

Review Article

Un-cisgendering Womanism to Scrimmage with Misogyny: an Analysis of Cassandra (1999) by Violet Barungi

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Abstract: Published in 1999, *Cassandra* is a remarkable novel through which Violet Barungi pinpoints various questions related to feminism and femaleness. To delve into the issue of feminism and glass the idea on *femocracy*, the perspective of femism and kink has been developed and elaborated. Indeed, in a critical perspective, the paper has spotlighted the degree of the Ugandan women's failure in the struggle against patriarchy in their society. An analysis of probate pertinency has shown up the resolution of the female character to overthrow the social and cultural female status cushioned by so much domesticated vagrancies. However, confronted with pugnacious realities, the female actant steps back to fall into the trap of sex and sexuality. A path to freedom is then cut short, a dream shattered on the erotic wall of venial pleasures. Emancipation is then wedged apart into the glooming splinters of masculinity and patriarchy.

Keywords: Feminism, kink, patriarchy, femaleness, love, misogyny, emancipation.

INTRODUCTION

“One is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman” (Beauvoir, 1989: 17-18). These words from Simone de Beauvoir ring high and loud to tell much about female engagement in the struggle for emancipation. Indeed, the idea of liberating women from the double yoke of social *feminicide* and traditions is evoked and elaborated by many African intellectuals among whom Violet Barungi. Born in the District of Ibadan in the West of Uganda, Barungi is a woman who sharpens her struggle for women's rights. She shoulders the vision to sweep through the female skirmish, dredging out the longstanding and sharp longing for women to walk across the borderline of social servitude and genderism. In this perspective, Barungi, in *Cassandra*, works out the issue of Ugandan women trapped between the hammer of traditions and the anvil of modernism and modernity. She dedicates herself to a self-writing through the perspective of *dominomorphism* defined in substance by C. Grignon and J.-Passeron as being the different social criteria that favour and put forward the culture of dominance (1989:32). Indeed, Barungi problematizes the topical matter of women-being and woman-doing to highlight the critical emphasis intentionally voiced and enacted by a young and *rebellious* girl. The question on women's struggle for emancipation, which has become “a major national and international significance in many African countries across Africa” (Mhabasonda 2002: 99), stirs to actions some women of Kampala who, in an intellectual-based awareness, vent their voices through the entrails of a female collective consciousness. Thus being, in this work, we target to raise the issue of probated pertinacity toward a patriarchal tradition. The whatnots of love as a hindering obstacle that rules away women from the horizon of emancipation is another point that will be put hand in glove with a medium stand on African Feminocentrism and Stewanism.

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I. A Probated Pertinacity toward the Female Status Quo

Wafting from the Grec 'Kassandre', the name Cassandra means *the one who helps men*. (Heems, 2019: 32). Devoted to gods and traditions, Kassandre was anointed with powers of prediction and would be consulted for any matter concerning the Kingdom of her origins. (Heems, 2019: 32). But, for having betrayed, she was punished by the god Apollo who deprived her of her powers and left her with no out of influency and with no power. Being a byword of the Grec personage, Cassandra, in the eponymous novel, follows a similar way of the cross. As a young girl, she loathes in a final way the all-powerful masculine complex of superiority Ugandan women suffer from. She builds cross-currents of opposing thoughts with the vice-grip of masculinity on women and principles herself for the sake of a grandeur of life that will profit her likes in her country.

Recruited in a Press House, Cassandra bears down on her stamina to engage a combat for a horizontal man-to-woman relation. The conditions of women based on suffering and oppression are ably brought about by men's insatiable desire for domination. In Cassandra's eyes, the woman's social position is, in Uganda in general and in Lotus International Company in particular, husky and lousy. Thus being, it is to be thought how to veto men's power that must, according to her, stop going *ad infinitum*. She first targets women whom she believes, do not honour their femininity. Juliet, her foregoer in the company, is the first to be victim of Cassandra's conceived dislike. She accuses her of not being enough decent and ethical to stand up to men. Being too mendacious and a bit fickle, Juliet swaps her bodily services for professional advantages. Cassandra's hope to see her colleague in a more honourable state is dashed to ground and she is outraged and lets it know in the following: "Juliet belongs to the class of females whose ambition does not go beyond being the boss' pet, mistakenly equating a pat on the head with a badge of success' (...). She is cheap and vulgar and thinks everybody else's like her" (Barungi, 1999: 11-12). Cassandra is formal and definitive; women should not be social ladders for men to atop themselves, profiting by the sexual facilities they are proposed as kickbacks to guaranty women's promotion.

In the same logic of thoughts, Wakilo, in his capacity as the director of LI, selects Cassandra for a professional trip in Nairobi, in replacement of Juliet. The crux of such a decision is not to treat the new recruit with kid gloves. The boss drives at isolating the fresh heart-throb of the company to lull her into accepting a private intimacy. Marie, Cassandra's colleague in LI, calls the former's attention and opens her eyes through the following discussion:

Marie: "ask yourself why you should be included in the team going for the seminar when there're already two members from Editorial going. Doesn't it strike you as odd especially when you go as a replacement for Juliet?"

Cassandra: "hardly a replacement unless if you think I don't qualify in my own right"

Marie: "Oh I didn't mean that and you know it, Cassandra. But merit has never been the criterion before and nobody's going to believe that it is now. Take my advice and don't wait until you're forced to make a choice."

Cassandra: "A choice between what?"

Marie: "Your job and your integrity." (Barungi, 1999: 15)

Marie plainly informs Cassandra about the sexual harassment women are victim of in the LI Company. According to her arguments, the wherewithal offered to them for their recognition and progress in their places of works, is nothing but a self-dedication to unobtrusive give and take operations. Consequently, women stand as sexual toys in men's hands. Women's devoirs and rights are messed over and their personalities shrouded into bare and bleak existences. That most blow makes Cassandra learn the deepest lesson. Her reaction is that of a woman who bends her steps towards emancipation. She declares:

That's the trouble with women, always looking for a line of least resistance. It is any wonder men treat us the way they do if we're not prepared to stand up for our own rights? How can we ever hope to achieve total liberation from all form of injustice unless we fight for them? (p. 16).

These utterances are produced and woven into a descriptive and critical logic, turning Cassandra into a *ligative* force that must pull women towards emancipation. She carries on her shoulders, as a female freedom fighter, the duty of transforming *discourses into actions* to, decidedly, reduce the differential gaps between men and women. In this way, two axes emerge in her words: an axis of intensity and an axis of extensiveness. She extols her femininity, chides men's gross malignancy and fumbles for a thawing of her society's traditions. Unequivocally, the heroine changes her stripes. From a social prey, she becomes an iron lady who overturns the established order and imposes her vision around her social universe. She goes "against cultural, political and economic norms that grant social power and preference to men at the expense of women" (Dione 2017: 410). In addition to bearing a *stivanist* cross to head along a combat route of sacrifices in the name of female freedom, Cassandra wears the dress of a female lawyer and attributes herself the duty to plead not guilty for the Ugandan woman. She aims at loosening the social stranglehold that buries the soul of women's

freedom in the depths of a tradition. She detaches herself from the masculinised understanding of her community and attacks the hegemonic will of men, for whom the only force that can tow women towards a fair and acceptable future is that grounded on masculinity.

Barungi reveals a factual truth about a female “emancipatory aspiration” (Re 2017: 112) through discursive activities. The system of manipulation and frontal opposition between men and Cassandra in the Lotus International Company bestows the narrative with a compositional field that amplifies itself in a network of paradoxical interactions. Hence the reversals, tensions and surprises that run through the narration.

Being aware of the impact of modernity on her daughters’ generation, Cassandra’s mother manages to talk to her elder spawn through a diplomatic canvas. She tries to reason her into accepting the society in which she lives with all its imperfections and illogic parameters. As she belongs to the older generation, she remains bedded in traditions and lets it know to Cassandra: “certain decencies must be upheld even in your ultra modern society” (p.122). Mrs Mutano does not want her daughters, Millie and Cassandra to be going out, gallivanting through a hive of flight activities. She insists on the necessity to build a correct and lawful conjugal life through the marital bounds. In her deep understanding of female fulfilment, the old lady, strongly, believes that a woman can only implement completion through “a husband, a home, children” (p.125). For Mrs Mutano, the ultimate goal of a woman cannot go beyond motherism, and mothering in a marital couple; hence the importance she assigns to marriage as a social institution. However, her position is deconstructed by her feminist daughter, Cassandra, according to whom times have changed and bygone époques have to be buried with their unmannered practices and beliefs. She states:

Is marriage the only thing going for women, Mama? (...). Would it surprise you to learn that I don’t plan getting married? Marriage is not everything. You know. You have a couple of unmarried sisters yourself who look just fine to me, happier than some of the married women I know, as a matter of fact. (...). There are many married women who never stop wishing they were single again (...) haven’t you for instance, ever regretted giving up your job to become a full-time housewife? (...). You know, Maman, you live in the Dark ages. Today, women have more going for them than the subservient role designed for them by men. Marriage is no longer the only goal. (...). Single women are no longer looked upon by society with pity, at best, and as misfits, at worst. Quite a number of them are, in fact, happy, and living meaningful lives (pp.124-125).

By performing this discourse, Cassandra ceases to be an individual *actant*. She bears and makes the tradition bear the mark of an inalienable identity in front of the recalcitrant rebellious young girls on whom an obligation cannot be imposed to get them act in accordance with the goodwill of their fellow male citizens. Marriage, which is considered by traditions to be a social chain that links women to a *Yes-Okay* position, is reversed and portrayed as an unnecessary institution, a social nutshell very often devoiced and devoid of its content, its sense of happiness. Cassandra, through her utterances, indeed, dispraises and abases the “feudal heart of the society” (Beck, Ulrich, et al 1995: 25) to promote common-law couples for the benefit of women’s social margins. As such, she stands against Nego-feminism and the snail-sense feminism to put forward femalism and feminist ideas to, in so doing, give triumph to the emancipatory values which underlie the anti-patriarchal women’s struggle. Mrs Mutano’s daughter is therefore observed in a process of demystification and of total stripping of marriage in particular and traditions in general with their patriarchal finery.

The head-on confrontation between conformists and anti-conformists in Ugandan society is echoed in a daughter-mother discussion through which divergent opinions clash within the logic of the forbidden and the bravado. Barungi uses this dual face-off as a narrative device through which she *textualises* the fractured relationship between the overtones of orthodox duty and the obligation to rise up against the social status quo.

In *Cassandra*, Cassandra puts on surface a *boulèsis* (a strong will) to gain back her female poise. With a growing sense of all-occasion protest, she drives at liberating herself from any form of domination and exploitation. To keep the best for female *bona fide*, the young girl hangs on the balance to recoup the *noûs praktikos* and make modern

times prevail over “dark ages” (p.124). She begrudges women like her mother of their aphasia and condemns their philosophy that consists in shirking their duty, their need to get out of their cage and face the daily oppression they are victim of. She puts a jaundiced view on patriarchy and, with a notch of arty commitment, breaks the domineering voice which targets “to persuade the powerless that their powerlessness is inevitable” (Ruthven 1984: 31).

In her permanent combat against the status quo, Cassandra, who has contracted a pregnancy out of marriage, decides to keep it against all odds. In spite of her society’s ferocity against single girls’ gravidities, the young girl refuses to show undue concerns and avoid shirking her duty as a pregnant woman: “I intend to keep the baby. (...) I shan’t change my mind” (p.147). Her standpoint is opposed and challenged by her own sister, Mellinda. The latter who is taken aback by Cassandra’s stubbornness, looks down on her sister who trivialises what happens to herself. She proposes Cassandra to abort before being ridiculed and belittled by their male-dominated society. She warns her sister through these statements:

You know, Cassandra, I sometimes despair of you, truly I do with your lofty views and unrealistic attitudes. But even you must know there are different rules for men and different rules for women. You may not like it but it doesn’t change the facts an iota. We live in a man-dominated society (p.150).

In this Ugandan society, the woman, in the eyes of traditions, remains a symbol of legitimate and legal submission. Her being and appearance remain the expression of a collectively accepted constraint and domination. On their shoulders, traditions place the burden of silence, assertion and conformism. Cassandra, who behaves with a perfect decorum, stays noncommittal in her views. Her answers are direct and laconic. To her sister’s criticism, she impudently, expostulates: “I’ve not lost sight of my goals in life, this is a minor setback (...). This is 1984 for heaven’s sake, not 1900” (p.148). A substantive argument about mentalities emerges on sight in a post-independence Ugandan society. Violet articulates a relationship of implication that unites the highly moral prohibition and the salvific duty. The author paints the narrative with a movement of logic where consecution and consequence govern the action in the storyline syntax of the R narration. The narrative space is thus enriched with catalytic functions and a parallelism is established between the conformist duty and the will to row against the current of customs. The plot then develops in a binary tonality, opposing the bearer of traditions and the progressive woman. Their contradictory points of views punctuate the sequences of the narrative on the *axiologies* of female resistance and feminine submission. The plot then gains in scenes and is divided, at this level of its message, into two fundamental sequences: the why-based sequence and the how-based occurrence. Indeed, Cassandra asks herself why the woman has to undergo the torments of ethno-patriarchy and her sister shows her how she has to stick to her tradition as a woman.

Violet Barungi bipolarises her message and brings out two forces that clash on the sensitive theme of the female body. If the intellectual, Cassandra expostulates on the necessity to spin, deconstruct and fidget the spine of the traditions, her sister mulls over how to sensitize and keep her abreast of the danger to disincarnate the traditional best-laid order. Hence the deliberate use of the warning by these words: “Would a little consideration for the people (...). I wash my hands of you (...). Like you want to show the world how tough you are, and how tenaciously you cling to your stupid principles” (pp.148-150). Mellinda dissociates herself from Cassandra’s combat. Good riddance to bad rubbish, Mellie seems to say to her sister. Her intolerance to the pregnant girl’s rebellious behaviour is sharp and pointy. However, straight in her boots, without fiddling or trembling before the powerful steamroller of tradition, Cassandra carries on her combat, sticking on her vision as an African feminist, and putting forward her full right over her full body. According to her “the logos (speech), the *epitumia* (reflection) and the *ergon* (action) are the top dogs items forfeited by men to outstretch and avouch bluntly their lordship on women who are reduced to impotence and second hand objects. Traditions levy a model of private life which is to be scrutinized and controlled by parents, in-laws, friends and relatives. Life is to be lived in compliance with the does and don’ts of the society. But Cassandra refutes that standing point and cuts it clear in the following: “I never do anything that I don’t want to do” (p. 99).

Cassandra presents herself as a female revolutionary and thus embodies the expression of a sacrifice, a generosity of an individuality that confronts the very foundations of her society and consequently shows the way forward. She is painted as a heroine who embodies a virile cause and aims for glory in a liberating victory. Traditionalist men and women look down on and label her as a lost sheep whose efforts for emancipation will get her nowhere, if not to isolate her further from her own people and her own intrinsic identity.

In fact, in order to free women from the weight of silence imposed on them by the patriarchal system, Barungi raises a woman who, with a strong personality, stands up against the iniquity and blind haughtiness of a male power. In so doing, she inscribes a positional relationship where the action of the strongest is described as being transformational.

She, as a committed writer, then reveals a social scheme that organises a cultural system where men are in junction with objects of positive values to make women state subjects, victims condemned to bend their backs before the domineering force of men. She gets Cassandra play a role which consists in questioning the social and cultural conception on men's superiority over women. The male voice which rings loud and bears the tonality of chieftaincy is to be broken into conciliation and horizontality.

II. Love and Whatnots Irking Obstacles for Emancipation

Love! Woman! Between the *actants* is man, who bears the seal of quest and conquest. He sets his sights on the woman he wants to be attractive, loving and congenial. This is how the relationship between man and woman is, sometimes, determined and characterised. Love is then the feeling that unites male and female to give meaning to life, which is perpetuated through the channel of reproduction. In literature, love has remained an old theme, as old as the letter and the spirit of the word love itself which carries the message of affection that, according to André Maurois can be "a love-passion, a love-physical, a love-taste and a love-vanity" (Maurois, 1972: 47). In *Cassandra*, love is conjugated in the mode of passion and it eschews all forms of rationality.

Indeed, it is in the middle of the night that Cassandra and Ray mollify their sexual desire and thus sublimate their carnal conjunction into an illegal lovely union. The locative *actant* (Ray's house) is enriched by a subject recipient and the narrative is *axiologised*. An euphoric atmosphere dominates the setting and favours the deployment of the interactions between the two lovers. While she is a virgin and unmarried, Cassandra makes a deliberate decision to give herself over to a married man. Her lover's expectations take precedence over her principles that she sees tumbling down from the height of their rigidity. The first sexual act between Ray and Cassandra is free of any command and sounds like both a will and a duty to perform. The woman, who feels powerless in front of the man she loves, finds herself in a potentialized status: she is an object of desire and offers sexual delights to the man she dears without restraint or ulterior motives. Cassandra wants to be loved, neutralised and fixed on the dead centre of her existence as long as she is accepted in Raymond's arms. In her discussion with George, she confesses:

George: "you're supposed to be a liberated woman"

Cassandra: "I'm not that liberated, I'm afraid. Hard as it may be for you to believe, George, I too suffer from the modesty syndrome of sex."

George: "Hallelujah, you've finally admitted to being human too!" (p. 27).

Sex is the weak point from which Cassandra suffers. Her commitment to the female cause is compromised by the exigencies of her sex. She cannot make a difference between satisfying her natural desire and her standpoint as a 'liberal' woman. Her determination to resist male domination is combed by the harassing need of sexuality. On the one hand, she battles against patriarchy and man's upper hand on women; on the other hand, she bows down and worships man's virility and sexuality for the sake of her sexual well-being. In fact, Cassandra alchemizes her body into an offering that her boyfriend, Ray, willing, a field day, sacrifices under the altar of a male domination. She makes herself flesh in her desires and verbalizes her love in sexual acts to the goodwill of her man. Therefore, her female sex becomes a dumping ground for her feelings of inferiority. The young feminist, who used to martyr herself to move the mountains of male authority, has softened herself in front of love and given herself to be read in a logic of a very watchful and lustful submission. Her battles of yesterday become litanies with a shortened narrative and half-tinted commitments, and dreams of an innocent young girl.

Cassandra then discovers the world of sex and sexuality. And it is in this world of pleasures and temptations that the rebellious girl will lose the main meaning of her fight for freedom and the restoration of female dignity. The loss of her virginity marks the end of a match and the beginning of a life painted on the edge of chaotic and unbearable lightness grounded on a sexual life that goes straight to a total drift. In Cassandra and Raymond's one-flesh union, passion prevails over morality and makes their love and love-makings bear the stamp of fornication and adultery. Actually, Cassandra's boundless attachment to Raymond leads her to be more conciliatory and consensual. In the face of his love, she stops playing at elbows and becomes more interested in keeping her man than in emancipatory politics. Love wins out over reason; and her feminist struggle takes a socially compromising gasp. The sacredness of the feminist world collapses on the slab of the fighter's germinal and fecund dream. A game is lost, and a 'war' is compromised. The barometer of female resistance to the hegemonic traditions in the Ugandan society seems to be cooling under the mind-altering effect of sex and love. Cassandra turns her femininity into an erotic capital and wears the effigy of her sexual pleasures as a safety belt to protect her dream of keeping and preserving the man she cherishes with all her might. In a conversation with Ray, Cassandra avows her weakness and half renunciation to her principles and struggle:

Ray: I know you take life seriously and determined to make it to the top of your career, I am right.

Cassandra: That has been my dream so far, my only dream and the sole goal of my life. It was simple enough goal, possible too but now...Now something seems to have gone wrong with my calculations. I'm not getting the correct

answers anymore. But as you said, there're no given formulae to the riddle that is life; all one can do's flounder in the dark (p.32).

The intellectual feminist's dream is extinguished in a world of inequality and inequity. A paradox then arises between an ardent desire for freedom and a feminine power that seems to fall flat on the face of its impossible nature. This situation locks Cassandra's life and that of her fellow women into a vicious circle, which takes on a rotating pattern that always brings the woman back to the zero point of her African feminist struggle.

Hegemonic feminism dreamt and roused by the young girl fades into a "situation in which women's equality with men is denied" (Hall, 2001: 250). Cassandra falls apart with her bundle of sexism into the intersectional point of love. She loses her protesting voice and bows down in front of the strong assertion according to which "nothing exists that has not been made by man (...) the world is man's word" (Leclerc, 1990: 74). Her submissiveness to men she loves is a turnaround that, read through an angle of stewanism and de Beauvoire's conception of feminism, is an admission of failure and weakness of a female stand that can no longer question the belief that "with one voice, only one can speak. Man (Leclerc, 1990:75) the warning down of her female commitment is "supported by the existence of sexual desires like fetishism" (Giles, 1994: 339-357).

Morality and female dignity are sacrificed at the cost of love. In this way, Violet Barungi takes a critical look at her traditions, of which identity appears to be based on the perpetuation of the male-dominant system underpinned by a patriarchal spirit. Violet then focuses on the wrongness of a traditional system that has no other means than to create disparities that lead to social discrepancies and exclusions. The perpetual quest for happiness that Cassandra shows up contradicts her in her choices, and locks her in a permanent state of psychological and moral instabilities.

The unsubmitive girl comes up against the harsh realities of love and is disarmed by the unfathomable reasons of blind affection. Through this loosening and resignation in the face of the obstacle, Violet Barungi highlights the social barriers that obstruct the path to emancipation for Ugandan women in particular. Cassandra, indeed, bends over backwards and relegates her indignation to the second degree of her resistance. She expresses her choice in this way: "I should hate you [Raymond] to discover that underneath the veneer of dazzling wit was the usual humdrum female [...]. Your friendship [...] means more to me than anything else in the world" (pp. 33-35). Cassandra is disarmed by the unconditional nature of love and illustrates her powerlessness through a comparative statement which, in reality, shows resignation. In her view, there is no possible match between her love and her feminist combat. Out of many goals, only that about love is, afar, beyond any possible compromise. Thus being, she expresses a psychological state of abandonment, hence a pitiful position of a 'model' female citizen who is being gangrened by the strength of masculinity that disempowers and disadvantages women. Her reaction then carries an assertive meaning which refers to a message of social and cultural establishment. She, undeniably, goes to the same direction than Annie Leclerc who wanders before stating in this way: "Man? What is Man? Man is what man brings into the world. We made children, they made man" (Leclerc, 1990: p.75).

Besides, Barungi follows and describes the adventures of the feminist Cassandra, bringing to the surface the assets of her actions and transformations. She turns her life into a narrative journey littered with conjunctions and disjunctions, punctuated by reflexive alterations through which her novel exposes the pulling and pushing factors of a struggle that is far from being won in advance.

Furthermore, the interactions in the marital space give rise to time effects that erode or strengthen feelings of love depending on whether one is married or is a mistress of a married man. While Cassandra finds joy in her illegal and extramarital relationship with Ray, Belinda suffers in her gut from the dimness of her marital life. This brings her to rebel against her husband's expectations and makes their married existence a living hell. Belinda, thus, attacks the marital laws in her society, dragging her husband into the mud of humiliation and dishonour. Not only does she refuse to divorce, but she forces her man to distance himself from herself so that she can dispose of her own body. While Cassandra goes down in her resistance against male domination, Belinda flouts the laws of tradition that organize intimacy in the couple to control, by her own, her sex and her sexuality. A sort of a handing over seems to take place between Cassandra and Belinda. The latter, to Raymond's authoritative assertion: "I'll keep you for as long as it suits me" (p.215), she bitterly answers back: "I'll not be tied to a crippled. Never!" (p. 215). The use of the adverb 'never' in the sentence transforms the addressee into an allocator and homogeneous listener. This expressive and assertive utterance itself gives values to the woman's refusal and rejection to abide by a man's injunction. This places Belinda in a position of a 'rebel' avenging herself against a former male-dominating power.

Belinda draws a curtain of illocutionary acts between herself and her husband in order to escape from men's dominating potency. Thus, she uses a directive to tell her man, who is no longer *a man*,: "my husband, I admit, was once a ladies' man, but even you with your limitation, nurse, could do better than a crippled invalid with minimal chances of

full recovery” (pp.216-217). Despite these assertions, Ray remains amorphous and apathetic. So Belinda refrains from blaming herself and develops her argument around an exclusive “comparison of superiority” through which she neutralizes any difference between him and “a crippled invalid” (p. 217).

Belinda, who hopes to take up the torch of feminism, retracts her decision to pursue her happiness with high-ranking military personalities. Indeed, her revolt against Raymond’s marital authority does not free her from male domination. Like Cassandra who abdicates and gives up the fight in the face of passionate love, Belinda trades in her independence and female authority for wealth and material happiness. She succumbs to a love-vanity and gives way to submission. The narrator informs:

What about Belinda? Since the death of their son, Raymond and his wife had become more estranged than ever before although neither had made the move to legalise their separation. But now, at the time of husband’s accident, Belinda had been considering doing so. She just struck it lucky with one of the nouveau riche army officers and did not have time for her suffering husband (p. 214).

Through her renunciation of the struggle by and for women, Barungi shows the weakness of the feminist movement in Uganda in the 1980s. A struggle whose limits were matched only by the selfishness of those who engaged it. Both Belinda and Cassandra have succumbed to the submissive calls of love and have consequently lost sight of their principled attitude. If Mellie and her mother have given audience to the scrupulous respect of established norms, Cassandra and Belinda have moved from a firm commitment to a disengagement whose final objective is and remains the personal satisfaction of carnal and financial aims.

CONCLUSION

Violet Barungi, in *Cassandra*, has merged the phenomena of time to articulate a narrative identity. The movements of her main protagonist, in time and space, are expressed and illustrated as temporal values that signify a being and a becoming. Indeed, Barungi portrays Cassandra’s past in her capacity as a fighter, a protester, and a committed feminist woman, to detach her from the present, which she considers to be a sentimental salvation. She observes and is observed in a denominational movement from a principled, non-negotiable woman to a docile and submissive one at will. Her attempts to achieve a temporal syncretism between her past and her present collapse before the demands of a cornelian take-it-or-leave-it choice. Such a position sufficiently undermines her room for manoeuvre and subjects her to the man’s nirvana desires. Actually, Barungi, in *Cassandra*, has succeeded in highlighting the predicaments Ugandan women came across in their thorny and painful way toward emancipation.

Victim of a double prejudice related to patriarchy and femality, Cassandra incarnates the topical struggle of Ugandan women to unchain themselves from any form of relegation to a second class citizenry and second-gendered sex. Through her itineraries, points are handed out and female barometer to measure the mercurial value of the Ugandan women’s achievements strongly oriented towards another page of her woman-being and woman-becoming in the Ugandan society. Through Cassandra, Barungi has achieved a gripping on the female destiny rattled by the dynamism of her surroundings. She succeeded in transforming afar dreams into close realities. The narration follows a horizontal direction to contradict with the verticality in social, emotional and professional relations between men and women. A way is shaped out. A will is strengthened. A struggle is engaged. However, is a total female victory within reach? “That is the question!” (Shakespeare 1992: 53).

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