their whereabouts. As such, evidence of his art practice can be traced back to the early 1990s when he made prints as an undergraduate student under the instruction of Gracie Masembe¹.

Owing to poor storage facilities, many of Kanuge's early prints have been lost save for five prints which he kept in his personal archive. These prints are important for my discussion because they help us access the artist's professional practice and trace the beginnings of the gendered symbols, symbolisms and ideology in the issues I analyse in this chapter.

Kanuge argues that these prints were part of a large body of work based on the central theme of 'the woman and her assumed space and her roles in a household' (Kanuge, interview, 2006). This can be seen in the print of a *Woman washing dishes (98)* (1993). Depicted in luminous blues, reds and

oranges interrupted by dark patches, the print does not display a mastery of skill and control of media. Rather, it allows us to immediately see a satirised subject wearing a multi-coloured dress and matching headscarf. She is identifiably peasant. She bends over to pick up a dish from a large basin filled with water. Her dramatic pose, and the dexterity with which she does her work, elicit humour. They also confirm that the woman mastered the skill of washing dishes: it is her chore.

Some unwashed utensils are spread on the ground while others are placed against a grass-thatched reed-work supported by one central pole. Many ethnic groups in Uganda construct varied shapes of 'traditional' huts in this manner. Currently, such architecture is still common in the countryside where it is used for habitation, food-storage and rituals. Kanuge is aware of this usage, but he uses the hut to serve two primary purposes: firstly, like many contemporary Ugandan artists, he uses huts to symbolise the authentic, rural, 'African' countryside less disturbed by the forces of modernity. Secondly, the artist uses the rural hut to define the identity and class of the ideal woman. These prints are not about the real life of the rural women who have access to mobile phones and radios. As it will become clear in this chapter, they are constructed; they are devices which serve the artist's belief that the ideal woman is the rural African woman who is undisturbed by modernity, 'she must be traditional' (Kanuge, interview, 2006).

In his *Woman and the sieve* (99) (1993), Kanuge depicts a woman sitting in a domestic space. Part of the wall of her hut has collapsed leaving its reed-scaffold standing. In a way this print comments on the uninhabitable conditions in which many poor Ugandans find themselves. Thus, the print testifies to the artist's sociopolitical activism and commitment to the cause of the many marginalised Ugandans afflicted by poverty. In our interview he expressed concern that in his home area there are so many poor people for

whom government does not provide enough amenities. Artistically, however, the collapsing wall allows light to flood the interior space permitting us to access the symbolism of food production and its gendered undertones. It is clear in this print that the artist propagated the convention that it is a woman's duty to cook food in a household. In the Buganda region (central Uganda) a woman is called *Omufumbi w'e ttooke* which translates to the one who is predestined to cook the local staple food called *matooke*.² Kanuge is aware of this construct. Although from Bunyoro himself (Bunyoro is a large ethnic group in Western Uganda), he is fluent in Luganda. Recently, he married a woman from Buganda. Arguably then, in his early print Kanuge extended the trajectory of Uganda's gendered art by adding food preparation to the list of attributes (or characteristics) which define, distinguish and condition womanliness.

Kanuge revisited the issues we confront in *Woman washing dishes* and *Woman and the sieve* in his *Woman peeling matooke (100)* (1993) based on the preparation of *matooke*, in his *Woman cooking a meal (101)* (1993) showing a woman preparing a millet/mealy, another local staple diet, and *Woman tasting soup (102)* (1993) based on local proverbs which suggest that a woman should taste the soup first.³ In these three works, however, he introduced another interesting symbol which requires specific mention, namely that of mother and girl child. On the one hand, this symbol taps into a web of childhood socialisations which help the development of a child. In many traditions (in Uganda and elsewhere), male and female adults are obliged to mentor children: it is a respected tradition. On the other hand, however, the artist's insistence on the mother-and-girl child symbolism in these three prints must be critiqued.

This symbolism is rooted in normative conventions which insist that a girl child must inherit the domestic position which her mother occupies in a patriarchal

society. *Omwana omuwala asera na nnyina*, the Baganda say, literally translated: a girl child must inherit her mother's traits and trades. Kanuge offers an interesting explanation for his symbolism which confirms my critique. He admits that he introduced the young girls in *Woman peeling Matooke*, *Woman cooking a meal* and *Woman tasting soup* to show that the duties of a woman in a household must be passed on from mother to daughter. That way the mother serves her social role as a role model to the young girl (Kanuge, interview, 2008).

As I remarked earlier in this thesis, by the mid-1980s the *new woman* challenged these expectations. For Kanuge she thus lost her admirable traits of self-possession, modesty, being composed and motherly; she lost the very traits admired by society. In the rest of this chapter I demonstrate that the artist believes that these traits are visually recoverable. He thus has restored them through his work.

5.2 WOMANLINESS IS MOTHERHOOD: KANUGE'S DEFINITION OF GENDER DIFFERENCE

During his postgraduate study, Kanuge did a large body of prints. They are documented in a catalogue (called a guide book) titled *The effective use of colour values for monochromatic relief prints* (1998) in which he argued that his project served primarily to improve his skill, craftsmanship and control of print-making as a medium of expression. Arguably the project succeeded. Compared to the five prints I analysed earlier on, his postgraduate work demonstrates that the artist improved his skill and control of the medium. His subjects and subject matter are more ambitious although sometimes his messages are ambiguously expressed.

Equally important, however, is the way in which he updated and expanded the ideas (and visual vocabulary) he explored in the early 1990s as he

recreated 'the social, physical and emotional aspects of [the] Ugandan woman's life' (Kanuge 1998:4). In the process, he used the symbols of motherhood and maternity to redefine 'womanliness as a feminine characteristic that makes a woman different from a man' (Kanuge 1998:14).

In his *Mother's mood i* (**103**) (1996) Kanuge used a luminous palette to present a transmuting image of a woman. Dressed in a patterned, sleeveless dress which exposes her long feminine arms, she looks down. She is momentarily silent, undisturbed by the viewer's presence. The work signifies the artist's inquiry into human experiences and temperaments, which he also explores in *Contemplation* (**104**) (1996) in which Kanuge engages contrast and texture to capture the portrait of a subject. Although turning to the right, she meets the beholder with her wide open eyes. The image is not confined to the subject, the sitter. Instead, it serves a moral task inviting humanity to look at itself and make a change. This is because Kanuge believes that by 'contemplating itself humanity changes both its implicit and explicit make-up' (Kanuge 1998:27).

Unlike *Contemplation*, the message he intends in *Mother's mood i* is oblique. Save for a slightly protruding womb which suggests (early) pregnancy, his intended message is unclear. In the caption under *Mother's mood i* Kanuge (1998:39) talks about technical issues and how they led to the success of the print. The discussion I had with the artist did not better the situation. The artist, however, extended this theme of maternity in *Sound of life i* (1996) and *Sound of life ii* (1996) and in these works his message gained clarity.

In *Sound of life i* (**105**), the artist presents a pregnant woman lying motionless on a levelled surface. This allows a male physician (an obstetrician/gynaecologist) to listen to the activities of her foetus. Behind him to the left a chubby baby stretches its arm; its index finger metamorphoses into a lactating

breast feeding another baby on the right. In *Sound of life ii* (106), he imbued the theme of maternity with unmistakable emotion. He proposed a powerful emotional statement embodied in an intimate relationship in which a man listens to the foetal activity of his unborn baby. The woman allows the observation to continue uninterrupted. Hence a family bond unfolds between the mother, baby and father. To complete the process, the mother stretches her arm resting it on the man's back. All this happens in front of an identifiably healthy baby fused into its father to complete the family bond.

By the 1990s concern was growing in the country over the pathetic health conditions of mothers and children in Uganda. Citing the 1995 *National Population Policy* report published by the Ministry of Finance and Planning Sarah Mirembe proclaimed: 'Children, pregnant women die most in Uganda' (*The Monitor*, 8-10 November 1995:3). This concern was not new; it attracted the intervention of successive governments and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) since colonial times (Neema 2002:59-60). For example, following Dr Albert Cook's investigation into maternal health (Musisi 2002), the colonial government intervened in the 1920s to improve antenatal services in the colony.⁴ Later in the 1960s, amid mounting challenges on his Presidency (including an attempt on his life), Milton Obote unequivocally prioritised what he called the 'great need for maternity care' (*Uganda Argus*, 4 December 1969:2). As a result, press reports indicate that by 1969 'maternity deaths [had been] cut by half' (*Uganda Argus*, 18 June 1969:3). Obote's effort was, however, interrupted by Amin's coup, escalating political turmoil and uncertainty mainly in the late 1970s and 1980s during which period many children died due to preventable diseases such as dysentery, measles and whooping cough. Progress was made in the 1990s when the ruling NRM government mounted the Safe Motherhood Initiative (SMI). Supported by generous NGOs and donor agencies, the initiative has since improved the

level of maternal and child health care. The rate of maternal deaths and the number of children dying due to preventable diseases have dropped.

But, critics have warned that the population growth of Uganda is getting out of control. As Deo Kabwende wrote in *The New Vision* of 27 May 2007, the 'fertility rate in Uganda is alarming'. It is alarming because 'recent projections put the average fertility rate of Ugandans at seven children per typical Ugandan woman, though in some cases especially in the villages, some women stretch to as far as 10'. This then implies that with low per capita incomes, high unemployment, rising cost of living, limited resources and increasing national debt, the country has reason to worry too. The government is giving mixed signals; it has been unable to give good leadership. In the absence of clear policy, traditionalists and religious conservatives continue to encourage women to produce more children, worsening the problem.

Kanuge is aware of the relationship between large families, poverty and low standards of living. He argues that people should have families they can manage; a small healthy family is better than a large unhealthy one, hence his use of symbols and references to antenatal care services.

But there is something more to his symbolism of motherhood and maternity that we need to unveil. In his *Sound of life i* and *Sound of life ii* Kanuge locates the woman at the centre of family virtue. Thus in both prints he, like many before him, images the normative functions of a woman in a traditional society. In his representations, the woman assumes her position as the sole source of comfort for the man and the baby she expects whose good health the artist exaggerates through the symbolism of chubby babies and inflated lactating breasts.

In *Mother's mood ii* **(107)** (1996) Kanuge further explores the theme of mother and child. If there is no obvious communication between mother and infant in *Sound of life i* and *Sound of life ii*, in his *Mother's mood ii* he employs the bath to open and offer a direct communication between the two. He depicts a woman lifting her infant from a basin filled with water, throwing the child into the air causing the water to splash. The exercise is wasteful; it runs contrary to the public campaign to save water since it is an exhaustible resource. The action, however, gives excitement to the child and satisfaction to the mother. The blue colour also has symbolic resonances. As he explains, it 'denotes the need for emotional harmony' between mother and child; its coolness depicts 'a joyous mood' (Kanuge 1998:45). Equally joyous is his *Mother's mood iii* **(108)** (1996), a figuration in which a playful mother entertains her child. She is involved in an extraordinary dance in which her long hair swirls framing the scene. Many mothers in Uganda creatively entertain their children. It is a cherished activity which bonds mother and child. However, this reality should not mask Kanuge's exploration of the mother and child theme as a political tool.

In his *Mother and child* **(109)** (1997) the artist depicts a mother tending to a child seated on her lap. She looks fixedly in the child's eyes as she communicates with it. We see a similar representation in *Living mirror i* **(110)** (1997) where a mother sits down in order to hold her infant's neck, look her fixedly in the eyes and speak to her directly. In both prints the children look their mothers in the eyes while remaining attentive. These gestures allow the girl child to receive and internalise the information her mother communicates. She is silent; she is probably too young to talk. However, her body language can be understood by the mother – something the artist re-emphasises in his *Living mirror ii* (1997).

In *Living mirror ii (111)* a mother raises her child. Identified as a girl child by means of a beaded necklace and armlet, the child stretches its right arm resting its palm on its mother's head. She places her other hand on her mother's right shoulder. This is a strategy which, together with attention to detail, enriches the composition. It shows the artist's mastery of medium, visual vocabulary and pictorial composition all of which are emphasised in the curriculum at Makerere Art School. Silence ensues as the mother momentarily enjoys her child's unspoken words. A patterned curtain is drawn to expose a glass window. This has three functions. Firstly, the glass window creates a sense of depth and space. Secondly, the window and its curtain, in contrast to the huts in his earlier prints, symbolise that the family we see is middle class associated with an affluent and modern space. Thirdly, the woman here is not like her rural sisters in *Mother and child* and *The living mirror i* or *Woman peeling Matooke, Cooking a meal, Tasting soup, Woman and the sieve* and *Mother and child*. She is of the elite and wealthy. Yet, she fulfils a similar role; her womanliness is defined through motherhood. We clearly need to take stock of these important issues which emerge here.

Through umbrella organisations such as University Women, The Association of Uganda Women Lawyers, Uganda Women Writers Association (Femrite), among others, elite women mentor girls; many educated and affluent women are mothers. This is because mentoring and mothering, in themselves, are noble roles that many women in Uganda, elite or non-elite, want to play. Elite women love being mothers; mentoring is a way of passing on character and skills which can mould a growing child into a good citizen.

However, this is not what the artist intends to celebrate in his work. In the excerpt at the beginning of the chapter he alludes to what he calls 'the traits or qualities that a culture regards as especially characteristic of or ideally appropriate to [all] adult women'. He alludes to a set of expectations in which

mothering and the mentoring of a girl child become socialising moulds intended to marginalise women. Doyle and Paludi (1994:97) would agree. They trace the mothering and mentoring back to a web of socialisations – a social mould – which shapes each person to fit into a group. They argue that socialisation marks, maps and appropriates gender roles. For Doyle and Paludi, it is the primary means used by the patriarchy to emphasise gender roles and to assign them to different sexes (Doyle & Paludi 1994:111). In addition, Rogers (1980:22) contends that socialisation prepares young girls to be like their mothers. Contemporary society uses it to carefully train young girls for the home-and-family destiny where they supply free labour to the community. It domesticates women while, above all, detaching and distancing them from all forms of paid labour outside the home. This, for Rogers, is a form of discrimination which rationalises women's careers in terms of future wives and mothers thus limiting women's potential (Rogers 1980:25). Relating to the situation in Uganda, Tamale (1996:27) argues that there is a systematic and deliberate form of

...cultural socialisation experiences (transmitted through parents...) [which] orient girls toward “feminine” mothering and wifely roles while encouraging boys into “masculine” roles that include being aggressive and ambitious and venturing into the world beyond the domestic arena...Such stereotyped expectations of the sexes, which are held by men and internalised by women, help to perpetuate gender inequalities in society....

This statement may be extreme to some degree; it is also too general. It does not accommodate the views of those men who fight gender stereotyping, but it provides lenses through which to see the basis for Kanuge's comments and his theme of motherhood as womanliness. It is on this pedestal of cultural socialisation that we begin to appreciate the artist's contention that 'woman-ness' implies having traits or qualities that a culture regards as especially characteristic of, or ideally appropriate to, adult women. Kanuge's beliefs that for a woman to be womanly she must display traits admired by society, and

that such traits must include motherliness and calmness, gain a gender bias. Against this backdrop it becomes clear that the artist used this print to map and mark what is appropriate for all women and most importantly those elite women who, for him, have lost their womanliness. This then is a useful point of departure for a discussion on Kanuge's contrast between productive rural and slothful urban women as he criticises the *new woman*.

5.3 PORTRAYING RURALITY, MITIGATING SLOTH: KANUGE'S CRITICISM OF NON-CONFORMING WOMEN

Kanuge explains that:

I choose to portray a rural woman because the rural woman does so many ... chores while the urban woman just does less work. She takes care of herself and goes to the office. Therefore there is little work to document (Kanuge, interview, 2006).

On the one hand the statement suggests that the artist is sensitive to the often unacknowledged role rural women play in the development of Uganda. However, the distinction which he makes between rural and urban women, and his belief that women who work in urban and non-domestic sectors do less work is problematic. Implicit in this contrast is the contention that women in the public space are slothful.

We have seen similar views elsewhere in this thesis: they were used against women under Amin's regime; Musango implied them in his sleeping women series. It is thus interesting to see how Kanuge extended this shared view in his *Closer to earth* (112) (1998), *Bearing the burden* (113) (1998), *Chaff in the wind* (114) (1998), *The harvest i* (115) (1998), and later in *The harvest ii* (116) (2003), five prints in which Kanuge constructs farm labour as an ethos which defines women in Uganda. His landscapes are identifiably rural. It is here that he locates women identified as peasant and industrious using movement, dramatic poses, colour, dress and work. These are his productive rural women.

More so, it is clear from his statement and the five prints in plates 98-102, that the artist conflates womanliness (and the very essence of being an ideal woman) with living in an idyllic rural (and not urban) environment, tilling land, harvesting produce and carrying heavy loads. This view is often rehearsed; it has shaped music and drama.⁵ It is used together with others like a good 'wife should be a good cook' (*The Monitor*, 23-25 October 1995) which Kanuge further explores in his over-dramatised *Custodian of fire* (117) (1998) and *What is for dinner* (118) (1998), two prints in which he affirms that women are cooks.

To contrast his enduring, industrious rural cook with her urban sister, Kanuge did *Hands of work* (119) (1998). He explores simplicity of line and light. He depicts two pairs of hands representing two hairdressers who straighten the hair of a motionless figure in front of an open window. Urban centres in Uganda are dotted with salons serving different clients. They carry attractive posters marking them as SALONS pronounced as *saluuni* (which is close to saloon). The salon was preceded by the *Kinyozi* (barber shop) which, like the *Ddobi* (laundry), has a history stretching back to the advent of colonial modernity which, by the 1950s, had informed the development of an urban African middle class with a strong appetite for improving its self image.

Today salons target the educated and business women elite. They range from the most expensive Lady Charlotte (at Centenary Park, Jinja Road), Salon Ultra (Lugogo Shopping Mall, Jinja Road) and Salon Spackles (at Garden City Mall, Yusuf Lule Road), to the inexpensive hair-dressers who sit in makeshift kiosks and under tree shades located in the country's busy urban and peri-urban spaces. The affluent salons have space, while the less-affluent have very limited space in which to accommodate their clients and equipment. They engage in cut-throat competition accosting clients in the

middle of the crowded and dusty roads. It is often the case that two or more hairstylists work on a client – a reality which Kanuge captures in *Hands of work*.

It is true that women of varying social classes spend hours on their 'hairdos' (*The New Vision*, December 20, 1996:25). This is because hair styles serve different purposes among women. For example, some women believe that beautiful bouncy hair helps a woman to 'set [herself] apart' (Randolph 2005:34). Such women use hairdos to mark, map and transmit their social status. Many women style hair to enhance their beauty: 'after all a woman's hair is the crown of beauty' (*The New Vision*, 20 December 1996:25). Others use hair to express their freedom and African identity (*The New Vision*, 1 October 2005).

I argue that a combination of these positive attributes has informed contemporary Ugandan art. For instance, in *The Princess* (2001)⁶ Chaz Katongole used hairdo to build and transmit the stature and status of Queen Sylvia Naginda, the *Nnabagereka* (Queen) of Buganda. For Ivan Mugume, coiffure confirms a woman's African identity. This is the message he proposed in his *African woman* (2005)⁷ in which the artist presented a woman with braids. He incorporated the conception and representation of women using a variety of traditional hairstyles seen in many parts on the African continent (Batulukisi 2000:25-38). The sense of elongation in the woman's head has parallels in the female cap mask of antelope skin seen among the Efut in Calabar, Nigeria (Roberts 2000:62-77). *African woman* also has attributes borrowed from the female heads carved by the Mangbetu⁸ of the Uele region of the Democratic Republic of Congo which are sometimes sold in Kampala's craft villages.

However, some artists have used coiffure to expose and criticise Uganda's elite women as materialistic. We have already seen Musango, Banadda and Ifee in chapter three. Let me add here that Edison Mugalu in his *Perfect gift* (2004)⁹ gave visual expression to his cynical attitude towards women's preoccupation with make-up and modern hairstyles. Herbert Bakka used make-up, coiffure and jewellery to question women's obsession with material things. This is obvious in his *Beauty burdens* (2005)¹⁰, *A twist* (2005)¹¹, *Proud girl* (2005)¹², and *Scarlet lips* (2005).¹³

Kanuge has taken both of the above positions. For example, in *Braids* (120) (1998), he highlighted the way in which braids reflect self-awareness and the re-awakening of women's 'African consciousness'. He has, however, also used hairdressing as a critical device. Accepting this claim allows us to see the lack of emotion in the woman in *Hands of work*; it explains the uncomfortable gesture of the woman in *Hot iron* (121) (1998).

Hot iron has a vertical format with improvised shapes in the background which illuminate the space. Two women sit in front of them. One feels anxious and grips her legs tight. This tension does not move the hairdresser who runs her right palm through her client's long hair as she straightens it with a hot comb. Plumes of smoke rise flowing to the left. This could be a result of the hair oils, contained in the tins and bottles we see on the table to the left, being burnt as the hairstylist heats the woman's hair.

This print must be contrasted with the artist's prints on maternity, food preparation and rural working women. Here he captures emotion, and the discomfort of the client, to dramatise while questioning the urban woman's priorities and the risks she goes through as she invests in bodily delights. His theme of hairdressing also shows what he calls 'less work' in the excerpt at the beginning of the chapter. Thus through the salon the artist critiques the

new woman's sloth and preoccupation with things which – unlike maternity, food preparation and farm labour – do not meaningfully contribute to the development of a society.

Relatedly, Kanuge did *Kissing the wind* (**122**) (1998) and *Listening to the wind* (**123**) (1998) to expand and extend his critique. He represents silhouetted, youthful, slender, naked women whose hair is blown backwards by strong winds. This allows the women in the two prints to gain a sense of flamboyancy, gaiety and youthfulness. However, in comparison with the women in his *Closer to Earth* (**112**), *Bearing the burden* (**113**), *Chaff in the wind* (**114**) whose hands are busy, and who are defined by a work ethos, the women in these two prints, just like those in his salons, are preoccupied with worldly pleasures. Here, criticism is present and it reoccurs in his *In the name of beauty* (1998) and *Overwhelmed* (1998).

In his *In the name of beauty* (**124**) four legs are seen covered by different dresses. It is arguable that they belong to different clients. They compete for the attention of a manicurist who attends to the client closest to him; the rest wait in a queue. If in this print it is clear that he can manage the competition, in *Overwhelmed* (**125**) it is the reverse. Here the manicurist faces the challenge of providing manicure as well as pedicure. This is not uncommon. However, he remains frozen in front of an illuminated background. On his right a woman steps into the picture plane raising her hand to demand for service. Simultaneously other customers bring in their hands and feet. The service-provider is evidently overwhelmed. Unable to decide where to start, he leaves the polish bottles closed and looks on in disbelief.

Arguably, Kanuge's exploration of the theme of manicure and pedicure goes beyond a discussion on Uganda's economy. I grant that with a raising population, and limited employment opportunities in the rural areas, many

young men have migrated to cities where conditions are no better. Hence they resort to informal employment available mainly in the transport sector (locally called *boodabooda*) which Kanuge visualised in his *Road master* (2002).¹⁴ The other sector is 'nail-polishing'. Called *Abacutex*,¹⁵ young unskilled men roam the suburbs where they offer 'manicure and pedicure' to women who stay at home in the suburbs, female students attending higher institutions of learning and women who work in shops and offices. Some are even attached to established and makeshift salons (the *Saluuni* to which I referred earlier) where they offer some crude forms of massage to their stressed clientele.

Kanuge is aware of this mundane service delivery and the economic issues which have shaped it. He has, however, instead used manicure and pedicure to frame the materialism of the urban woman and confirm his view that urban women spend much time with earthly delights; they are 'lazy and unproductive'. Arguably then, his themes of hairdressing, manicure and pedicure represent the artist's cynicism and the intricate ways in which he questions the priorities of bourgeois women.

5.4 RECOVERING MANHOOD: KANUGE'S DEBATES AND STRATEGIES

In one of the discussions I had with him Kanuge argued that:

If you are a man you must behave like a man ... and perform as a man. Always naturally there has to be someone who is in charge ... [someone] who has to dominate (Kanuge, interview, 2006).

This statement confirms the traditional and Christian-Judaic notion of the man as the head of the family. It is, however, more relevant to this chapter for what it fears than what it explicitly expresses. In alluding to the man's dominant position which is always natural and must be performed as a right, the artist laid bare his worry that women pose a threat. Kanuge's fear is neither unique

nor new. I have discussed its different but related forms in the preceding chapters.

However, the *new woman* posed a threat to the traditional man-led family since the 1990s. This fear was captured in a cartoon published in *The New Vision* of 24 November 1995 under the heading *If you deny me equality you face it* (126). Set against a countryside environment, the cartoon shows a giant female figure wielding a big club. Known as *embukuuli*, traditionally men keep such clubs as a weapon to guard the family in case of attack/intrusion. The gargantuan figure has a ferocious facial expression. She assumes an imposing posture offering protection to an angry woman with her two frightened children. She stands guard clearly marked 'Beijing, ACFODE, FIDA'. I have already mentioned that the Beijing Conference, Action for Development (ACFODE) and the International Federation for Women Lawyers (FIDA) revolutionised women's voices and activism in Uganda. This development was significant to the women's movement in Uganda.

Yet Uganda's traditionalists saw the Beijing Conference, ACFODE and FIDA as threats to the traditional family. This is confirmed by the figuration of a woman holding on to the giant figure's powerful arm, thus finding the necessary strength to confront a man, identified as her husband, walking away to the right in a manner recalling the cartoon in *Le grelot* (1), she yells and wags her index finger at him reminding him of the consequences of ignoring her rights. 'If you deny me equality' she warns, 'you face it'. Deflated, neutralised and unable to resist his wife with her newfound powerful ally, the man leaves with all his belongings. He has been forced to vacate his household. 'Okay stay alone with your equality and don't forget to fulfil all my obligations [at] home', he grumbles.

Implicit in this cartoon and its narrative text are issues which provoked untold fear among men in the mid-1990s. It foregrounds a conspiracy. It provokes our sympathy for the man who is dispossessed and displaced from his house by an alliance between virulent housewives and heroic women activists. The satirist projected how a new political force, founded on anger, outrage and intimidation, had emerged in the country posing a threat to the man, family and hence society. As we read in the response from the man, the cartoon was framed by the fear that granting women's equality, and the way it was fought for by women activists, resulted in husbands losing their positions as heads of families. Equally lost was the man's position as the sole provider of the defence, moral, economic and other needs of a traditional family which was disrupted by an invading force of elite women activists.

To confirm my assertion, in the article accompanying this cartoon one Kiggundu argued that the constitution, Beijing, ACFODE, FIDA, affirmative action and the women movement created an era of 'emotive agitation'. He explained that 'the mood after 1995 was...intimidating to men since it was like women activists were on [a] war path ready to crash the male'. This, for Kiggundu, amounted to a declaration of 'war against men'. Kiggundu's concerns were not isolated. On page 9 of *The Monitor* published for 2-9 January 1995 it was reported that women had mounted a 'coup to relinquish men out of their God given roles'. In short *The New Vision* cartoon, Kiggundu's article and the cartoon in *The Monitor* all rejected women activism; they elicited the fear that affirmative action was inimical to the wellbeing of the traditional family cherished in Uganda.

This form of representation, the politics it portends and its circulation in the press were not new. For instance, *The Star* of 16 March 1989 published a comic strip depicting a man and a woman (127a). The woman turns and frowns while instructing the man: 'Stop ordering me about. We are equal and

we should share the work', she exclaims. Shocked by the events, the man looks on. This caricature was informed by the discussion and eventual promulgation of the Affirmative Action bill (1989). It presents a situation where men are overwhelmed by the fear that women's liberty would subvert patriarchal authority. This is what Paglia calls 'maleness ... obliterated by shocks of female power' (Paglia 1990:44). Consistent with this imagination is the fear that women would ruin the traditional family structure.

Thus in the mid-1970s and late-1980s men had imagined that liberated women would be insubordinate and uncontrollable but would remain at home under the men's surveillance (albeit downgraded). The situation was radically altered by the constitutional reforms which started in 1989 and culminated in the promulgation of the new constitution in 1995. These legislative changes engendered a new set of worries which shaped the cartoon in *New Vision* of 24 November 1995, the war drums in *The Monitor* of 2-9 January 1995 and are important for our understanding of Kanuge's work.

A commentary published in *The Monitor* of 23-25 October 1995 outlined the expectations of an ideal 'wife'. She ought to respect her husband and his friends; she must 'take care of babysitting arrangements' and must never 'interrupt when [her husband] talk[s] about the things that interest [him] and [his] friends' the newspaper reports. Hence, a good wife must be motherly, subservient, passive. *The Monitor's* story recalls a cartoon published in *The Star* of 19 April called *An ideal African woman (127b)* (1988). The woman in the cartoon carries a basket with food stuffs and fire wood on her head. In her left hand she holds a hoe supported on her left shoulder, while with the right hand she pulls a goat. She is lead by a young girl who wears a dress. The woman carries a crying baby on her back and looks heavily pregnant. Unlike her sister's facial expression we see in *Stop ordering me about (127a)*, the *ideal African woman* looks silent. Yet as it is obvious in the cartoons *If you*

deny me equality you face it (126) and the *An Ideal African woman (127b)* Kiggundu's commentary highlights that in the mid-1990s there was fear that alongside the further downgrading of male authority in the home, women activism had radicalised career women motivating them to be assertive, vocal and not passive.

In addition, the career woman lost her motherliness and essence of being a wife. This is well articulated in a cartoon published in *The Monitor* of 8 December 1996 under the heading *The career woman (128)*. This cartoon is close to those before it. Its message, however, targeted the career woman herself. The artist showed a dominant female figure in the immediate foreground. She dons a black dotted dress with matching high heeled shoes. She is identifiably modern and careerist. To claim and assert her presence in a space – symbolised by a 'session' – beyond the traditional home, she (like her sister, the 'director' we saw in *Now women are above us (59)*) sits behind a desk. She menacingly turns towards a man. Located to the far right of the picture space, the man cooks while carrying a baby strapped on his back. He is obviously weak and powerless. Unlike his brother who was forced out of a home in *If you deny me equality you face it (126)*, he is forced to become subservient to his own wife in his own house. He is distanced from the powerful woman by a space which (like her sister *Now women are above us (59)*) and in a manner recalling the cartoon in *Le grelot (1)* the satirist animates using three powerful symbol(ism)s. First, the gargantuan woman traverses the space with her fully-stretched, powerful, masculinised left arm. Secondly, she uses her fully-charged index finger to direct the attention of her audience to the object of her instruction, the man whom she has obviously displaced and dispossessed. Thirdly, she utters a military-style instruction. The man turns his head backwards to receive the instructions and freezes. After

cooking, the instruction goes, 'you wash **baby's** nappies. I'm too busy preparing for the session' (emphasis in the original).

Let me admit that male house-minders (locally called house boys) are common in Uganda's middle class homes. They do domestic chores including the ones depicted in the cartoon. They are often recruited by, and report to, their female bosses (often called *Mmami* or *Madaamu*). They often enjoy a higher status than their female counterparts (locally called house girls). They are expected to receive, and never to question, instructions from their female bosses in a manner depicted in the cartoon.

However, the cartoon taps into another debate which intensified in the mid-1990s. It reminds us of Honoré Daumier's lithographs – for example, his *Depuis que Virginie a obtenu la septième assésit de poésie...* (18 April 1844), *Une femme comme moi...* (23 May 1844) and *Emportez donc ça plus loin...* (2 March 1844) (129). Published in *Le Charivari*, these lithographs elicited the threat which elite women who reclaim their freedom and sexuality can pose for the male patriarchy. They are framed by the assumption that such women dispossess men and abandon their normative roles, forcing their spouses to become 'husband[s] cum house-servants'. In other words, through his prints Daumier associated women's claim for liberty and equality with 'domestic disarray' (Broude & Garrard 2005: 211).

Although culturally, historically and geographically distant from Europe, men in Uganda have similar fears. Helping with babies is equated to a sense of lost manhood which can only be brought about by supernatural intervention. Alex Baine agrees. She narrated that 'men changing nappies ...was unheard of in our culture. In fact in our culture they would say that *Omukazi yakurogire nakukwatisa omu popu y'omwana* (Baine, interview, 2009). Baine's statement literally translates that it is only, those men bewitched by their wives who can

go so low as to help with the changing of baby nappies. This point can be inferred from the cartoon in *The Monitor* of 8 December 1996 under the heading *The career woman (128)*; it is heightened by the fact that the baby is urinating on the man's back.

Shanley and Pateman (1991: 3-4) unfold a useful debate on the gendering of spaces and roles in a patriarchal home which puts this debate into new light. They argue that 'manhood and politics go hand in hand, and everything that stands in contrast to and opposed to political life and the political virtues has been represented by women, their capacities and the tasks seen as natural to their sex, especially motherhood...rather, women have been designated as the upholders of the private foundation of the political world of men'. This assertion cannot be generalised to all situations. Shanley and Pateman assume that all men have equal access to the corridors of power. This is not true in Shanley and Pateman's Western world; it is also not applicable in Uganda where politics is dominated by exclusions which affect men and women alike.

However, Shanley and Pateman open a relevant discussion on the separation and gendering of spaces and roles through which women have been marginalised in Uganda. Put differently, men are associated with the public sphere, the world of business and politics, while women are defined as domestic, naturally suited for domestic spaces and chores. Women have a vital part to play in social life but not as citizens and political actors. Rather, they are designated as upholders of the private foundation of the public world of men. As such, the 'increased female independence and the special advantages given to women through affirmative action [in Uganda were bound to cause] serious conflict between men and women, both outside the home and within the domestic context' (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:239).

These issues informed public discussion. The print media published exaggerated reports of families that had collapsed because of women's empowerment. It was argued that women's access to the public domain would subordinate men (see *The Monitor* of 6 June, 1995:17). Critics of women's empowerment prophesied that:

...women's [political, economic, intellectual and social] well being can only be achieved when women trample upon men ... bring them down from their assumed positions of superiority and dominance ... women want to grab power from them [the men] (*The Monitor*, 2-4 January 1995:9).

The Church criticised government for granting women empowerment; it argued that affirmative action threatened the stability of families (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:240) and would dispossess men from their natural position as heads of the households.

Amid this fear, men responded in diverse ways which affected elite women. Some blocked their wives' careers; others reduced financial contribution to their households (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:241), while some men cautioned women who ascended to high positions in the public service to avoid being arrogant to the opposite sex and rather be motherly. For example, Tamale quotes one Jackson Bambilira, a member of parliament for Bwamba county (Bundibugyo district), who said that:

[Y]eah, women in politics, I am impressed they have come up but I would like to caution them on one thing. When they come to parliament they should behave in a motherly manner. It's embarrassing sometimes when a lady is in parliament and she conducts herself in a manner which is unbecoming. It's not good for her moral turpitude and it affects her performance in her constituency. I have heard from some of my male colleagues saying this....We need mature ladies in the House because those ones are more motherly and know how to respect themselves....Another thing is that ladies should avoid being arrogant to the opposite sex (Tamale 1996:123).

Clearly these views and reactions were extreme and there are examples of men who behaved differently. However, they are important overt expressions of ways in which the patriarchy (represented by Bambalira and his male colleagues) set gendered expectations inscribed in the 'force of domestic virtue assumptions' and used them to control career women at work and at home (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:263). These measures were strategic; they were intended to intimidate the *new woman*, cow her and push her back into her normative position – the home.

Raising these issues serves my discussion in the following ways: Immediately, it unmask and reaffirms the gendered politics in the cartoons I analysed previously. It confirms that as visualisations of the career woman and women activism, the cartoonists shaped (and were shaped by) the fear that women's emancipation led to an inversion of roles; it was inimical to normative family values; it threatened to displace, belittle and force the patriarchal male to lose his locus at the helm of Uganda's domestic and political economies. Against this backdrop, the figuration of the gargantuan club-wielding activist in *If you deny me equality you face it* (126) and careerist-militant mother in *The career woman* (128) join the category of the feared Amazons we saw in chapters three and four as they project the fear that emancipated women will 'forget their family roles' (Bantebya & McIntosh 2006:240). This, for Kanuge, is the environment in which men can no longer behave like men or perform as men.

Interestingly, just as he believes that once lost women's traits can be recovered through the medium of print, Kanuge also contends that print can be a medium through which to recover the man's dominant position. He thus did *Protector* (130) (1998), a monochrome print inscribed in a vertical composition. The artist attends to detail and character. The composition consists of a central male figure who dons a hat and a goatee. These are not

beauty accessories. Rather they are markers of authority and domination over a group of women clustered together although their individual identities are maintained through dress and jewellery. To the left one of the women seems to be speaking to the others who remain silent and motionless. This allows the towering sneering, possessive man to completely frame and thus dominate his subjects, and their interactions, using his overarching arms. This posture and posturing evokes the intensity and absoluteness of the power the man wields over the four women in a confined space.

Kanuge believes that 'women have to accept' to stay in polygamous households because they build family unity (Kanuge, interview, 2006). This view is also expressed by other conservatives and traditionalists in Uganda. It dates back to the colonial contests between monogamy and polygamy which I analysed in chapter one. However, women activists would disagree with this argument. For example, Tamale traces the African roots of polygamy. She argues that 'sexual prowess in most African countries symbolizes men's power and is intricately linked with the institution of polygamy and culturally-endorsed male promiscuity'. Tamale's view may be criticised. It generalises; it does not explain how during the making of the *Domestic Relations Bill*, a law which intended to outlaw polygamy, some women strongly supported polygamy.

Yet Tamale's view that polygamy 'makes sex an extremely insidious tool for oppressing women' (Tamale 1996:132) is instructive. It helps us to appreciate part of the logic behind polygamy. In light of Tamale's argument it could be argued that in his *Protector* Kanuge brought the dispossessed men in *If you deny me equality you face it* (126) and *The career woman* (128) back into their natural position at the head of a family. His use of polygamy, a goatee and hat confirm that the man before us has his ability to 'behave like a man...and perform as a man'. He is in charge of the women under him.

In this chapter I have contextualised Kanuge's prints in a complex power matrix linking the family, mothers and children into the politics of womanhood. I have read his works to demonstrate that his symbols, and their symbolic meaning, are grounded in shared expectations about the position of a woman in a patriarchal society. I have exposed the layered vocabulary inscribed in domestic chores, rural labour, maternity, coiffure, manicure, pedicure and motherliness, which he used to reconfigure and articulate the dividing line between womanliness and manliness. His prints have taken their position in shared anxieties and become sites for action against the *new woman* in Uganda. In the process, what Sanyal (2000:229) called the 'maternal image' in Uganda's contemporary art has assumed new and deliberate meaning; mothering and motherliness have become more than attributes. They are powerful weapons used to challenge the *new woman* who emerged in the late-1980s and took to the centre of public discourse. Secondly, through the theme of polygamy Kanuge has reclaimed and re-asserted the man's dominant position at the apex of Uganda's heterosexual patriarchy while propagating its public and domestic relevance.

Endnotes

¹ Gracie Masembe was a master printer. He was Cecil Todd's student. He graduated in 1968, taught at the Makerere Art School from 1976 to 1977 and later in 1985-2007. He died in 2007.

² *Matooke* is a banana specie. Unlike other types of bananas which are consumed after they have ripened, *matooke* is cut, peeled and prepared into a soft dough while green. It is a staple delicacy in Uganda. It is rich in starch and is commonly served among many ethnic groups.

³ The Baganda say *Omukazi yasooka okukomba ku nva*: it is the woman who must taste the soup before serving it. This is often emphasised to avoid the embarrassment which might result should a woman serve a dish which is less than appropriate.

⁴ Also see Chapter one

⁵ For example, Silver Kyagulanyi sang *Tebaremwa amaka* (2006) which translates to rural women being very competent and decries the sloth of urban women. It celebrates the productiveness of women who remain in the villages cooking, looking after their families and sustaining stable marriages. Herman Basudde sang his *Esomero Lyabakyara* (2006?), the school for women. This song is an expression of Basudde's admiration for traditional institutions which mould women into ideal women who know how to till land, carry heavy loads and produce many children.

⁶ Chaz Katongole, *The princess* (2001). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *Women artistic voices 5th annual exhibition*. Catalogue for an exhibition held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 7-20 April. Kampala: Nommo Gallery

⁷ Ivan Mugume, *African woman* (2005). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *Women's contribution to wealth creation at house hold level*. Catalogue for 9th annual exhibition celebrating the international women's day at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 7-20 March. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

⁸ The Mangbetu are found in Western Democratic Republic of Congo. They use hairstyles that give a sense of elongating the head upwards. This custom of 'head-elongation' was originally a privilege of the elite women among the Mangbetu where elevated hairstyles were associated with high status (Palmenaer 2000:117-123).

⁹ Edison Mugalu, *Perfect gift* (2004). Mixed media, measurements unknown. *Women and HIV/AIDS: challenges and way forward*. Catalogue for 8th annual exhibition celebrating the international women's day held at Nommo Gallery, Kampala, 9 March – 10 April. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

¹⁰ Herbert Bakka, *Beauty burdens* (2005). Wood, measurements unknown. *From image to essence*. Catalogue for an exhibition of paintings and sculptures for Bill Kavuma and Herbert Bakka held at Nommo Gallery, August 22. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

¹¹ Herbert Bakka, *A twist* (2005). Wood and metal, measurements unknown. *From image to essence*. Catalogue for an exhibition of paintings and sculptures for Bill Kavuma and Herbert Bakka held at Nommo Gallery, August 22. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

¹² Herbert Bakka, *Proud girl* (2005). Wood and metal plates, measurements unknown. *From image to essence*. Catalogue for an exhibition of paintings and sculptures for Bill Kavuma and Herbert Bakka held at Nommo Gallery, August 22. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

¹³ Herbert Bakka, *Scarlet lips* (2005). Wood, measurements unknown. *From image to essence*. Catalogue for an exhibition of paintings and sculptures for Bill Kavuma and Herbert Bakka held at Nommo Gallery, August 22. Kampala: Nommo Gallery.

¹⁴ John Bosco Kanuge, *Road master* (2002). Wood cut print, 33.7x26.5cm. Photo taken by Amanda Tumusiime. Kanuge private collection.

¹⁵ This name derives from Cutex, a popular nail-polish brand used by the nail-polishers. *Abacutex* (singular *owacutex*) literally means those who carry and apply cutex. This does not mean other brands are not used. Rather it refers to a complex form of re-branding through which the local population takes a popular brand to generically represent all brands in the category. In this way, all toothpaste brands are locally known as *Kologate* (from Colgate toothpaste), all filling stations are called *Seelo* (from Shell), all privately owned buses are called *Baasi za Baganda* (from buses owned by the Baganda).

Conclusion

In the introduction I raised the following question: During the period 1986 to date when Uganda's *new woman* negotiated her way into the public domain and challenged established conventions and beliefs about masculinity and femininity, how has art made by formally trained artists responded to the emergence of this *new woman*? To answer the question I have investigated the position and role of art in Uganda's gender debates. I have shown that not only are representations of women aesthetic statements but they are also used as tools to reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes held by society. By unveiling the complex layered histories and assumptions which present themselves as commonsense views about the world I have demonstrated that artists construct such views through their images. Visual expression is a complex device through which Ugandan artists, in different but related ways, mitigate or call for the *new woman's* claim for equality.

Some male artists have challenged women's claims for rights in various ways. One strategy was to cloak their criticism in the interest of the public health campaign intended to change customs. In a country confronted with escalating health challenges related to HIV/AIDS this is a beneficial service. Sexually transmitted diseases have been at the centre of public health campaigns since colonial times. However, this health campaign has often been turned into an opportunity to police women's sexuality and to restrict their movement and access to public space. Artists contributed to these suppressive tendencies by imaging women as materialistic gold diggers and prostitute lookalikes responsible for the spread of HIV and AIDS. Through such themes contemporary art has become a convenient tool to fight the country's autonomous women. Shaped by the intense debate on women's freedom in Uganda visual artists such as Musango and his students developed an iconography of misogyny to restrain the *new woman*.

The development of dress codes and fashion has taken interesting turns during Uganda's colonial and postcolonial history. Starting in the 1960s, but mainly as a result of postcolonial discourses, traditional fashions began to symbolise the authentic, the unadulterated. Modern dress represented the alienated. By the 1970s the patriarchy associated modern dress with immorality and being undesirable. After 1986 visual artists addressed this debate and commented on the *new woman's* use of modern dress and fashion to project her affluence, class and elitism. The *new woman* was presented as an alien agent of Western cultural imperialism and thus a threat to the country's moral fabric. Some artists preferred to combine modern fashion and voluptuous, frivolous bodies to avail the *new woman* for the powerful heterosexual male gaze and thus neutralise her. Another approach was to visualise nudity and the act of undressing as powerful symbols which effectively eroticise the female body and project the *new woman* as an object of sexual desire. Thus by adopting these visual strategies Uganda's contemporary art has transformed stereotypes of beauty relating to the elite women's bodies into powerful devices to silence the *new woman*.

A substantial number of artists in Uganda produce images of motherhood and women-in-rural-life to define the roles of the ideal woman. Some produce such works to celebrate their mothers and motherhood. Others, however, use images of rural motherhood as representations of what John Bosco Kanuge calls 'everything' about the woman. Such images of mother-and-child and the countryside-woman as produced by Kanuge are not neutral. Implicit in these images is the ideology of motherhood which is considered as one of the bases of women's oppression because it creates feminine and masculine character traits which perpetuate the patriarchy. This ideology strengthens the divide between private and public spheres confining women to the private domain. It foregrounds male dominance, restricts women's mobility and growth and challenges women's freedoms and rights.

Similarly many artists discussed in this thesis conflate non-elite women with productive labour. Consistent with this construct is the argument that the presence of women in elite spaces constitutes a waste; it is being unproductive. This comes from the social construction of work as manual labour. Thus a woman working in the field is more productive than her sister seated in the office. Yet it could also be said that in a way through such artefacts artists acknowledge the role rural women play in the development of the country.

Many of the visual strategies analysed in this thesis have no local precedents because contemporary art in Uganda is a product of formal art education. This raises questions concerning the role of the educational institution as a site for shaping creative processes. Since the time of Margaret Trowell students at MTSIFA have been trained to ground their art in the issues affecting their society. In an article reviewing Lilian Nabulime's sculptural figures Kakande (2011) argues that MTSIFA is responsible for the construction and differentiation between sexes in contemporary Ugandan art. By insisting on figure drawing as a core subject in which the nude, nudity, male and female models are used, MTSIFA has trained students to visualise men as masculine and women as feminine. This is the start of the visual stereotyping seen in contemporary Ugandan art. We cannot, however, totally exclude individual intervention based on persuasion and commitment to propagating a certain point of view.

Visual artists in Uganda claim that unlike traditional craftsmen who work in guilds and perpetuate commonplace views without intervention, the graduate of MTSIFA works as an 'individual'. This argument can be faulted in as far as it ignores ways in which craftsmen are agents who selectively perpetuate views about culture in order to ensure relevance to the community and hence

boost their sales. Convinced by this view, however, the visual artist insists on his/her role as an individual who is active in the society and the discussions that shape it. As such she/he emphasises the primacy of art as a creative and investigative process in which solutions must be found. This is an idealist standpoint in which the artist has become a creator and propagator of meaning. To pursue this role he/she does not ignore the canons of aesthetics: balance, form, colour theory, etc. These aesthetic concerns veil the sometimes complex and contradictory meanings embedded in gendered texts reducing their effectiveness as direct propaganda. In fact the artistic merit of artworks proves to be of paramount importance in terms of the market. Artists like Naita whose livelihoods depend on art sales cannot afford to offend the sensibilities of their audiences. Because of this market dynamic, a lot of political and gendered art in Uganda relies on veiled aesthetics in order not to offend public sensibilities.

Since Uganda has no efficient gallery system, artists struggle to sell their works. Many of the gendered works discussed in this thesis are stored away in public collections (like the Makerere Art Gallery Collection) where they often gather dust. Others are kept in the artists' collections where they can be viewed by curious observers, researchers and potential buyers. In both instances the artworks in question do not have the public exposure enjoyed by the press (and cartoons), theatre, music and film. They are accessed by very small elite audiences and thus their ability to impact on the public opinion of the *new woman* is limited. This also goes to show that one cannot speak of a coherent campaign masterminded by visual artists to undermine women.

This is the fate of Uganda's political and gendered art in a liberalised (capitalistic) economic environment in which all public museums have been turned into private property. For example, the Uganda Museum which was built in 1954 as a national museum to house the country's collection of

important archaeological and historical records was recently sold to a private estate developer. The Nommo Gallery which is the remaining public institution where the national collection of gendered works would have been housed is poorly funded. It has no storage facilities; some of its land has been occupied. Makerere Art Gallery is trying to intervene but it is part of a poorly funded public University which is affected by regular student riots. Thus the fact that private collectors and artists are keeping custody of the country's gendered art should be seen in a positive light. Without it this thesis would not have been written. This reality also implies that the conclusions drawn from my analysis are mediated by and limited to a particularly Ugandan environment and cannot be generalised to apply to other countries with different historical circumstances.

The findings of this thesis lead to the insight that in a country where the *new woman* is a threat, artists become cultural brokers grounding their works in complex trajectories in which the process of creating and disseminating meaning is competitive and contestable. Locked in this trajectory, works in which men purport to lower women may also have the effect of doing the exact opposite. Through them, the *fallen woman* becomes, if only visually, firmly located at the centre of the picture plane and thus the public space from which the artists purport to eliminate her.

The *new woman* is indelibly placed on Uganda's public scene through powerful legal reforms, institutions and activism. The constitutional guarantees inscribed in the Bill of Rights are very strong. Article 21 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda specifically prohibits discrimination based on sex. Within this milieu women organisations like FIDA, MIFUMI, etc have powerful legal teams that have filed petitions in which they have successfully challenged cultural and legal provisions which offend women's rights.¹ Women artists are not at all organised along similar lines. The Uganda

Women Artists Association, for example, organises exhibitions for women artists to celebrate 8th March, International Women's Day. The aim is mainly to sell art; the case for women's rights and liberties is secondary. In fact men dominate these exhibitions since the number of women participating has remained limited to a few regulars like Mary Naita and Lillian Nabulime.

Women activists in Uganda have fallen into a patriarchal trap which has also affected the position of women artists, namely the clamour for being at the top. In Chapter One I used the tropes of "heroines" and "powerful women" in reference to the position of pre-colonial women as public actors and how that position was lost through colonial history. Women were pushed to the margins of public life and discourse until 1986 when they, to use Snyder's tropes, moved from "burning sun" to the "boardroom" (Snyder 2000). According to Jones (2005:426) such a debate undermines male historical narrative by insisting on reinserting women into history. In spite of its positive contribution nonetheless, Jones warns that such a debate serves to reinforce the problematic masculinist notion of "greatness" – and thus heroism and boardroom executive – which privileges some women while leaving out others. This criticism applies with similar force to Uganda's women artists. They must invent an alternative language (and discourse) which does not rely on hierarchical patriarchal narratives.

Uganda's gendered art is a reflection of the health of the country's democracy. The 1990s witnessed a discussion on women in which the *new woman* was considered a predatory threat as seen in Kasule's and Musango's work. There was freedom in most parts of Uganda save for the North which was struck by insurgence. Such a debate through images is now rare – even in the print and electronic media. The degenerating political environment in the country which affects men, women and children has elicited debate on the ever decreasing space for open political discussion.

Male artists have diverted their attention to this changing political environment. This suggests that the discussion on women issues seen in art is probably a reflection of the country's democratic maturity and tolerance of open discussion and political expression.

Uganda's *new woman* has evolved and will continue to evolve as she continues to compete with her powerful male counterpart over the ever limited resources. In light of these realities, this study can only serve to open a discussion on how gendered biases, openly or subtly expressed through a country's public discourse, can inform contemporary artistic practice as artists invent visual language couched in chauvinistic positions and feminist women artists challenge them.

Some thoughts on the way forward

My discussion has been limited to art in which the following features have been transformed into a battle of the sexes: (i) misogynous iconographies of the *new woman* imagined as materialistic gold diggers, prostitutes and vectors for HIV and AIDS; (ii) images of eroticism and the erotica; and (iii) notions of womanhood and family.

This inquiry has the potential to expand. Firstly, I recommend that other scholars investigate related subtexts, themes and idioms. Scholars need to inquire, for example, about the representations of men by women artists. Two female sculptors, Silvia Violet Nabiteeko Katende (born 1961) and Rose Namubiru Kirumira (born 1962), both graduates of Makerere Art School where they currently teach, are such examples. The two artists did *Job well done* (1997)², an interesting sculpture showing a physically disabled man stretching his erect penis.

Job well done invokes a curious, highly contradictory image of a man incapacitated by physical impairment yet highly charged with 'sexual virility'.³ It uncannily projects the two opposing pillars of ability and inability albeit simultaneously. Almost immediately, the sculpture may be read as a satirical attack on masculinity and power. Yet there is more below its surface. Rozsika Parker advises that it is also true that such 'images of men' do not tell us the truth about men. Rather, they reveal 'women's fantasies and desires, fears and defences' (Parker 1985:54). Parker's argument opens a fresh window on works such as *Job well done* and Kirumira's *Kintu and Nambi* (1997)⁴ – a powerful representation of a delicate phallus and a nail-laden vulva – and others in this category. This area needs to be explored vigorously in order to expand and enrich our knowledge of Uganda's gendered contemporary art.

Secondly, some male artists use their works to advance the case for women's rights and gender equality. Muwonge, for example, did his *Women's emancipation project* (1995)⁵ in which he depicted a group of women converging on a space from different directions. They raise their arms behind their leader who carries a flag marked with a gender symbol (which denotes a woman) and the inscription *8 March*. Since 1986 Ugandans have celebrated 8 March as International Women's day. It is a public holiday on which many issues which marginalise women are publicly debated and challenged.⁶ Muwonge argues that he started with *Women's emancipation project* before he did several other works to celebrate women's day and to raise the 'status of women'. He has exhibited regularly in the annual International Women's Day Exhibition. In other words, the work marked the artist's departure from the morbid theme in his *Misfortune* (see Chapter Two). Muwonge's claims for his work, its symbolism and his participation in the women's day exhibitions weave into quests for women's equality. Musicians such as Moses Super Charger in his song *Tomujoganga* (Respect the woman; 2005) and Jose Chameleon in his song *Ssinsolo* (Women are human beings too; 2005) have

used their music in a related manner. These men are still few but their voices must be acknowledged. Feminist scholarship must liberally expand available theoretical paradigms in order to account for these men's contributions to the fight for gender equality. I recommend that research be done in the area.

Thirdly, scholars of Uganda's art history need to know that the debate on women, art and power is always held suspect; holding it in public is a taboo. I failed to gather meaningful information from some artists when they realised that I carried a voice recorder. Others would change their statements as soon as they suspected that I was advancing a feminist discussion on the plight of women in Uganda. One musician accused me of using my education to antagonise stable marriages. My situation is not isolated. Woman activist Sylvia Tamale and others regularly face similar challenges. Eve Ensler is a women's rights activist who uses theatre to challenge all forms of domination related to human sexuality. In 2005, she came to Uganda to perform her *Vagina Monologues*. The play was intended to raise funds to support women activities and to rehabilitate war victims. Instead, it divided the country and was declared immoral. Conservatives and traditionalists accused Ensler of propagating alien forms of Western culture and "vices" such as lesbianism disguised as the fight for equal rights. Government summarily outlawed the *Vagina monologues*. These suspicions and sanctions will continue but they need to be challenged. Appropriate strategies must be developed on an *ad hoc* basis to circumvent them and continue with the debate on all forms of gendered domination and marginalisation.

According to Alex Baine some women have accepted that 'yes we are supposed to be inferior ... they quickly resign and accept ... the level at which [they] are and the majority [of women in Uganda] are just like that ...' (Baine, interview, 2009). Baine's explanation may be controversial. However, it opens a new discussion on women who admit and perpetuate their oppression

through art. A discussion in this direction will throw new light on Uganda's contemporary women artists whose art perpetuates the submissiveness and marginalisation of women.

Apart from the themes considered in this study, other, more violent strategies have been devised to silence the *new woman*. For example, issues concerning the *new woman* are present in cartoons depicting women with padlocked, sealed lips (**131a**, **131b**), locked in chains and ropes or breaking them. In this case the use of padlocks, ropes and chains is intended to symbolise a debate for or against women's activism. A study of these cartoons and works such as Fred Mutebi's prints of *Women activists i* (**132**) (2005) and *Women activists ii* (**133**) (2006) in which the artist uses similar symbols to question women's activism in Uganda, needs to be taken up. It might expose how violence against the *new woman*⁷ has shaped Uganda's contemporary visual art.

Finally, I propose that there is a need for dialogue with male artists to sensitise them to the complex issues of women, art and power. Justice Mukasa-Kikonyogo recently retired from the judiciary. She was the Deputy Chief Justice of Uganda and head of the country's Court of Appeal. In our interview she argued that women 'involve men in our fight because if you don't involve them implementation will fail' (Mukasa-Kikonyogo, interview, 2007). Jurgen Peters, head of the Fredrich Ebert Foundation in Uganda, an organisation that funds women's activities in the country, addressed a seminar at the Regency Hotel in Kampala in November 2007. This seminar evaluated the progress of affirmative action. He argued that women will not achieve anything if they do not involve men in their debates and activities. I agree with Mukasa-Kikonyogo and Peters. I propose that women vigilantly engage men in a meaningful and sustained debate. They can never know how many allies and converts are out there waiting to be won over. For

example, Angelo Kakande (whose work featured in Chapter Four) has changed his attitude towards women as we see in the doctoral thesis he completed in 2008. He admits that this happened after he read feminist literature. This literature forced him to reflect on the complex ways in which his idioms are located in what, on Foucault's terms, is a history and deployment of sexuality and power.

Endnotes

¹ For example they recently filed a petition in which the Constitutional Court declared unconstitutional the cultural practice of female genital mutilation.

² Violet Nabiteeko Katende and Rose Namubiru Kirumira, *Job well done* (1997). Cement, measurements unknown. Private collection.

³ Kirumira, interview, 29 October 2006 and 15 May 2011 Makerere University, Kampala.

⁴ Rose Namubiru Kirumira, *Kintu and Nambi* (1997). Mixed media, measurements unknown. Private collection.

⁵ Muwonge Kyazze, *Women's emancipation project* (1995). Oil on canvas, 100 x 175 cm. The artist's collection.

⁶ For instance, women marked 8 March 2000 with a mass demonstration at Rukungiri (in Western Uganda) during which 'women's organisations from all over the country protested the dropping of the spousal co-ownership (common property) clause from the 1998 Land Act' (Tripp & Kwesiga 2002: 8). The theme for 8 March 2010 was 'Equal rights; equal opportunities'. Through rallies and Uganda's vibrant print and digital media, women activists challenged the way women are persistently denied access to the country's resources.

⁷ For example, Vice President Specioza Kazibwe was battered for years before she filed for divorce in 2005.

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