

The Politics of Queerness and Queer Resistance in *Cassandra* (1999) by Violet Barungi: from Eccentricity to Uneccentricity

BY

Saliou DIONE

- African and Postcolonial Studies, Department of Anglophone Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar (Senegal)



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Corresponding author:

Saliou DIONE

Abstract

This article brings to light the relationship and the intense struggle that exist between the body, sexual identity, and gender affiliation in Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* (1999). It looks at how these are exacerbated by broader global discourses of gender and queer politics within the patriarchal structure in the Global South shaped by feminism. The paper's approach is informed by queer theory and black/postcolonial feminism as it examines the modalities of being queer that reside within the cultural norms. It further uncovers how the protagonist-eponymous character, Cassandra, challenges heteronormativity and engages the reader in queer resistance, whose trajectory aims at dismantling the *queerphobic* patriarchal structure and calling for gender-based reflections on the lives of African women who find themselves shackled in the miasma of the intersection of the politics of the body, gender identity and of cultural norms. To that end, the article analyzes the hegemonic secular construction of queerness as a modality in which the characters' freedom from norms and morals' becomes a regulatory framework for the ideal queer, premised on a liberal idea of freedom. Delving into the theories of attitude change, such as cognitive consistency theories in psychology, it further pinpoints how the protagonist adjusts to emotional changes and accommodates new attitudes.

Keywords: Africa, body, feminism, gender, patriarchy, politics, queer.

INTRODUCTION

There is a variety of definitions of the term 'queer' within the literature realm. It can refer to a broader umbrella category for gender and sexual minorities, and an embracing term of the LGBTIQA (Lesbian, Gay, Biosexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and Asexual) communities. The term can also indicate anything that is non-normative - economic system, political orientation, or theological and cultural tendencies. Indeed, the hegemonic secular construction of queerness in Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* (1999) is a modality in which the characters' freedom from norms and morals' becomes a regulatory framework for the ideal queer, premised on a liberal idea of freedom. As such, liberal stance becomes, in the literary text, the "barometer of choice in the valuation, and ultimately, regulation of queerness." Therefore, in this limited and problematic definition of queerness, individual agency is framed and recognized only when it manifests as resistance to norms, rather than complicity with them, thus equating resistance and agency. Barungi's queer subjects are

recognized as negotiating what it means to be queer in a specific time and space, in a specific culture, and particular cultural constraints.

Within the context of this article, the term queer is then used to indicate any non-normative act and action by the characters in Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* (1999). Furthermore, a number of contemporary discourses suggest that *queerphobia* is characteristic of the novelist's Uganda society that is intrinsically hostile, antagonistic, and oppressive to women who are involved in non-normative practices and beliefs against the bastion of sexual freedom, gender equity, women's rights, and democratic cultures. A number of critical theorists like Johan Galtung (1969) have pointed out the contradictions inherent in such triumphalist perspectives, including blindness to the complex forms of structural violence in the forms of inequality, discrimination, and gender injustice pervading many African contexts. More

especially, such kinds of essentialist African perspectives render invisible the lives, views, and realities of queer women, and their complex relationships to patriarchy in different contexts. These complex intersections of power centre the experiences of an elite group (culture-promoters) and impose their ordering and manifestations of queerness on 'non-normative' bodies (culture-rebels) in constrictive and exclusionary ways. Barungi's approaches to queerness adopt a paradigmatic shift framed around questioning, subverting, and examining men's dominance over women, and deconstructing some long-time socio-cultural practices that constitute, according to her, hindrances to her female characters' self-actualization, power expression, and happiness. It is in this context that Ugandan novelist has written *Cassandra* (1999) in which she features an independent-minded, self-confident, and ambitious woman who subverts the subservient role designed to her by the patriarchal spectrum, but ends up having all her power subdued by love, making her adopt new attitudinal changes, going from eccentricity to uneccentricity.

In so doing, the author displays in her literary text the politics of queerness whose ontology and epistemology are disrupted when female queer subjects of the likes of Cassandra, 'come out.' She subverts the hegemonic patriarchal formations that organize sexuality and sexual performances. She is not the only character to challenge her state of dominated subject; other characters are also engaged in the fight for gender transformation, as an expression of the heterogeneity of queerness. Important to the recognition of heterogeneity is to localize, situate, and analyze specific realities and perspectives offered by diverse groups of queer subjects. As Puar suggests, such contextually sensitive approaches facilitate more inclusive conceptions of queerness that reflect on complexity, contestation, resistance, co-option, negotiation, and the self-articulation of Barungi's queer subjects in their own specific social and cultural milieu.

Cassandra, a name which means *the one who helps men* (Heems 2019, 32), challenges heteronormativity and engages the reader in a struggle, whose trajectory aims at dismantling the *queerphobic* patriarchal structure and calling for gender-based reflections on the lives of African women. The queer gender subjectivities approached in a Ugandan society is still stuck to traditional beliefs, practices, and communal being and belonging to the 'don't do' position for those who find themselves shackled in the miasma of the intersection of the politics of the body, gender identity and of cultural norms. Consequently, the article analyzes the politics of the female body and the feminist philosophical outlook, and the protagonist's adjustment to emotional changes and accommodation of new attitudes as an expression of the theories of attitude change, such as cognitive consistency theories in psychology.

I. The Politics of the Body and the Feminist Philosophical Outlook: Locating Social Stereotypes and Stereotyping

There is value in black women sharing their ideas, political activism, and experiences (Andrade 2000, 45). African bodies as

sites in which social constructions of differences are mapped onto human being constitute shared experiences. Therefore, subjecting the body to systemic regimes such as social and cultural regulations is a method of ensuring that bodies will behave socially and politically accepted manners. According to some feminist scholars, the body is both socially shaped and colonized (Brownmiller 1975, 272). The politics of the body conceives of the body itself as politically inscribed and shaped by practices of containment and control. Its location within intellectual history begins with Karl Max before being popularized by the French philosopher Michael Foucault (1977) who looks at it as a central point to analyze the shape of power. Therefore, any forms of gender-centered formations and sexuality-types other than those inscribed within the patriarchal institution are deemed deviant and become then inherently political. In many African societies, it is defined within that framing and its cultivation is essential to determine how one will behave in society (Jonhson 1989, 6).

In accordance with French philosopher Michel Foucault, *bodies* are directly situated within a political field and power relations maintain a direct hold on the body. The latter has been historically disciplined and has been the basis for many essentialist claims (Zerilli 1991, 2). Moreover, examining the body helps to understand how it provides the protagonist-eponymous character, Cassandra, with a mode of subjectivity, the social conditioning and normalizing that incorrectly assume a stable nature of identity and power relations in which marriage, as a social institution, is secondary:

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 who look just fine to me, happier than some of the married women I know, as a matter of fact [...]. There are many 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 Mama; 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 [...] (Barungi 1999, 124-125).

Cassandra's subversive words before her mother, Mrs. Mutano, prove that she is ready to engage in a fight against her society with its traditional practices and beliefs, which, according to her, are outdated and belong to the old ages. This leads her to now theorize marriage as an unnecessary institution for women of her generation known as *modern* and *feminist* women. She then adopts an anti-conformist stand that appears in the dual face-off as a narrative device (Sene, 2022, 60). In fact, Barungi's conception of the comprehensive acceptance and embrace of queerness and queer identity within the patriarchal spectrum stems from her female protagonist's struggle for a societal ideal marked by free actions and free will. Consequently, the reader notes in her interaction with her mother and other characters a counter-hegemonic bodily discourse against the reduction of her agency. She strives, as an active subject and not an object, to refuse her body to be

marginalized, policed within the marriage institution, and confounded to the dominant discourse by opposing prevailing ideologies that have marked the body with meaning since “*single women are no longer looked upon by society with pity, at best, and s misfits, at worst. Quite a number of them are, in fact, happy, and living meaningful lives*” (Barungi 1999, 125). The whole idea for Cassandra’s move is to challenge the idea that women can only find wholeness and completion in the hands of men.

The novel bears witness to a challenge to a social system that still wants to let sexual subjugation be swept under the carpet. This is to remind the reader of the strength and vision from long traditions of feminist resistance against patriarchal sexual hegemony and heteronormative intolerance (McFadden 2003, 6). Barungi places her discourse within the feminism spectrum of resistance against women’s traumatic experiences of power relation and sexual dependence. Indeed, the Ugandan novelist refers to two modes of political expression, one that is literary (authorship) and another one that is non-literary (activism). This is black women’s political expression that is in the public sphere, political expression that articulates their own subjectivity. In so doing, Barungi engages Cassandra, who is at the same time an editor, then a writer, to transcend those that simply reinforce their silence, objectification, and absence. In making her an editor, the author seeks to follow the tradition of feminist scholars such as Pumla Gqola, Patricia Hill Collins, Judith Butler, Bell Hooks, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Ousseina Alidou, Hassana Alidou, and others. The novelist puts her female protagonist in a situation in which she demonstrates the value and courage of not alienating the self from [our] politics, positionalities, families, and communities. The aim is to develop a woman’s voice in writing in order to produce credible intellectual work (Hill Collins 2000, viii) Barungi features as an activist, a feminist political figure who is the voice-bearer of all African women victims of the patriarchal institution along with its heteronormative standards. Eroticism becomes then the means by which this resistance is expressed. To operationalize this mode of expression, Cassandra steps out of cage and dictates her own political sexual discourse and action in a move to perpetrate a long lineage and tradition of black women doing the work of dismantling patriarchy and sexual dependence culture. Like Judith Butler (2000), Cassandra speaks to the need for moving past reductive discourses around feminist aims and actions, and the importance of listening to, reading, and disseminating what feminists and feminism movement have to say (Butler 2000, 2).

Moreover, Barungi’s novel, *Cassandra* (1999), recalls that the female and male bodies are set in hierarchized dichotomies that embody masculine/feminine, mind/body, heterosexual/non-heterosexual, married/unmarried bodies despite the instability of public/private borders. In most African societies, women and girls are taught that their bodies are dirty, nasty, smelly, disgusting, corrupting, imperfect, ugly, and volatile harbingers of disease and immorality (McFadden 2003, 5). Cassandra refuses to go by that dichotomized and oppressive-tendency way of looking at the female body. She defies this cultural normality as a way of shaking off the shackles of patriarchal sexual servitude and of displaying new horizons of feeling and being. In fact, issues associated with

the body, such as pregnancy, motherhood, clothing style, and gender roles, or sexual harassment, were not traditionally seen as political. They were considered to be outside of literature. Bodies are the core of the political and cultural order to mark status and power. Many post-colonial African societies segregate access to political power, leadership, domestic work, and intimate relationship based on the sex and ethnic group of the bodies they organize. Consequently, the characters’ political, social, and cultural worlds in Barungi’s novel, *Cassandra* (1999), are organized to reflect the habitual and legal patterns enshrined in society’s standards as normalized within the patriarchal system that defines who should and should not have sex, who one can or cannot have sex with. In so doing, the corridors of power are structured to tally with the associated characteristics of male, heterosexual bodies of dominant gender and ethnic groups. Conformity then requires assimilation to the norms associated with power bodies: women must get married, women must be mothers, women must be married if they are to have sexual intercourses, women must live under the umbrella of men, etc.

The act of breaking the silence echoes Audre Lorde (1984)’s argument according to which “*society has set some does and don’ts for women, which subjugate them and jeopardize their maneuvering power insofar as cultural laws assume and restrict relations of intimacy and the structure of families according to the sex, race, and ethnic groups of bodies*” (Lorde 1984, 40). Culture polices the boundaries of approved sexual relations, as deviations from normative heterosexuality, gender hierarchies, and approved modes of masculinity and femininity. From then on, Barungi concepts of the female characters’ bodies as powerful symbols and sources of social power and privilege on the one hand and subordination and oppression on the other. The author’s mapping out of power relation in body structure shows how theories about bodies have experienced a postmodern turn to language and then back again to theorizing materiality and embodiment. Looking at heteronormality and sexuality through her eponymous-protagonist character, Cassandra, permits to interrogate the concept of sexuality as a category of literary analysis and a form of power. Though sexuality is closely related to the question of the body, it is seemingly private, even apolitical matter but in reality is fiercely regulated by social practices, beliefs, and discourses, serving to uphold the dominance of patriarchy through heteronormativity.

Through *Cassandra*, Barungi points to the amount of power that it takes to uphold the heterosexual matrix and its attendant assumption, for example about sexual freedom though out-of-wedlock-sex and the family. The Ugandan author’s description of Cassandra’s sexual attitude related to gendered bodies and norms. Among them are included the violence, reproductive rights, and control which have central tools for society in governing and gendering bodies and upholding norms about appropriated femininities and masculinities. Indeed, Barungi constructs a political sociology of women’s bodies around issues like love, sexual freedom, sexual violence, gender, motherhood, maternity, and discourses. Violence, as Galtung states:

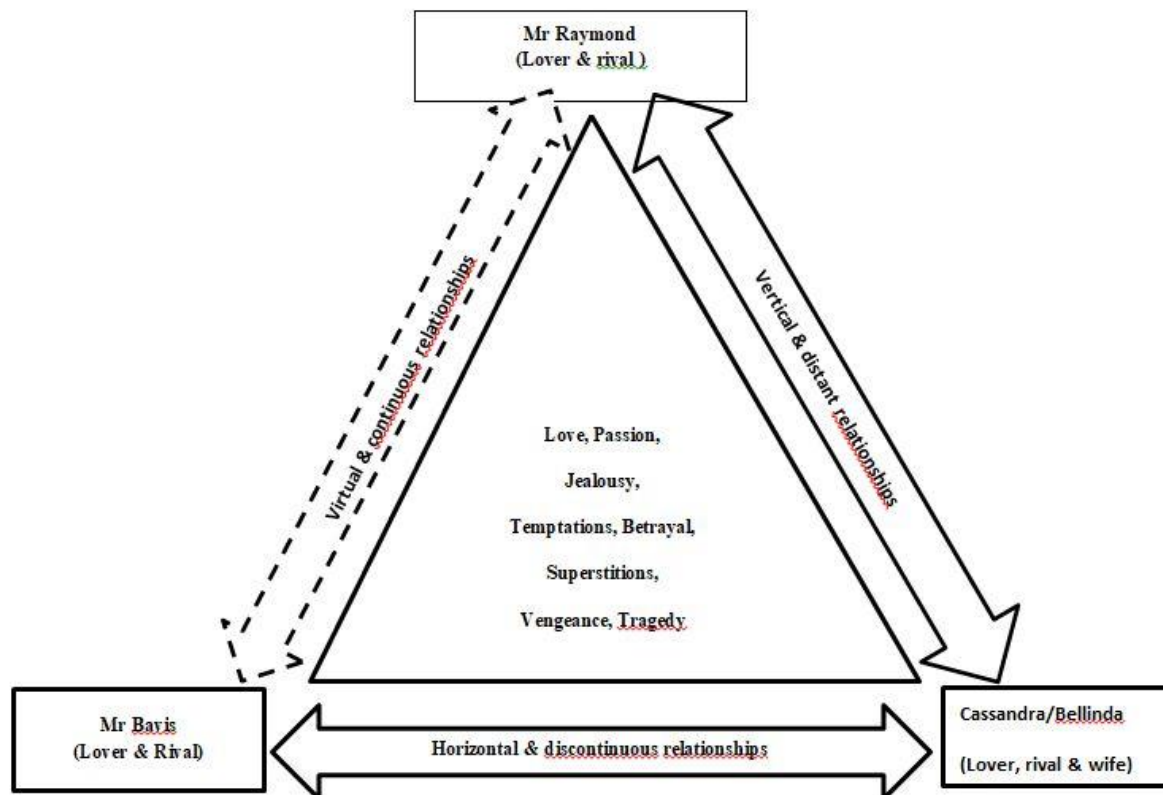
is here defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have

been and what is. The writer then resorts to soft violence to draw the reader's attention to the distance between the potential and the actual, and that, which impedes the decrease of this distance (Galtung 1969, 168).

Like Galtung, Barungi creates a typology of different categories of violence (direct, structural, and cultural) which characters like Cassandra, Bavis, Raymond, Bellinda undergo. Cassandra is aware of structural violence to be built into the system of the patriarchy institution that allows the violence not to have a perpetrator, as one would easily witness with direct violence. The structural nature of this type shows an *"unequal power and consequently as unequal life chance"* (Galtung 1969, 171). Moreover, through Cassandra, Barundi's feminist outlook foregrounds the imperative of cultivating social relations based on the vision of *'positive peace,'* rather than on violence, which she conceives of as both the absence of direct physical and indirect structural violence. The *'positive peace'* she pleads for can be embodied through the establishment of an ethics of social justice, facilitated through *"condition(s) of an egalitarian distribution of opportunities, of power and resource"* (Galtung 1969, 183). Barungi is far from ignoring the existence of spaces where queer women and men like, respectively, Cassandra and Raymond, can live with commitment to sexual justice and inclusivity. The social and morality norms that shape the former's political attitudes highlight the impact of body-centered

considerations with love as a pretext. As the author illustrates it, feeling of disgust and rejection toward those having sex out of wedlock like Cassandra, Raymond, Bellinga, Bavis, and Horace, are informed by society's favoring sex as a characteristic of bodies. This is done in such a way that marginalizes other [unmarried] bodies Cassandra's feminist voice contest imperial feminist narratives that center the experiences of White western feminists as normative and universal while framing African cultures as singularly oppressive to women.

The discussion between Cassandra and Raymond on the issue of gender inequality epitomizes the idea of women's body as a 'site of proprietorship' in what she calls African-oriented laws. She furthermore adds that *"I doubt whether you'd be happier with African-oriented laws"* (Barungi 1999, 120) and Raymond responding that *"don't forget that according to African traditions, a woman's no better than a chattel, bought and paid for. The customary laws we have don't favor the woman because they are more ancient than the imported laws, having been made to suit the society as was then"* (Barungi 1999, 120). This sex-relationship idea is reflected in the triangular love and rivalry linkage between Cassandra, Raymond, Bellinga, Bavis as illustrated by the graphic (Thiam 2012, 161) below about the significant role the sex-body plays in each character's relationship with the other as the story unfolds to a denouement process.



1. The significant role the sex-body plays in the triangular relationship between Raymond, Bavis, and Cassandra/Bellinda.

In fact, women's first-person perspectives on their own sexuality have historically played only a marginal role in the creation of

socially endorsed sexual meanings. Yet, these shared meanings have a profound influence on how individuals like Cassandra make

sense of their bodily experiences in sexual situations. It is in that context that Merleau-Ponty articulates in various passages of his *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002), the special relationship between the person's body and their ability to understand the surrounding world to feel at home in it. He argues that "*my body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension'*" (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 273). For him, "*to understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance – and the body is our anchorage in a world*" (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 167). Cassandra, Raymond, Bavis, and Bellinda have adopted Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body as the strange object through which they can consequently '*be at home in*' the world, they live in, '*understand*' it and find significance in it" (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 167). Here, the four characters see their bodies as their primary home and it is only through them as their anchorage and "*home base*" that the surrounding world becomes known and familiar to them.

Actually, for Cassandra, two things are important here: first, she experiences the world always and unconditionally from the perspective of her own body - all her experiences have the body as their necessary starting point. Second, the body is the instrument through which she not only perceives the world but also understands it and makes sense of it in the first place. This basic bodily understanding is not limited to rational cognitive abilities but forms the foundation for her orientation in the world. It relates to how she makes sense of her physical and mental surroundings in general and how her consciousness constantly organizes its environment into meaningful units. Through Cassandra, the reader realizes that in Barungi's literary text even if there are many characters who are *queerphobic*, patriarchist, and sexist, the late Horace is an exception. Sorely lacking in such essentializing *genderphobic* approaches are more nuanced and carefully located analyses of specific contexts, discourses, and voices within a plural and multi-dimensional context. To go counter these simplistic binaries and their political imbrications, Barungi tallies her approach with that of Jasbir K. Puar (2007) in her exploration of varying modalities of queer identity outside of what she defines as "*the queer as regulatory formation*" (Puar 2007, 12). Therefore, her featuring of culture-based violence against women makes senses of varied terrains and uncovers dubious discourses and paradoxical allegiances, which she contextualizes and frames within the patriarchy and heteronormativity powerful coalition. Through Cassandra and Bellinda, Raymond's wife, she explores how feminism can be caricatured and vilified at both end of the political and social spectrum insofar as African and postcolonial feminisms are now faced with complex problems in areas where gender often comes second to other political and social priorities.

II. Crafting a Power Negotiation Paradigm: Adjusting to Emotional Changes and Accommodating New Attitudes

Power relations are highly dynamic, nuanced, and contextual. That is why in Violet Barungi's *Cassandra* (1999), power is not manifested in a static form, and, as such, attitudes that include resistance and then change are obvious. In this literary narrative, the body is a site where power is both contested and negotiated due to the fluidity of privilege and marginalization. In so doing, the Ugandan author is notably contributing to the global efforts of African and diasporic women to collectively and accurately write about what it means to be and to become a woman in African contexts, representing her female protagonist's lived experiences. Cassandra is not only overcome by her environment but rather thrives because of defining self within it. Barungi exposes her to challenge the patriarchal standards in society where she believes to be confined to marginality. What is striking in the narrative is the author's resort to the practice of social psychological theories of attitude formation and change. Attitude change is achieved when individuals experience feelings of uneasiness or guilt due to cognitive dissonance, and actively reduce the dissonance through changing their attitude, beliefs, or behavior relating in order to achieve consistency with the inconsistent cognitions. In the case of the novel's eponymous-character, Cassandra, there is discontinuity in her practice of changing gender behaviors and relationships in her society. Therefore, she seeks consistency among her attitudes and behaviors towards other people. Her inconsistencies have arisen between her related beliefs, her bits of knowledge and evaluation about her attitudes and behaviors in society but also her relationships with the members of her community, her family, her colleagues, and men. This aims at reconciling her divergent attitudes and aligning her attitudes and behaviors so that she can appear more rational and consistent. As Sene has argued:

it is in the world of pleasure and temptations that the rebellious girl will lose the main meaning of her fight for freedom and the restoration of female dignity. In Cassandra and Raymond's one-flesh union, passion prevails over morality and makes their love and love-making bear the stamp of ofnfiction and adultery. Cassandra's boundless attachment to Raymond leads her to be more conciliatory and consensual (Sene 2022, 62).

Faced with inconsistency, the writer uses inciting actions driven by forces to return her to an equilibrium and to a reality far from imaginations and imaginaries. She has altered her attitudes and behaviors by developing a rationalization for the discrepancy. Being aware of the impact of Western modernity on her daughter's mind, Cassandra's mother, diplomatically warns her into endorsing society's *dos* and *don'ts* despite its flaws:

You know, Cassandra, I sometimes despair of you, Truly I do with your lofty view 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 (Barungi 1999, 150).

Though the mother's pessimistic view expresses the in-depth of the long tradition of male domination, Barungi evidences how important are that attitude change processes in which Cassandra

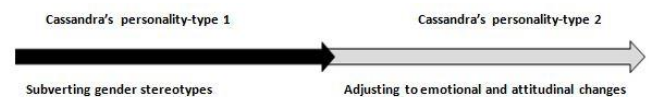
has embarked on after her failure to change her society's behaviors towards women. Indeed, the Ugandan novelist provides an empirical foundation for the investigation of persuasion as a clinical treatment strategy. To this end, she makes her then non-conformist protagonist recall her mother's warning when discussing her love relationship with Raymond, saying that "*he already has a family from which you'll always feel be excluded.*" Despite that, she confidently thought that the knowledge of her coming baby, their baby, would provide that special link now missing to make her harmony complete. These are important approaches to Cassandra's psychotherapy for attitude development and change. The writer's objective is to provide the reader with a new type of female figure who should be attentive in considering the nature and importance of persuasion in a struggle for transformative actions.

For Barungi, in a feminism struggle and practices in African contexts, engaging in attitude change processes becomes fundamental. That is one of the reasons why she has not featured a static female protagonist, but a dynamic one as a way of making her readjust to her feminist perspective and fighting strategy to reach the targeted social changes. In so doing, she is engaged in the construction of another portrayal of womanhood and femaleness, thus breaking ground to feminist discourses that A. D. Makosso perceives "*as the proliferation of women-centered texts in recent African literature as a means by which feminist writers intend to correct the ambivalence in African gender relationships*" (Makosso 2018, 208). Barungi depicts Cassandra in an all-rounded perspective as a female character sourcing from her lived experiences to draw her society's attention to gender realities as she rethinks, readjusts, and readapts African feminist discourses and practices. This is visible when the writer uncovers the relationship between social cause and effect as she enables her female feminist protagonist to perceive reality beyond the words and principles. In that perspective, Virginia Woolf has echoed the ambivalence in gender relationships, inscribing women's freedom of intuitive sympathy in a process of subverting dualistic systems of thinking and acting inherent in patriarchal ideology. That stance matches Simone de Beauvoir's, according to which gender has nothing to do with one's sex and it is a social construct since one is not born, but rather becomes a woman (quoted in Charles E. Bressler 2011, 160).

Furthermore, Cassandra has to show that she does not have to be only praised for her splendor beauty and reduced to her simplest expression of decorative flower in the lives of Raymond and Bavis. She wants, instead, to demonstrate her capacity to meet new social challenges for a tangible self-accomplishment through first her bodily expression, as a way of feeling home in it, and second her position in society. However, to bring gender transformative actions and knowing that she lives in a more demanding society, Cassandra has to readjust herself and readapt her new attitudes. Consequently, she now favors harmonious coexistence for the sake of maintaining stability in her community and seeks to project the image of '*a new woman*', who is trying to find new horizons of self-esteem and liberation by moving from a non-conformist attitude to a conformist one:

For a long time she had known the kind of relationship, she had let herself into. But she had not wanted to face reality. Now reality had caught up with her. So why didn't she call it quits and go? But she simply couldn't contemplate a life without Raymond, especially now, when her condition made her more vulnerable and in need of his reassurance. She also still hoped that the knowledge of their coming baby once in his possession, would effect the desired change in him, and bridge the gap that was daily growing wide between them (Barungi 1999, 165).

Delving into balance theory, Barungi provides the basic model of balance for her female protagonist. She makes her develop consistency in her judgment of people and feelings that link her relationships with the other characters in the novel. This is how she manages to find balance between Raymond and Bavis. The author resorts to characterization, language, and style to redirect attention to an alternative feminist stylistic approach that develops a new model of feminism that tallies more with African local realities, needs, and contexts.



2. Cassandra's Evolutionary Personality-Types and Behavioral Changes.

With the author's female protagonist's adjustment and adaptation to emotional and attitudinal changes because of the lived realities, she attempts at theorizing what can be termed as *complementarity feminism*, which promotes the establishment of a non-radical and non-rebellious feminist message. Through her new attitudes, she preaches the complementarity of the sexes. In her feminism progressive trend, she presents a protagonist who goes from the status of a woman-propagandist to that of a double-edged woman who has firstly embraced radicalism to puncture male chauvinism, secondly recreated, and reconstructed the battered image of the African woman with a slight dose of openness and flexibility within societal standards. That is why she decides to embrace society's traditional beliefs and practices of motherhood and womanhood through childbearing and marriage as her mother has once reminded her of that African life's reality that goes beyond feminism politics. Because of the power of love and her society's local realities that require new feminist strategies, which is adapted feminism, Cassandra ends up embracing Barungi's conception of *complementarity feminism* that does not subscribe to the superiority and inferiority of sexes but rather advocates that man and woman should complement each other rather than engage in constant gender conflicts.

Conclusion

The article has brought to light how Uganda author Violet Barungi has addressed in her novel *Cassandra* (1999) queer politics and queer resistance through her female eponymous-character, Cassandra. The latter has embarked on a journey in which she resists what she considers harmful, persistent disparities within the patriarchal ideology. The aim is to promote a system that looks

after everyone, particularly women. Cassandra's queer resistance looks like culturally sustaining, life-enhancing, and structurally transformative practices in gender relations and body perception. The paper has demonstrated how queer resistance is refusing to be singularly defined by action against, but also action for. With the protagonist working for a more inclusive, equitable, and just future in her society in order to reveal and redress unjust power imbalances in institutions and social interactions by looking to her community's collective past and centering the voices that have consistently been pushed to the margins. It has shown how she has subverted the prevailing oppressive dynamics in her society by striving to create all-inclusive shared community spaces. It has further uncovered how the protagonist is negotiating what it means to be queer in a specific time and space, and within cultural constraints such as body politics. How the power of love and society's realities have compelled Cassandra to revise her fighting strategy, readjust herself, and readapt new attitudes for a harmonious coexistence for the sake of maintaining stability in her community by projecting the image of 'a new woman' negotiating her feminine power within Barungi's complementarity feminism structure, have been analyzed. Sourcing from her lived experiences, she rethinks and readapts African feminist discourses and practices by readapting her attitudes and beliefs in her society to achieve gender transformative actions.

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