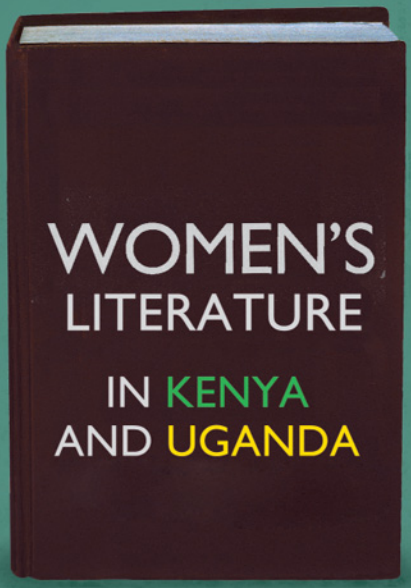

THE TROUBLE WITH MODERNITY

MARIE KRUGER

Women's Literature in Kenya and Uganda

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The Trouble with Modernity

Marie Kruger

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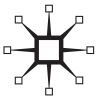

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For the Writers

Ugandan women writers outside the FEMRITE office (November 2, 2002).
Front row, from right to left: Beatrice Lamwaka; Mildred Kiconco Barya; Beverley Nambozo Nsengiyunva; Monica Arac de Nyeko; Jackee Batanda; Middle row: Lilian Tindyebwa; Goretti Kyomuhendo; Ayeta Anne Wangusa; Glaydah Namukasa; Philo Nabweru; Jemeo Nanyonjo; Goretti Bukombi. Last row: Unidentified visitor; Winnie Rukidi; Rose Rwakasisi; Florence Ebila; unidentified FEMRITE member.

Contents

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Introduction

Kenyan and Ugandan (Women's) Literature

The Trouble with Modernity

For nearly a decade, writers' collectives such as Kwani Trust in Kenya and FEMRITE, the Ugandan Women Writers' Association, have dramatically reshaped the East African literary scene. This dramatic shift is evident in the success with which Ugandan women's groups have collaborated with local publishing houses to steadily increase the literary presence of female authors, or in the efforts of *Kwani?* magazine to promote the work of Kenyan scholars and writers, journalists and visual artists in an innovative print format. Though some of the women writers have been honored with prestigious literary awards, their works have not received sustained critical attention.[1] This book provides the long overdue critical inquiry that these writers and their nuanced narrative representations so urgently deserve. I demonstrate throughout my work that Anglophone Kenyan and Ugandan women's writing constitutes a vital, yet often overlooked, part of the cultural and creative exchanges in Eastern Africa, and that it continually extends its focus to include the larger historical and political events in the African Great Lakes region (Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, and Eastern Congo).[2] As new literary networks operate across national spaces and freely exploit the digitized modes of global communication, the works of their writers revisit and significantly expand the recurrent concern with modern institutions, subjectivities, and sexualities in East African writing. In fact, the writers' simultaneous interest in gender dynamics within local communities and in social exchanges between two neighboring East African nations allows for a unique

examination of the relationship between modernity, gender, and the complex cultural and political networks of the region. In my analyses of the texts of prominent and emerging East African authors, I establish a dialogue between several challenging narratives that examines the writers' complex engagement with the discourses of modernity and the extent to which such concerns either traverse national boundaries or remain invested in the politics of particular national and ethnic communities.

The Trouble with Modernity acknowledges the continued popularity of narrative prose in English for Kenyan and Ugandan women writers. FEMRITE publications and magazines feature the fictional narratives and life stories of Ugandan women, while *Kwani?* magazine offers an eclectic diversity of testimonials, travelogues, journalistic reportages, and creative writing. This interest in narrative, as I explain elsewhere in this introduction, not only reflects on the continued relevance of narrative as a medium of social change, especially for the gender mainstreaming programs of Kenyan and Ugandan gender and literary organizations, but also relates to the pivotal role accorded to literacy in English and the role of the educated writer in the discourses and practices of modernity. Other studies will have to address how East African authors writing in different genres and in languages other than English have contributed to the understanding of modernity. Certainly, the efforts of FEMRITE to recuperate the oral testimonies of Ugandan women in Acholi and Langi, the linguistic diversity in *Kwani?* as well as the Kiswahili texts of Tanzanian writers deserve further scholarly attention.[3] My study advances this ongoing interdisciplinary debate by mapping the unique visions of the alternatively modern in Kenyan and Ugandan women's narrative prose.[4]

Officially launched in May 1996, the Ugandan women writers' organization FEMRITE developed from an initiative by Mary Okurut. At the time, Okurut lectured in the Department of Literature at Makerere University; since then she joined President Museveni's cabinet, first as the president's press secretary, then as a member of parliament. In the mid–1990s, Okurut began to lobby a group of like-minded women—aspiring and established writers of fiction, journalists, and university lecturers—to establish an institutional outlet for the promotion of women's literature. One of the group's earliest supporters, Monica Chibita, suggested the name FEMRITE to simultaneously signal the gender (fem) and professional identity (w/rite) of its members. FEMRITE is indeed "Mary's Dream," as Hilda Rutagonya, the current coordinator of the organization, explains in a 2006 publication celebrating the group's achievements.[5]

Through the persistent efforts of Okurut and others, FEMRITE was able to secure funding from the nongovernmental Dutch organization Hivos, and, in 1997, the organization established its office in Kamwokya, a neighborhood in Kampala in close proximity to Makerere University.[6] The small house has since transformed into a hospitable space for emerging writers, a resource center and publication office, a meeting place for the weekly book club, and the monthly assembly of the executive committee.[7] Although FEMRITE has struggled over the years to obtain adequate funding, the organization has certainly made significant progress toward achieving its objectives. The dramatic increase in women's literature, the national and international reputation of FEMRITE writers, and the organization's strong support for literacy campaigns illustrate its ability "to create an awareness about Ugandan women's writings; promote a culture of reading and writing in Uganda; help women writers improve their skills; network and publish creative works by Ugandan women; as well as serve as a resource and training centre."[8] Interestingly, this summary of the group's concerns was provided by one of FEMRITE's original members, Florence Ebila, in an article titled "Ugandan Women Watering the Literary Desert." The trope of the literary desert has become commonplace in African literary criticism since 1965, when Taban lo Liyong lamented the inability of Eastern African countries to provide fertile ground for creative writing. For women writers, however, lo Liyong's famous (and often criticized) assessment acquires an added urgency.[9] By the early 1990s, only four Ugandan women writers (Rose Mboya, Elvania Zirimu, Jane Bakaluba, and Barbara Kimenye) had gained national prominence, while the country's major press, Fountain Publishers, had recently launched the work of Mary Okurut, Lillian Tindyebwa, and Goretti Kyomuhendo, three emerging female authors and prominent FEMRITE members. Though women continue to be underrepresented among Ugandan writers, FEMRITE has had a dramatic impact on promoting "greater equity in literary production."[10] By March 2010, the group's small publishing outlet had released 21 print publications, from novels, poetry, and short story anthologies to several collections of women's life stories, which address such controversial social topics as HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, and military conflict.[11]

FEMRITE's programs and support networks have shaped the careers of young female writers such as Monica Arac de Nyeko, Glaydah Namukasa, Jackee Batanda, and Mildred Kiconco, many of who have won prestigious literary awards, while some of them also contribute to the success of *Kwani*? magazine. In the meantime, Doreen

Baingana and Goretti Kyomuhendo have become the internationally recognized faces of Ugandan women's writing. All of these writers recognize FEMRITE as a major influence on their professional and personal development.[12] The group's objective to operate as a general agent of social change, however, extends beyond providing resources for individual writers. The late Hope Keshubi, whose work will be discussed in Chapter 4, emphasizes FEMRITE's aim to transform Ugandan civic society and "[to] build confidence and a good image of women as a way of changing society's negative attitudes towards women."[13] To this effect, FEMRITE's magazine, *New Era*, was conceived as a "social magazine" that covered a wide variety of social and literary topics, including the controversial issues of domestic and sexual violence, and that gave ample opportunity to FEMRITE members to showcase their journalistic and creative writing. After a six-year run, the magazine ceased publication in 2002 and was briefly replaced by the biannually published *Worldwrite* (2002–5), which focused primarily on FEMRITE's professional activities and the creative work of its members. Both magazines intended to educate readers on the concerns of Ugandan women and the difficult process of writing and publishing in a country with few publishing venues. The magazines, in particular, and FEMRITE, in general, thus operate within the larger social context of the late 1990s when the Ugandan women's movement stressed the need for gender sensitization programs.[14]

These efforts are reflected in neighboring Kenya where nongovernmental organizations such as the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD) rely on creative literature to sensitize local populations to the disadvantaged position of girls and women in a patriarchal society.[15] Officially launched in 1996, the CCGD intends to contribute to the development of democratic and gender-responsive cultural practices and institutions in Kenya through its extensive publication program, workshops, and educational campaigns. The center frequently collaborates with the local chapter of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) to lobby for the inclusion of women in national politics, to increase access to educational and professional opportunities for girls and women, and to encourage the critical interrogation of gender identities and behavior. The concern with the social construction of gender is shared by several Kenyan gender and literary organizations. Studies such as *The Road to Empowerment* (1994), *Delusion: Essays on Social Construction of Gender* (1994), and *Contesting Social Death: Essays on Gender and Culture* (1997) examine how cultural ideologies shape gender roles and relations and how this normative framework is mediated through

social, political, and literary discourses. The case studies included in these edited volumes devote particular attention to social and literary discourses that capitalize on "the authority of tradition" to sanction established cultural norms. As the authors expose the ideological scripts and political interests informing gender identities, they advocate for a "gender sensitization program" that will enable women (and men) to understand and modify the social performance of gender.[16]

In these publications, oral and written literature is viewed as playing a vital role in consolidating or transforming dominant gender scripts. Benjamin Odhoji, for example, summarizes his research on Luo orature by emphasizing that "[f]olktales . . . operated in the field community not just as genres of entertainment, but also as ideological tools which reflect, justify and enhance sex differential patterns of the male dominated economic base" (57). In *Contesting Social Death*, a study of the Kenyan Oral Literature Association (KOLA), he and other scholars examine how patriarchal norms are integrated into a culture's narrative traditions and the extent to which such literary idioms can be contested and changed. KOLA shares this interest in the relationship between narrative and cultural identity, and in creative writing as a tool for social change, with other Kenyan gender and literary organizations, including the now-defunct association of Kenyan women writers, FEMART-Kenya. With the support of the prominent Kenyan writer and publisher Asenath Odaga, FEMART-Kenya published a literary magazine, proceedings from a conference on Kenyan women's literature, as well as several anthologies of short stories. The titles of these publications—*Moving to the Centre* and *The Survivors*—already demonstrate the group's objective to employ women's writing, and especially narrative prose, to address the gender inequities in Kenyan society.

If the turn toward multiparty politics in 1992 aided the Kenyan women's movement, then the overthrow of the Obote regime by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) signaled a similar political change in Uganda. Susan Kiguli and Florence Ebila credit "the National Resistance Movement's general philosophy of affirmative action for women and the acknowledgement of women's participation in the guerilla war" for creating the social climate in which women's organizations could thrive.[17] That these changes, at best, are only a first step toward gender equity is demonstrated in the backlash against women writers whose explicit representations of sexual violence have been denounced as pornographic. The controversy surrounding Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Secrets No More*—a novel that recounts the rape of women during the Rwandan genocide and also in

the seemingly protected space of domestic relations—serves as a poignant example of how easily women writers are shamed into silence.[18] Kiguli and Kyomuhendo both emphasize that the need to conform to social expectations encourages a pervasive form of self-censorship that prevents women from claiming writing as a legitimate profession. To counteract these socially imposed interventions, FEMRITE engages in a host of activities, from weekly book clubs and writers' workshops to radio and television programs, to provide aspiring writers with opportunities for training and networking.[19] In its effort to promote a culture of reading and writing in Uganda, FEMRITE continues to collaborate with educational institutions and teachers, with representatives of the media and the book industry, and with policy makers and academics. "To instill the value of literature and reading amongst children and students in various parts of the country," FEMRITE has instituted children's reading festivals at several Ugandan primary and secondary schools.[20] In the organization's activities and the statements of its members, literature—and literacy in general—are continuously emphasized "as tools for national development," and women writers are perceived as making a substantial contribution in this realm.[21]

Every year, FEMRITE hosts a week of literary activities during which members have an opportunity to network with internationally renowned African writers and critics. Three of these events invited discussions on the Ugandan publishing industry (2001), the role of literature in sustaining a reading culture (2005), and "writing the unfamiliar story" of socially marginalized populations (2008). The presence of Keresia Chateuka from the Zimbabwean women writers' organization at the 2008 Week of Literary Activities, and a transnational workshop for African women writers later the same year, both demonstrate FEMRITE's commitment to work together with "writers from across the continent to create a sense of belonging for African women writers' groups."[22] Though the organization might still fall short of its intention to stage a literary revolution in Uganda, its activities have effectively promoted local writers in the hope that these writers contribute to the development of a gender-sensitive national culture and engage in sustained dialogue with African and diasporic writers.[23]

These overlapping local, national, and regional agendas are shared by Kwani Trust, "a Nairobi-based literary network committed to the growth of the region's creative industry through publishing and distributing contemporary African Literature."[24] Founded in 2003 by the Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina, Kwani Trust—not unlike FEMRITE—profited from the vision of its founder; the support of a

group of Kenyan writers, filmmakers, and journalists; and the significant sociopolitical changes after 1992, when the country transitioned toward multiparty politics. Associated with the success of the literary collective—and especially the international reputation of its journal *Kwani?*—are artists such as the late Wahome Mutahi, Judy Kibinge, Yvonne Owuor, Parselelo Kantai, and Muthoni Garland, who, in 2007, established Storymoja, a further publishing venue for Kenyan creative and noncreative writing.[25] Prominent Ugandan writers like Doreen Baingana, David Kaiza, and Kalundi Serumaga are actively involved in Kwani Trust, as is Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, a well-known Kenyan writer of Anglo-European origin.

With its programmatic name *Kwani?*—which translates into English as "so what?"—this group of writers pursues an ambitious project of supporting creative expressions outside of the public spaces "defined by the church, the state, the media and universities."[26] Their dislike of official narratives and institutions is reflected in Wainaina's terse assessment of academics as "unwanted gatekeepers" who operate within an elitist context that remains hostile to popular culture.[27] Instead, Kwani Trust intends to promote a new generation of fiction and nonfiction writers who "are generally interested in expressing themselves in *a more modern way* that questions political, social and economic structures" (emphasis added).[28] In the five volumes of *Kwani?* published to date, these "more modern ways" are synonymous with popular modes of expression, with Internet-based forms of communication such as email and text messages, and with linguistic innovations like Sheng, the mix of Kiswahili and English that is popular among Kenyan youths.[29] As *Kwani?* aims to reflect contemporary sociocultural and linguistic practices in Kenya—"the language of the Kenyan streets" rather than the clichéd talk of politicians and academics—its editors Kahora and Wainaina celebrated the emergence of a new national identity driven by the versatile creativity of younger Kenyans.[30] The events following the presidential elections in December 2007, however, were soon to demonstrate that frustrated and poor Kenyan youth are not impervious to ruthless political manipulation and that national identity easily fractured along ethnic lines. I will return to these events and their impact on Kenyan writing and society shortly. For now, it is important to note that, even as *Kwani?* models itself on other African nonacademic journals committed to youth culture (*Chimurenga*) and narrative diversity (*Transition*), it shares the concern of FEMRITE's more conservatively presented magazines when advocating for the transformative impact of writing and writers on civic society and political culture.[31]

To promote East African writers and, in general, employ creative and nonfictional writing to address socioeconomic inequities and foreground the situation of marginalized populations, Kwani Trust engages in several activities similar to FEMRITE's programs. Short story and poetry competitions that encourage aspiring writers to reflect on "the Kenya they live in" (2009) or the meaning of masculinity (2007), monthly spoken-word performances and literary salons—in addition to an annual literature festival featuring book readings, discussion forums, and exhibitions—have consolidated the group's impact on the Kenyan popular art scene. Kwani Trust's publication program now includes not only a literary magazine of international repute but also a series of shorter, more affordable monographs, including Wainaina's and Owuor's award-winning short stories and (auto)biographical accounts of prominent Kenyans like David Sadera Munyakei, who, in 1992, exposed high-level corruption within the Kenyan government.

While FEMRITE aims to cultivate literacy in schools, Kwani Trust examines Kenyan history and urban culture through a variety of digital projects. The *24 Nairobi* project intends to showcase the Kenyan metropolis through the perspective of photographers who claim Nairobi as their home, either by birth or by choice. In contrast to "the narrow lenses and stories of missionaries, career war photographers and aid workers," *24 Nairobi* aims to provide "an alternative, innovative, realistic and professional African perspective" of the Kenyan capital.[32] *Generation Kenya* shares a similar objective when compiling the photographic portraits and biographical narratives of 45 influential Kenyans born since the country's independence in 1963. The intention of the curators is to work toward a visual archive of Kenyan identity that questions Western readings of postcolonial history while also foregrounding the contradictory processes through which ordinary Kenyans transform into publicly recognized figures of success.[33]

This interest in new forms of visual communication is also evident in the multiple editions of *Kwani?* Published annually since 2003, the journal combines the creative writing of Kenyan and, to a lesser extent, Ugandan and other African authors with journalistic and scholarly essays, interviews and biographies, travelogues and personal memoirs. As the journal traverses multiple genres, unafraid to blur the lines between fact and fiction, it addresses such controversial issues as the colonial construction of "settler" and "native" (volume 1), the political manipulation of ethnic identity (volume 4), and the sexual violation of young girls in the seemingly safe space of boarding schools (volume 3). Its generic trespassing includes a fondness for the

visual arts; for photographic narratives and political cartoons; for stories unfolding in the cyberspatial realm of text messages, emails, and blogs; and for a range of Kenyan linguistic idioms that signify on the status and residence of its speakers. From Sheng, the preferred sociolect spoken by Kenyan urban, and often poor, youths, to Engsh, the version of English associated with upper-class young Kenyans, to the ridicule of "Kiongoso," the deceptive talk of government officials, *Kwani?* astutely observes the linguistic stratification of Kenyan society.[34]

Remarkably, these innovative verbal and visual expressions are framed by the repeated return to two significant historical events. The frequent references to the Rwandan genocide in several *Kwani?* volumes are juxtaposed with the iconography of the Kenyan liberation movement, as represented by the silhouettes of dreadlocked men on the cover of the first two editions and the photographs of Dedan Kimathi and other freedom fighters in later issues. What emerges in these historical narratives is a more complicated landscape of national and regional identities, of anticolonial resistance and postcolonial culpability, than the one suggested by the editors' enthusiastic embrace of popular youth culture. Focused on the problems they inherited from the previous generation, *Kwani?* writers are outspoken in their critique of failed nationalism, corruption, and censorship.[35] The violence following the 2007 election in Kenya, though, made it necessary to consider that "national identities suppress and mask other identities that could be potentially explosive if found in the mix of political manipulation, economic deprivation, corruption, limitations of freedoms, and violation of rights."[36]

As frustrated male youths were coached in violence by politicians of both parties, Billy Kahora wonders—in his editorial to the first of two issues of *Kwani?* volume 5 dedicated to the postelection violence—how Kenyanness fractured into a series of sharply divided ethnicities. He asks, "What are our, or will be our defining texts in the light of what happened during those 100 days of 2008?"[37] When the dreaded 100 days of genocidal violence in Rwanda haunted the postelection clashes in Kenya, Kwani writers found themselves in search of explanations, of common ground, and, ultimately, in search of a nation.[38] New civic organizations emerged, such as the Concerned Kenyan Writers Group, to whom the second issue of *Kwani?* volume 5 is dedicated.[39] Yet even these more than 400 pages of eyewitness testimonials, journalistic reportages, travelogues, photographs, and creative writing are prefaced by Kahora's anxious question about the state of Kenyan democracy. Interestingly, it is Mbembe's pessimistic assessment of the African postcolony that shapes Kahora's vision of "the strange carnival

in which a pervasive atmosphere of macabre conviviality binds the potentate and the dominated in a drawn out orgy of violence and death."[40] Can the nation be redeemed if not only an autocratic government but also, more importantly, the educated middle-class writer has failed to prevent systematic human rights violations?[41]

The vision of the writer's social responsibility inevitably leads us back to earlier critical paradigms that, in the postindependence period of the 1960s and 1970s, insisted on the role of the intellectual in building the postcolonial nation. That the educated writer is still expected to invest her skills for "the greater good" is apparent in FEMRITE's support for writing as a tool of national development, in Storymoja's promotion of a reading and writing culture as "patriotic duty," and in Kwani Trust's willingness to contest official power and examine "the country's big, current issues, such as unfair distribution of wealth, land and resources."[42] With the imperative of responsibility comes the fear of failure that speaks to the ambivalent position of the intellectual between political dissidence and bourgeois co-option. Its tainted colonial legacy turns literacy, and the institutions of formal education in general, into a shape-shifting vehicle for national renewal and social divisions. Not surprisingly, these concerns translate into prominent literary themes.

From *Nervous Conditions* to *Weep Not, Child*, the protagonists of African fiction have had to reconcile individual aspirations with the needs of larger social collectives. For women, literacy has always been of particular appeal, for it promised an escape from the confining grasp of poverty and patriarchal domination. The desire for social mobility through education informs the novels of FEMRITE writers, from Barungi's *Cassandra* and Wangusa's *Memoirs of a Mother* to Kaberuka's *Silent Patience* and Kyomuhendo's *First Daughter*; it dominates the fiction of established Kenyan writers, beginning with Grace Ogot, Asenath Odaga, Pamela Ngurukie, and Margaret Ogola; and it resurfaces in the work of new writers (Wairimu Kibugi Gitau and Florence Mbaya).[43] I will further discuss this interplay of gender, culture, and modern institutions in Chapter 2 on "Historical Modernities: Epics of Love and Literacy." As the nation struggles with corruption and violence in the fiction of Margaret Ogola, Jane Kaberuka, and Mary Okurut, what remains of the role of education in shaping a progressive subjectivity and a democratic society?

But it is not only the familiar figure of the intellectual and the crucial role of literacy in colonial and nationalist modernities that provide a better understanding of how Kenyan writers responded to the postelection violence. Equally important are the narratives that

chronicle the construction of ethnic and racial identities in East Africa. In response to Kahora's question as to "[w]hat texts can we turn to for an explanation of the first few weeks of 2008?"[44] Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye pointedly remarks that "the consciousness of violence is present is most Kenyan novels and drama, even where it is not the main theme, but we have often shirked the communal aspects of conflict. After all, what happened in January was neither unprecedented nor unanticipated. What shocked was the scale of it."[45] To the list of works cited by Macgoye, I would add Likimani's examination of Gikuyu identity at the time of the liberation war, Owuor's discussion of the Rwandan genocide, Odaga's and Macgoye's concerns with building a nation out of diverse ethnic identities, as well as the rejection of ethnic stereotypes in the romances of Adalla and Ngurukie.[46] In Ugandan women's fiction, the discourses of race and ethnicity inevitably implicate the dictatorial regimes of Obote and Amin and the protracted civil war in the north. Kyomuhendo's novels on genocide (*Secrets No More*) and civil war (*Waiting*), Kiguli's and Oryema-Lalobo's poetic laments of militarized violence, and the short stories of Monica Arac de Nyeko, Jackie Batanda, and Waltraud Ndagijimana, to name only a few, reflect on the inability or unwillingness of the postcolonial state to protect vulnerable populations. These literary representations are echoed in the life stories of Northern Ugandan women, which are collected in two edited volumes published by FEMRITE.[47] In Chapter 3 on "The Dark Sides of Modernity" in the narrative prose of Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Yvonne Owuor, and Goretti Kyomuhendo, I will therefore examine the extent to which colonial fictions of race and ethnicity haunt postcolonial nations in their struggle for ethically responsible ways of living with "strangers."

Not only, however, in situations of political conflict and war is East African women's literature concerned with violence against women. In their review of patriarchal institutions and practices, the writers often devote special attention to the sexual abuse of women and to the rape and incest suffered by young girls whose guardians fail to protect them. This failure to protect also implicates the lack of sexual education that alienates female protagonists from their bodies and proves especially disastrous in the time of HIV/AIDS. The production of modern sexual bodies is a prominent theme in several anthologies of short stories—as well as in the texts of Florence Genga-Idowu, Shailja Patel, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Rebeka Njau, and Carolyne Adalla—and often serves as a critique of unequal access to knowledge and power. The titles of some anthologies—*The Survivors, Our Secret Lives, Reversed Dreams*—already speak to the disadvantaged

position of women within patriarchal social and political systems.[48] In Uganda, the concern with gendered violence is even more explicitly linked to the advance of a sexually transmitted, and still terminal, disease. The novels of Mary Okurut, Hope Keshubi, Doreen Baingana, Glaydah Namukasa, and Lillian Tindyebwa; the short stories collected in FEMRITE's anthologies; and the life stories published in *I Dare to Say* provide ample testimony to the literary preoccupation with sexuality, gender, and AIDS.[49] As I will explore in Chapter 4, "Mapping Global Modernities: Property and Propriety in the Time of AIDS," the plight of those infected with HIV often translates into a general metaphor for postcolonial anxieties and the failure of the nation to responsibly provide for its citizens. In my analysis of the texts of Carolyne Adalla, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, and Hope Keshubi, I foreground how representations of HIV/AIDS offer a critique of capitalist economies when they link the desire for sex to the seductive appeal and excessive consumption of material goods.

In the age of global capitalism and disease, when literary collectives such as FEMRITE and Kwani Trust freely move between the space of the metropolitan capital and the global modes of digital communication, the nation has not completely lost its significance as a political and symbolic structure. Even as Kenyan and Ugandan writers condemn the failure and corruption of the state, they continue to search for a government and citizens who responsibly negotiate rights and obligations. When Wainaina laments the failure of the writers "[to] separate our reasonableness from the unreason and power games of a cynical political class," and when Kahora emphasizes that Kwani Trust "wants to allow for and start off a debate that enables democracy and creates an economy that everybody can take part in and benefit from," then these visions of social transformation unmistakably revisit the language of modernity.[50] The search for justice seems destined to traverse the familiar territory of order and reason, democracy and prosperity, while fearfully guarding against the state's monopoly on violence and the construction of ethnic others. The writers of *Kwani?* might have more in common with academic debates than they care to admit. In December 2006, at a conference at Moi University (in Eldoret, Kenya), participants discussed how African intellectuals have modified the institutions of modernity to establish independent modes of self-writing and the extent to which these local appropriations of colonial modernity continue in the contemporary period of globalization.[51]

What these debates neglect to consider is how East African women writers have engaged with established representations of gender, race, and modernity in an effort to define their own visions of the

alternatively modern and to recover the emancipatory promises of social reform from the fraudulent practices of the colonial intervention and the often equally ambivalent gender rhetoric of nationalist programs. How do their texts respond to the double erasure of women of color in discourses and practices of modernity? How do they reflect on the antithetical portrayal of African women in both colonial and nationalist rhetoric as either a moral antidote to the corrupting influence of social change or an embodiment of hedonistic impulses that contrast unfavorably with the rationality of men? As their texts suggest new ways of imagining gender, they offer multidimensional, and often ambiguous, literary scenarios that fundamentally rewrite the potentialities of modernity. Each chapter of my book thus expands the critical paradigms of modernity when I interrogate how the selected texts reclaim the modern institutions of church and school (Chapter 2), position gender in the rapidly transforming narratives of ethnic and racial identities (Chapter 3), and reimagine the production of modern sexual bodies in the age of global capitalism and disease (Chapter 4). I will explore these questions within the larger theoretical context of recent discussions of alternative or critical modernities, which have displaced the Western monopoly on modern subjectivity and culture, even as they failed to account for the complex dynamics of gendered experiences. While the next chapter will provide a more comprehensive survey of these interdisciplinary debates, for now, I will offer a definition of the alternatively modern that acknowledges the crucial role of individuals and social groups in the negotiation (and contestation) of modern institutions (church, school, nation), categories (rationality, temporality, subjectivity), and phenomena (migration, ethnicity, sexuality).

Throughout my work, I establish that the understanding of modernity and gender in East African women's literature requires a simultaneous concern with various spatial configurations: with the nation-state and its promise of liberation from colonial legacies, with the transnational exchange of ideas and the displacement of people in Eastern Africa, and with the local cultural practices that determine the intimate details of gender identities and relations.[52] This emphasis on East African cross-cultural encounters, on the collaboration of literary collectives, and on the recurrence of literary themes also shifts attention away from an exclusive preoccupation with the interaction of European and African cultures. The translocal networks of the African Great Lakes region are of particular importance in Chapter 3, when a "Tutsi prince" finds himself displaced across the border to Kenya, when Jewish immigrants seek exile in colonial Kenya, and when Congolese

refugees are trapped in Amin's violent Uganda. At a time when a global disease exhausts the resources of East African nation-states and exploits the prejudices of those overwhelmed by a deadly pandemic, these texts imagine new discourses of rights *and* responsibilities that postcolonial studies can ill afford to ignore. As East African women writers write themselves out of the biased representations of the West and into their own, often equally conflicted narratives, they reveal the strategic silence of the West on the colonial violence that enabled its material progress and epistemological hegemony and its denial of the transcultural encounters through which the modern has always been the product of many rather than the monopoly of one. In the works of Kenyan and Ugandan women writers, modernity emerges as a process of mutual negotiation inside *and* outside the colonial orbit rather than the diffusion of a single cultural formation.

In spite of its prominent place in Western history, modernity has been the subject of a bewildering array of often conflicting narratives, all eagerly aspiring to find a workable definition for the elusive experience that has shaped Western understandings of subjectivity and culture, and of self and other. Shuttling between chaos and order, between the thrill of rebellion and the stifling grip of bureaucratic efficiency, between confident optimism in the opportunities afforded by a constantly changing world and nostalgic longing for the security promised by the relationships of the past, modernity presents itself as a shape-shifting vision that generates ambiguous responses rather than conceptual clarity. If modernity is "[the] characteristic intellectual and social formation of the industrialized world," inspiring conflicting views of hope and fear, then what does it mean for Africans to be modern, forced as they were into the institutional apparatus of colonial modernity while excluded from its epistemological privileges as the West's nonrational other?[53] Does any, even tentative, embrace of modernity amount to the surrender to hegemonic paradigms, or does it suggest the possibilities of the Black Atlantic, of the global modernities and alternative centers of cultural authority only belatedly recognized in the West? Is the debate of African modernities hopelessly "untimely" given the circulation of other spatial and theoretical formations in the humanities (postmodernism) and in the social sciences (globalization)?

Even a cursory review of recent publications in African studies and of the works of African philosophers and literary critics reveals modernity's lasting legacy for the relationship between Western and African cultures, a relationship still trapped in the ideological short circuit that prefers to contrast Western "progress" with African "traditions."[54]

As Victorian myths of the Dark Continent are obsessively recycled in the tropes of "tribal savagery" that haunt *The Last King of Scotland* and the James Bond franchise, it is obvious (yet again) that modernity indeed always requires an "other" and an "elsewhere."[55] While popular representations render old stereotypes palatable for twenty-first-century audiences, academic discourses on modernity have undergone frequent transmutations. In their introduction to an edited volume devoted to *African Modernities*, Deutsch, Probst, and Schmidt chronicle the scholarly debate in African studies that emphasized "modernity as contagion" in the 1930s and 1940s before insisting on "modernity as necessity" in the 1950s and 1960s. However, it is the current emphasis on "modernity as contingency" that has significantly contributed to the understanding of modernity in its culture-specific manifestations.

Since the publication of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), an increasing number of interdisciplinary works have challenged the conceptual monopoly the West believed to have defined securely in its favor. As postcolonial and diasporic studies—such as David Attwell's survey of South African literature (*Rewriting Modernity*, 2005) and Peter Geschiere's anthology *Readings in Modernity in Africa* (2008)—contested modernity's political narratives, the myth of the modern as a singular cultural and historical formation began to shatter, while the crucial role of African cultures in the formation of Western epistemologies finally received attention. Feminist theorists, meanwhile, wondered whether the gender of modernity is indeed white and male, and whether these gendered and racial preferences are expressed in conventional notions of modern subjectivity that link the desire for autonomy and freedom to the need to subjugate the other and the fear of dependence on the feminine.[56] Missing from the theoretical debate, however, is a critical examination of literary representations of modernity that engages with the intersecting narratives of race and gender in specific cultural idioms and locales. My study addresses this significant theoretical blind spot by inquiring how women writers have reinscribed modernity into the cultural fabric of particular geographical sites and, in the process, attempted to situate gender outside not only of colonial but also of African versions of authority.

To locate Kenyan and Ugandan women's literature within a highly contested theoretical terrain, my work is premised on the critical interrogation of the episteme modernity and its equally important conceptual siblings: tradition, postmodernity, and globalization. The next chapter, "Promise and Fraud: The Poetics and Politics of

the Modern," establishes the long overdue dialogue between Western and African philosophers and cultural theorists, which I pursue throughout the subsequent chapters. The work of Kwame Gyekye and Anthony Giddens on modern institutions and social relations of trust (Chapter 2), of Achille Mbembe and Zygmunt Bauman on the capacity of the modern nation-state to target "racial and ethnic strangers" (Chapter 3), and of Sylvia Tamale and Deborah Posel on the production of modern sexuality in an age of globally circulating bodies and commodities (Chapter 4) clearly demonstrates that modernity is "unfinished business." However, it is less Habermas's famous assessment of *die Moderne* as a historical process toward personal and social emancipation based on the emergence of an ethically committed, communicative rationality that signifies the incompletion of the modern for Kenyan and Ugandan novelists. Instead, I maintain that East African women writers perceive "the incompleteness" of modernity in the fraudulent claims of colonial modernity and the failure of the postcolonial nation to adequately provide for its citizens. They remain committed, however, to the promise of social mobility and democratic participation, and of economic prosperity and cultural autonomy. In this interwoven landscape of promise and fraud, I examine the location of modernity through the performance of gender.

In Chapter 2 on "Historical Modernities: Epics of Love and Literacy," I interrogate the interplay of gender, culture, and modern institutions in novels by the Kenyan author Margaret Ogola (*The River and the Source)*, and the Ugandan writers Mary Okurut (*The Invisible Weevil)* and Jane Kaberuka (*Silent Patience*). In the examination of these works, I engage with the theories of the British sociologist Anthony Giddens and the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye, who, even though writing from different cultural and disciplinary locations, share a concern with modernity's institutional and psychological effects when they interrogate how modern institutions have shaped biographical narratives and social relations of trust. Most importantly, Giddens and Gyekye draw our attention to the dialectic between individual agency and social institutions that emerges as the primary concern in the narratives of Kaberuka, Ogola, and Okurut. These novels tend to disassociate the institutions of church and school from their immediate colonial past and instead claim literacy and proficiency in English as highly desirable tools in shaping a progressive subjectivity and society.

As the novels celebrate a bourgeois identity in terms of moral duty, romantic love, and a disciplined work ethic, they, at first, seem to validate the controversial promises of the Enlightenment. Yet the dream

of bourgeois success is carefully balanced with the commitment to an ethos privileging the needs of larger communities. Thus, the texts offer a vision of the alternatively modern that echoes Gyekye's understanding that "the decline and fall of a nation begins in its homes" (293). The prominent role of the educated protagonist and her supportive relatives in these narratives reclaims the family as the pivotal institution through which the reform of the postcolonial nation can be imagined. Driven by the desire for citizenship, sovereignty, and power, the narratives employ the genre of the epic as the opportune narrative template for locating the normativity of the modern present in the East African past.[57] Once these epic narratives transition from the hereditary status of the chiefs to the bourgeois nobility of disciplined citizens, the figure of the widow emerges as the principal site of change and continuity. Are the heroines of Ogola's, Kaberuka's, and Okurut's fiction "liberated" by romance and education and their enticing promise of individual and social progress? Does the ethos of self-advancement encourage female characters to willingly sacrifice their own needs for those of the larger community? In my analyses of the texts, I examine the vision of an alternative modernity that, in its appeal to a desirable moral and social order, persuades female protagonists to accept the logic of sacrifice.

While the novels in Chapter 2 recover the utopia of progress in a morally redeemed modernity, the texts I discuss in Chapter 3, "The Dark Sides of Modernity: Citizens, Strangers, and the Production of Moral Indifference," are unwilling to claim the modern nation as a vehicle for liberation and solidarity. In the narratives of Goretti Kyomuhendo (*Waiting)* from Uganda, and Yvonne Owuor ("Weight of Whispers") and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye (*A Farm Called Kishinev)* from Kenya, modern institutions are only able to produce moral apathy toward those who are marked as "different" and who are therefore excluded from the protection of the state. As "difference" mutates into a source of conflict, and even genocide, leaving women and children especially vulnerable to organized hostility, these novels and short stories enter into a productive dialogue with scholars who question the etiological myths equating modernity with the social production of moral responsibility. Of particular relevance here is Zygmunt Bauman's work on *Modernity and the Holocaust*, in which he examines the epistemological preferences and bureaucratic capabilities that enable the modern nation-state to target an "undesirable" population. When the texts portray the displacement of Tutsi refugees ("Whispers"), the despotic rule of Idi Amin in Uganda (*Waiting*), or the anti-Semitic persecution of Jewish settlers in colonial Kenya (*Kishinev*), they

expose the moral indifference with which a particular East African nation-state uses its considerable power to engineer a socially opportune landscape.

In my reading of these historically diverse, but culturally related, narrative scenarios, I reveal that the definition of such "undesirable others" endlessly mutates: migrants and refugees, as well as racial and religious minorities, can be grouped under the abstract category of "stranger" to whom national and local authorities claim to owe no social responsibility. I argue that once the emphasis on autochthony conceives of citizenship in ethnic and territorial terms, colonial (and fascist) fictions of race and ethnicity prove convenient vehicles for political manipulation.[58] Thus, Bauman's concerns can be productively related to Achille Mbembe's analysis of the new relations of servitude and coercion in postcolonial African societies, where territorial and institutional frameworks are shifting toward different forms of government. Inevitably, the crisis of the nation-state generates a corresponding crisis of citizenship when, even after their escape from civil war (*Waiting*) and genocide ("Whispers"; *Kishinev*), refugees are subjected to new forms of discrimination in a host nation reluctant to share scarce resources with the perpetually displaced. To what extent, then, do the narratives express a desire for other forms of citizenship and envision an ethical responsibility that transcends the influence of modern institutions? What types of resistance do they suggest when they interrogate the racialized and gendered construction of "citizens" and "strangers"?

With the final chapter, "Mapping Global Modernities: Property and Propriety in the Time of AIDS," my examination shifts to the production of modern sexuality and the responsible management of life and death in the context of global capitalism and disease. In the narrative prose of Carolyne Adalla (*Confessions of an AIDS Victim*) and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye (*Chira*) from Kenya, and the novel *To a Young Woman* by the Ugandan writer Hope Keshubi, a global health pandemic challenges individuals to reconcile new patterns of sexual behavior with familiar cultural metaphors and institutions. Macgoye's novel, for example, employs an ethnic term (*chira*) to compare a new medical condition with the highly problematic transgression of acceptable standards of behavior. As the modernized version of *chira*, AIDS signifies a pervasive moral corruption doomed to spread the disease beyond the individual to a society overwhelmed by the demands of rapid social change. In her narrative, and in the texts of Adalla and Keshubi, AIDS translates the plight of the infected into a metaphor for the corruption of the body politic, and thus a medical syndrome

evolves into a diagnostic allegory for the domestic and global inequities troubling East African nations.

As a powerful and gendered trope for postcolonial crisis, AIDS not only speaks to the social and sexual vulnerability of women, however, but also anticipates the cultural reforms that potentially support their agency and authority. My analysis foregrounds the extent to which representations of AIDS voice a critique of capitalist production and consumption and contribute to the reimagination of ideologies of property and propriety. Thus, I examine how the selected texts advocate for new standards of disciplined consumption in an effort to limit the excessive desire for the property and bodies of others. How are modern sexual bodies produced through the authority of biomedical knowledge (*Young Woman*), the demands of evangelical Christianity (*Chira*), or the appeal to transnational feminism (*Confessions*)? Does the concern with "sexual propriety" challenge fellow citizens and government(s) to reconsider their relationship with those who are infected with HIV? Do the politics of such imagined communities allow for greater tolerance of difference, or does the fear of a terminal disease invite the retreat into the seemingly safe space of moral restraint?

My critical readings of these challenging literary scenarios will lead to Yvonne Owuor's short story "The State of Tides." In the book's conclusion, I discuss Owuor's narrative that rewrites imperial modernity from the perspective of Conrad's "savage and superb woman." Her contemporary sister embarks on a journey to the postimperial metropolis, where she is destined to meet Marlow's itinerant descendant. Inevitably, the protagonists have to confront a violent past that has left them with the hegemonic patrimony of empire and nation. Against the persistent experience of crisis, the narrative argues for the possibility of reasoned insight into the consequences of modernity, for an ethical repositioning toward the past that allows for the acknowledgment of the other as part of the self. In its advocacy for a historically contingent and culturally sensitive practice of rights and responsibilities, "The State of Tides" will enable me to revisit many of the prominent concerns of East African women's writing.

The choice to focus on women's texts is not inspired by an attempt to locate the "truly modern rebels" in the precarious position of multiple marginalization. Nor do I wish to separate women writers from the lively literary scene in East Africa. Instead, I intend to address the silences in the study of the alternatively modern, which has neglected the gendered implications of modern institutions, subjectivities, and sexualities. On these issues, the examination of local modernities can enter a productive engagement with feminist criticism and its

commitment to texts authored by women writers, and with the gender mainstreaming programs of Kenyan and Ugandan women's organizations intended to educate society on the specific concerns of women. For as long as women remain located within the prevailing structures of modernity, their texts are influenced by "hierarchies of class, race, and sexuality [and their] various and overlapping identities and practices as consumers, mothers, workers, artists, lovers, activists," while also privileging those cultural dimensions not typically associated with modernity.[59] Yet the practices identified in Felski's pioneering study of gender and modernity in European literature—romance and motherhood, shopping and fashion—will not necessarily translate into the cultural concerns of East African women writers. What it means to be modern in Kenyan or Ugandan narratives relates to the gendered experiences of colonial occupation and the subsequent struggles for political emancipation and cultural autonomy.

Few scholars of African gender studies have explicitly engaged with the discourses and practices of modernity. Notable exceptions include Stratton's discussion of the Mother Africa trope and its problematic equation of women and tradition, or Tamale's and Posel's work on the reinvention of modern sexuality in the context of global consumer culture. Their arguments will be prominently featured in Chapter 4 and thus further contribute to the interdisciplinary dialogue I intend to facilitate throughout this study. Though Gyekye and Giddens, and Bauman and Mbembe offer productive readings of modern institutions, subjectivities, and societies, my analyses will also address the extent to which the selected literary texts reveal the insensitivity of these theorists toward gender-related issues. With its emphasis on gender, *The Trouble with Modernity* makes an important contribution to the interdisciplinary examination of local modernities and simultaneously expands the concern with modernity in African gender studies. As Western feminist critics like Barbara Marshall and Rita Felski are cautiously optimistic that contra-modernities can serve as potential sites of empowerment, Simon Gikandi and Valentin Mudimbe remain skeptical as to whether such epistemological shifts result in greater cultural and political authority. Without the reinscription of the sign itself, as Bhabha reminds us, established geographies of power easily maintain their dominance, even as our theoretical vocabulary acknowledges the importance of local cultural networks. It is to this epistemological minefield that I will now turn my attention.

Chapter 1

Promise and Fraud

The Politics and Poetics of the Modern

As part of the geography of imagination that constantly recreates the West, modernity always requires an Other and an Elsewhere. It was always plural, just like the West was always plural. This plurality is inherent in modernity itself, both structurally and historically. Modernity as a structure requires an other, an alter, a native-indeed, an alter-native. Modernity as a historical process also created this alter ego, as modern as the West, yet otherwise modern.

—Trouillot, "The Otherwise Modern" 224

The Power of One: Western, Male, and Modern

Though definitions of modernity remain controversial across, and even within, single disciplines, the literary figure of the *flâneur* as the prototypical trope of urban migration surfaces surprisingly often in these constantly shifting debates. Credited with introducing the concept of *modernité*, Baudelaire's work occupies a prominent position in the discussion of modernity, and his reflections on the urban drifter proved influential not only in literary theory but also in philosophy, anthropology, and even sociology, where he influenced the works of Max Weber and Georg Simmel.[1] Together with Goethe's troubled Faust, it is the transient figure of the *flâneur* and his search for meaning in the everyday experience of metropolitan life who expresses the desire of the modern hero for the release from established authority.

Representing the two faces of the quintessentially modern protagonist, who wrestles with those forces denying control over self and nature while actively participating in the seductive world of fetishized commodities, Goethe's Faust and Baudelaire's *flâneur* aspire toward a sovereign identity profoundly impacted by the racialized and gendered narratives of Western modernity.

This Western bias is certainly evident in some of the better-known sociological definitions of modernity, which highlight the institutions of postfeudal Europe. Here modernity emerges as a "posttraditional order" shaped by an industrialized social and economic landscape, a capitalist mode of production with competitive markets and commodified labor, and a territorially bound nation-state with a monopoly on the means of violence.[2] Clearly, such definitions privilege the institutional dimension of modernity and emphasize organizational and economic efficiency, which, ideally, is assumed to contribute toward greater democracy.[3] Sociological definitions of Western modernity and their emphasis on the desirability of scientifically and technologically "advanced" societies also underwrite the notion of "modernization" that, since the 1950s, has dominated economic and political debates. Vigorously promoted by the World Bank and the structural adjustment programs of the 1970s and 1980s, modernization programs pursue a paradoxical agenda that advertises modernity as a universal developmental model not necessarily rooted in European history and, at the same time, insists on the desirability of Western models of socioeconomic change. But the global export of developmental models that primarily benefit Western interests has little to offer to African societies. Mbembe's study of "the African postcolony" observes the fundamental economic shifts of the 1980s when, as a result of structural adjustment programs and deregulated world markets, African political systems struggled to profitably reintegrate themselves into changing global economies.[4] As the state lost its influence to the tutelary government of international creditors, public functions are increasingly performed by private operators for private ends. These privatized forms of sovereignty contribute to the privatization of violence, since established security forces and new paramilitary groups now operate for individual "big men" for whose benefit they extract resources from the general population. The shift toward new economic and political paradigms further marginalizes vulnerable populations, as I will argue in Chapter 3, especially when colonial fictions of race and ethnicity prove opportune vehicles in the struggle over power and resources. As the narratives of Macgoye, Kyomuhendo, and Owuor observe the changing territorial and institutional frameworks in the

Great Lakes region of Eastern Africa, they reaffirm the divisive politics of identity inherited from the colonial period and their continued political manipulation in the postcolonial present.

To better understand these literary concerns, which I first outlined in the introduction, it is necessary to take a closer look at the relationship between modern institutions and identities, and this, inevitably, returns us to the colonial past when political, religious, and educational institutions (nation, church, and school) left their indelible mark on East African subjectivities and societies. Anthony Giddens's simultaneous interest the institutional and individual dimensions of modernity offers a constructive reading of the relationship between colonial institutions and postcolonial agency that I will pursue in Chapter 2.[5] For Giddens, modern life has a profound impact on social relations and identities, apparent in the shift from relatively stable communities located in a physical place to social networks operating across larger cultural and geographical spaces. Modern political and economic institutions shape a self-reflexive subjectivity that constantly reinvents itself in response to a rapidly transforming landscape. New patterns of trust and introspection, new relationships with expanding social networks and increasing knowledge, are needed as the reflexive character of modernity extends into the very process of individuation. Unlike traditional rites of passage with their often predictable outcome, the modern self is continually modified in the struggle for a coherent biographical narrative. Not surprisingly, the educated protagonists in the novels of Ogola, Kaberuka, and Okurut search for such biographical continuity (and ontological security) when they negotiate the impact of church and school on cultural identity and envision an alternative modernity that morally redeems the postcolonial nation-state (Chapter 2).

Giddens's theoretical framework for the analysis of modern societies remains influential across the disciplines because of "its scope, generality, and the ability of researchers to isolate, refine and transform particular components in his model."[6] His famous assessment of modernity as a "juggernaut" operates within a sociological tradition that has been inclined to focus on the risks of the modern. Its theoretical vocabulary filled with terms such as alienation, anomie, iron cage, and other cheerful reminders of the complexities of modern life, classical social theory appears preoccupied with "the dark sides of modernity." How can order be reestablished given the decline of traditional authority, the social division of labor, and the emergence of a pluralistic, industrialized society with its propensity for undermining conventional social networks? In contrast to the more optimistic

assessment of Western philosophy, sociological scholarship revolves around the tension between modernity's emancipatory possibilities for "human freedom and autonomy through the expansion of culture, civil society and its institutions, and the controls exercised over freedom and autonomy by the modern centralized state (the darker sides of modernity) as it seeks to assimilate all differences, such as language and ethnic culture, to an underlying centre."[7] One need not look any further than Bauman's study of *Modernity and the Holocaust* to better understand the perils of a perfectly operating bureaucracy from which all moral responsibilities have been eliminated. Disproving the myths that equate the modern with civilizational progress and the social production of moral responsibility, Bauman's work examines the epistemological preferences and institutional capabilities that enable the modern nation-state to target "undesirables strangers." Together with Mbembe's work on the new relations of servitude and dependence in postcolonial African societies, Bauman's study allows for a productive analysis of the failure of modern institutions and epistemologies. My reading of the novels and short stories in Chapter 3 ("The Dark Sides of Modernity: Citizens, Strangers, and the Production of Moral Indifference") will demonstrate that Bauman's and Mbembe's arguments are particularly relevant for understanding the crisis of East African nation-states and their exclusive definitions of citizenship.

At least until the 1960s, however, those scholars concerned with the darker sides of Western modernity have been remarkably silent on the hegemonic aspirations of the colonial state. Instead, sociological theories focused on the precarious situation of the Western subject and the ambivalence of reason—the human faculty both valued for enabling the accumulation of specialized knowledge and feared for the increasing separation of cultural spheres dominated by expert knowledge.[8] Written in the shadow of World War II, Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) offers a critique of Western modernity at a time when the rationality of the modern subject had not prevented genocidal violence. Rather than applauding the promise of reason, Horkheimer and Adorno insist on its dialectical entrapment between freedom and bondage: the affirmation of the autonomous subject through the liberation from fear, from nature, from domination by others only results in a more effective form of enslavement in a capitalist society driven by economic profit and commodified mass culture. While instrumental rationality—the purposeful accumulation of knowledge—allows for control over the unknown, such mastery over nature necessitates continual acts of self-sacrifice. Only the "denial of nature in man for the sake of domination over

non-human nature and over other men" (54) holds fear at bay and guarantees the power of the self over others. The positivist premise of the Enlightenment might turn the unknowable into knowledge and hence work toward the suppression of fear, but, in its desire to leave nothing outside the secure orbit of knowledge, reason only manages to duplicate the psychological functions of myth, which it claims to have successfully transcended (16). The circular logic of Western society does not allow for a teleological narrative of progress; instead, it transforms reason into its opposite—an irrational instrument of subjugation.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, the conceptual order of the Enlightenment is grounded in the economic structure of capitalism and its attendant division of labor (21). These economically based social divisions are already inscribed into European mythological narratives. Horkheimer and Adorno's reading of the Homeric version of the Odysseus myth therefore foregrounds the ambiguous (and gendered) nature of reason within a capitalist economy. By showcasing the adventures of the prototypical bourgeois male, who successfully disciplines himself to defy the mythic forces of fate, the epic "foreshadow[s] the repression of the body and the feminine that will determine the development of Western culture."[9] Even modern mass culture is informed by the juxtaposition of male discipline and repressed femininity, for the seductive promise of consumption attempts to reconcile individuals to a totally administered society ruled by the desire for profit and the need for conformity. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, however, is less interested in reading Odysseus's escape from the Sirens as the modern hero's release from the call of gendered nature than in understanding the logic of self-censorship that distinguishes master and servant. As Odysseus's men, whose ears have been sealed, resist the seduction of the Sirens for the disciplined performance of their work, the hero, tied to the ship's mast, is restrained from surrendering to temptation. Thus, "[t]he servant remains enslaved in body and soul, the master regresses" (34). The epic here anticipates a bourgeois economy in constant fear of failure, a fear that rationalizes the utilitarian approach to other human beings, since the need for taking risks in pursuit of success makes human beings encounter "all other men in an alienated form—as enemies or as points of support, but always as tools, as things" (62). As the Enlightenment runs amok, not even the oppressor has reason to celebrate. In "The State of Tides," Yvonne Owuor examines the extent to which the drive for sovereign control over self and other turns Marlow's descendants into fugitives from their own humanity, haunting them with the knowledge of their responsibility

for a history of violence. In the conclusion of this book, I will discuss Owuor's short story and its eloquent reflection on the psychological consequences of being able to relate to other human beings only "as tools, as things." Other narratives in this study, as I explain in greater detail in subsequent chapters, relate to Horkheimer and Adorno's arguments on the logic of self-censorship when they advocate for a self-effacing, bourgeois femininity (*Silent Patience*) or insist on the disciplined exercise of modern sexuality (*To a Young Woman*).

While these prose narratives illustrate the significance of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* for literary representations of modernity, it is also important to consider Felski's critique that the text fails to address "the ambiguous and multidimensional aspects of modern development" (6). Limited to a series of predetermined economic, administrative, and expressive patterns, Horkheimer and Adorno's vision of Western culture and the self-destructive logic of modern reason does not allow for the possibility of independent agency, neither by those confined to the regressive performance of power nor by those trapped in the disempowered positions of servility. Though they address the exclusion of women from Western modernity, and even offer the utopian possibility that a nonrational femininity might transcend the limitations of male-dominated reason, Felski rightfully argues that the understanding of women as libidinal others disavows the multidimensionality of female subjectivity. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* thus illustrates the limits of any generalized narrative of modernity: "Within the constraints of a single mythic narrative, it is inevitably man who assumes the role of collective subject of history, while woman can exist only as Other, as the object rather than the subject of historical narrative."[10]

She and other feminist critics wonder whether the gender of modernity is indeed male, so that modern heroes—from Odysseus to Faust and the urban *flâneur*—represent new manifestations of bourgeois and working-class male subjectivity, whose revolt against authority includes the longing for freedom from familial and communal ties and whose struggles are phrased in "metaphors of contestation . . . grounded in an ideal of competitive masculinity" (2). Her critique of a male subjectivity that links the desire for autonomy to the need to subjugate the other reflects the concerns of Barbara Marshall, who examines the ideal-type individual on whom sociological theories of modernity are predicated. Based on the relationship between modernity and capitalism, sociological inquiries posit a distinctively modern individuality, defined by the specialized division of labor, the dominance of wage labor and commodity production, and the separation of public and private spheres (27). This "universal" subject of

modernity conceals its knowledge base in the experience of white, Western, heterosexual men, and instead locates gender "in the realm of kinship and family, a sphere of social life which has great import in the structuring of 'pre-modern' social formations, but loses this importance as an organizing principle as 'modern' society develops. Once industrialized, capitalized class society is introduced, women and children disappear" (23). With the separation of the family from civil society and the state, women and children were effectively eliminated from the visible space of social life. The emergence of private and public spheres in nineteenth-century Europe further consolidated (and obscured) the gendered dimension of society. Material and institutional practices, symbolic and rhetorical strategies, were affected "by dominant conceptions of women's relationship to history and progress, as spatial categories of private and public were mapped onto temporal distinctions between past and present."[11] Women came to symbolize a conservative and traditional identity, so that their entry into modernity signaled the adoption of masculine attributes and therefore threatened established gender relations.[12] As I will explain in greater detail elsewhere in this chapter, some nationalist movements in twentieth-century Africa, and, in particular, the literary trope of Mother Africa, rehearse a similar gendered dichotomy when celebrating women as "the custodians of tradition."

However, even in nineteenth-century Europe, the ideology of separate spheres was constantly undermined by the movements of working class women into mass production and industrial labor and by the privileged entry of middle-class women into the new consumer world of department stores. Anne McClintock's analysis of race, gender, and sexuality in colonial discourse persuasively demonstrates the pivotal role of "race" in articulating these gender and class distinctions. Photographic portrayals of white, working class women, for example, insisted on their unfeminine and uncivilized appearance, and thus declared their regression to an earlier moment of racial development, in an attempt to translate the modern practice of women's salaried employment into the anachronistic space of cultural degeneration.[13] Even if rhetorical and political strategies successfully excluded women, the changes associated with conditions of modernity—"such as the separation of the family from wider kinship groups, the separation of household and economy . . . the emergence of the modern state," and the newly emerging roles of worker and citizen—must be examined as gendered processes.[14] The conflicts generated by cultural change are certain to translate into familial and sexual relationships, which are central to the construction of modern subjectivities. Especially in the

time of AIDS (Chapter 4), when a health pandemic transforms into the gendered trope for postcolonial crisis, the literary imagination of modern sexual bodies not only engages with local metaphors and institutions but also relies on the authority of biomedical knowledge (Keshubi's *To a Young Woman*) and the demands of evangelical Christianity (Macgoye's *Chira*).

In general, the texts under study reclaim sexuality and parenting, romance and marriage, as fundamental sites for the negotiation of modern identities, and thus insist on the crucial role of gendered practices within the family, community, and nation. Their concern with cultural change in the intimate space of domestic relations partly reflects the vision of the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye, who regards the family as one of the pivotal social institutions through which an alternative African modernity can be articulated.[15] Gyekye's arguments productively expand Giddens's reading of the institutional landscape of modernity, and thus the theories of both scholars will frame my analyses of the institutions of church and school in the next chapter. In the narratives of Ogola, Kaberuka, and Okurut, educational and religious institutions profoundly impact how modern subjects attempt to avoid the stigma of "backwardness" by reinventing themselves as productive and disciplined citizens.[16] This claim to productivity and discipline, though, is carefully routed through the normative preferences of the past and thus suggest the possibility of being both modern *and* authentically African.

It is not just the fictional texts that question the Western monopoly on modern life and subjectivity. Since the mid-1980s, modernity has been challenged by studies that insist on its culture-specific manifestations and that attempt to close the disciplinary divide "between models of social change based on economic or political determinism [and those that emphasize] beliefs and culture values."[17] These alternative modernities address the effects of social change in relation to a particular cultural environment and the subjective preferences of local actors and communities. As a consequence, the focus has shifted from culture reduced to a single component (institutional, symbolic, or economic) to the transcultural negotiation of local modernities.[18] How, then, does the localized analysis of modernity impact our understanding of culture? If, as the sociologist Swingewood argues, culture is crucial for understanding how the potential of modernity unfolds within a particular social system (177), we need a theory of culture that contemplates intra- and intercultural differences, that relates historically past to current transcultural encounters, and that envisions modernity and globalization not as antagonistic but as

mutually interdependent processes.[19] Not surprisingly, such calls for an inclusive definition of culture return to Bakhtin's model of cultural heteroglossia, since his "theory of culture as internally differentiated and decentred, a pluralism involving struggles between many voices within contexts that are profoundly historical, suggests a concept of modernity [as] open and unfinalised."[20] This "unfinalized" potential of modernity recalls Habermas's attempt to reclaim (Western) modernity by interrogating the relationship between its social and cultural manifestations and, ultimately, by moving beyond "the philosophy of consciousness which privileges the cognitive-instrumental relation of subjects to the world."[21] In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas advocates for a conceptual shift from an emphasis on the knowledge of objects to an emphasis on how subjects capable of speech and action negotiate communication in an effort to establish an interpersonal relationship (295–96). Such a change toward a paradigm of mutual understanding affects not only how subjects relate to other subjects—their partners in the process of communication—but also how subjects relate to themselves, how they move from an observer perspective into an interpersonal relationship that allows them to become "a participant in an interaction from the perspective of alter" (297). For Habermas, this paradigm shift toward relations between individuals, who negotiate each other's needs and the normative structure of modern life, amounts to a radical epistemological intervention introducing the possibility of a counterdiscourse *within* modernity. In its critique of a logocentric Western self-understanding, which "views human beings as distinguished in their relationship to the world by their monopoly on encountering entities, knowing and dealing with objects, making true statements, and implementing plans" (311), Habermas's notion of "communicative rationality" has far-reaching ontological, epistemological, and linguistic consequences. Instead of relating exclusively to the objects of the external world, speakers also position themselves in relation to social norms and their own subjective preferences. Instead of privileging subject-centered reason, they embrace communicatively mediated knowledge and its inclusive orientation toward different cultural domains. Instead of the preference for fact-finding discourses, a speaker's communicative use of language gives full consideration to the propositional, illocutionary, and linguistic components of speech acts. To recover the emancipatory potential of (Western) modernity, Habermas insists on the paradigm of mutual understanding and its realization through the communicative rationality of intersubjectively negotiated speech acts. Society, he argues, successfully reproduces itself when the universal

grammar of language and its consensual negotiation result in "the propagation of cultural traditions, the integration of groups by norms and values, and the socialization of succeeding generations" (299).

But even Habermas's "alternative" modernity fails to address the differences within and between cultural communities that Bakhtin's heteroglossia so strongly embraced. Disagreements between social groups with different gender, class, ethnic, and other allegiances undermine the possibility of an ideal speech situation and complicate any attempt at a consensual reproduction of cultural coherence and identity. This intracultural dissonance is further amplified by the linguistic and normative plurality of transcultural encounters, which often occur within politically contested environments. If the language of the colonizer is the privileged medium of communication, the possibility for negotiating the normative content of modernity among equally empowered subjects remains a distant utopia. Owuor's "The State of Tides," however, boldly imagines the consensual language of silence as an alternative to the material and epistemic violence, which, historically, has characterized the interactions between (post)imperial and (post)colonial subjects. As I will explain in the book's conclusion, the narrative even gestures toward the notion of communicative rationality when inquiring how an act of oppression disrupts "the conditions of symmetry and reciprocity that characterize an intersubjectively constituted life context."[22]

Not surprisingly, Habermas's advocacy for a communicatively oriented rationality has been critiqued by postmodern theorists for whom reason as a tool of subjugation cannot be redeemed from its hegemonic aspirations. By exposing the political contexts in which "reason" and "progress" operate, postmodern theory has proven valuable for the study of the alternatively modern and its interrogation of the impact of ideology and culture on producing relations of power. Kaplan and Grewal, for example, understand the postmodern as being concerned with how "a culture of modernity is produced in diverse locations and how these cultural productions are circulated, distributed, received, and even commodified" (5). Their question productively intersects with Meyer and Olver's study of African modernities, in particular, their interest in the relation of "alternatives *within* modernity to traditional and postmodern alternatives *to* modernity (16; emphasis in original). But we also need to consider that many of modernity's conceptual challenges are duly repeated in postmodern poetics and politics. What new aesthetic and epistemological paradigms are offered under the shape-shifting label of the postmodern?[23] How does postmodernism as an aesthetic practice relate to the

economic and political transformations of postmodernity, and to what extent are both concepts linked to a consumer culture that reverses modernity's drive toward autonomy and specialization?[24] Does the postmodern emphasis on uncertainty and simultaneity position itself as the privileged site of cultural critique, not unlike modernism's earlier "challenge to the political complacencies and intellectual dogmas . . . of realist and naturalist traditions"?[25] The postmodern break with established vocabularies calls to mind modernity's opposition to the aesthetics and epistemologies of the past. Rarely, however, is the break with the past as radical as one might desire. In Chapter 4, I will elaborate on Hall's notion of the global postmodern to argue that postmodernity and globalization do not need to enter into a conceptually antagonistic relationship with modernity. Instead, Hall's notion of a globally operating consumer culture that absorbs local differences for Western profit and pleasure interacts with historically earlier forms of globalization that enabled the dissemination of colonial modernity.[26]

For now, it is important to note that the postmodern shift toward the local and the global might simply rehearse a spatialized version of the contested relationship between tradition and modernity.[27] At times, new epistemologies only deliver more effective strategies for maintaining established hierarchies, as Mudimbe concludes in *The Invention of Africa*. Marshall's question whether postmodernity is "any more relevant as a periodizing framework than 'modernity' for women" (25) is of particular relevance for African women who, while at first forcefully secluded in the traditionality of the premodern, now find themselves hastily summoned to the ambiguity of the postmodern. For as long as the simplified binary of modernity versus postmodernity remains intact, the modern narrative of teleological progress is easily rehearsed in a postmodern idiom, reassuring, once again, that the privileged site of cultural critique is located in the present. Surely, to situate the interrogation of modernity in an ideological and temporal space marked as "post" is premature when alternatives *within* and *to* Western modernity speak to a range of dissenting voices, when colonial legacies continue in often terrifying forms in the postcolonial present, and when the pivotal role of African cultures in the construction of Western and alternative modernities has barely been addressed.

Even in the domestic spaces of Western societies, women entered into an ambiguous relationship with modernity, offering a moral antidote to the worst "excesses" of modern society, while simultaneously representing a backward and irrational force that needed to be controlled.[28] Domestic configurations of public (male) and private

(female) spheres interacted with globalized mappings of race and gender. Supported by racialist theories and enabled by modern weapons and travel technologies, the belief in the superiority of Western historical progress offered a powerful rationale for the occupation of foreign space. Foreign space turned into imperial space, providing the ideological and material conditions for the spatial totalization of a particular version of modernity. By the nineteenth century, Western modernity operated as the exclusive reference point from which all other cultures could be judged and hierarchically ordered.[29]

> *At the level of ideas, 'Africa' is usually an 'invention' based on the relationship between the West and the African continent . . . and therefore already always modern. At the level of practice, the violent modernization of African social life started at least when Europeans bought the 'biopower' required for the American plantations on the West African coast. It should be noted, however, that this violent modernization of social life did not imply that Africans were allowed to assume a modern identity.*
>
> *—Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels 4*

MEANWHILE IN THE FUTURE POSTCOLONY: FROM AMBIGUITY TO ORTHODOXY AND BACK

In 1988, the renowned Congolese scholar Valentin Mudimbe published *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, a study of the inscription of otherness, power, and knowledge in the discourses about the African continent, which he followed six years later with *The Idea of Africa*. Mudimbe's inquiry into African systems of thought leads him to "the poetic ensembles" through which the West has articulated its knowledge of Africa, in the hope of finding its own investments duly reflected in a familiar landscape.[30] Based on the political interests and the epistemological vocabulary of its Western producers, such knowledge invented an Africa that reassured Europeans about their privileged position in an expanding geographical universe. Mudimbe's examination of the idea of Africa is of direct relevance to the study of the alternatively modern in East African literature, for the question of how Africans engaged with colonial modernity cannot be separated from the popular and academic discourses in which the West imagined a politically opportune other.[31] While the history of these "poetic ensembles" partly accounts for their continued appeal, it also tells of the epistemological shifts that led to the awareness of modernity's many different faces.

In his infamous assessment of Africa as a "continent without history," Hegel affirms the Western notion of African cultures as impervious to the demands of change in their passage through time. Denied the rational agency necessary for critical reflection, Africans found themselves excluded from the field of philosophical activity, and hence from those scholarly discourses that assumed a pivotal role in the construction of Western modernity.[32] Instead, they became the designated objects of religious and anthropological studies, which posited that "African systems of thought developed unconsciously (without self-reflection) and were essentially collective and confirmatory (they did not allow for the agency of autonomous subjects)."[33] To this day, African philosophers are competing with the stereotypical image of a "traditional Africa," only able to respond to cultural change with the stubborn affirmation of (indeed, with *faith* in) the established order. As Mudimbe chronicles the elaborate processes through which the West created an Africa available for European consumption, he emphasizes the active involvement of Africans in the production of these discourses as a result of which "[t]he conceptual framework of African thinking has been both a mirror and a consequence of the experience of European hegemony."[34] In his survey of various Western disciplines, Mudimbe echoes Glissant's understanding of the West not as a place but as a project, constituted in relation to "images of peoples situated outside of its cultural and imaginary frontiers [who] were nonetheless imagined and rejected as the intimate and other side of the European-thinking subject."[35] The fifteenth-century invention of the savage as Europe's negated double operated within a political and representational economy that defined visibility and truth according to its own needs. This vision of Africa shaped colonial policies and produced colonized societies existing in a "diffuse intermediary space" framed by a series of paradigmatic oppositions: tradition and modernity, primitivism and rationality, orality and literacy.[36]

A wide range of academic, popular, and literary genres contributed to the positioning of Africans in the "savage slot," where the mutable trope of the native interacted with the utopian projection of the West and its vision of order.[37] Natural and social sciences, anthropological and imperial discourses, operated within a framework of ethnocentrism defined by "an epistemological filiation and an ideological connection."[38] The discipline of anthropology offered a technical, seemingly objective vocabulary for the expression and tabulation of cultural difference and thus aided in the transition from medieval geographies of monstrosity to evolutionist theories, which "saw race as *the* crucial determinant, not only of culture but of human character

and of all history" (emphasis in original).[39] Anthropology and related sciences insisted on normative uniformity—a set of quantifiable criteria against which all cultures could be measured and judged. For Mudimbe, the reduction of Africa to primitiveness amounts to a normative orthodoxy proclaiming the "imperial power of the Same."[40] For the Western subject, modernity might have resulted in a bewildering array of opportunities; regardless of whether such normative ambiguity is experienced as threat or as thrill, it implies the possibility of choice that was to be denied to the non-Western other whose invention was shaped by a set of recurrent ideas and tropes. The construction of the "native" further enabled the possibility of a unilateral sovereignty on which colonial consciousness could successfully thrive. When Habermas asserts that "[m]odernity revolts against the normalizing function of tradition; modernity lives on the experience of rebelling against all that is normative" ("Modernity" 5), he neglects to address that the spirit of rebellion proceeds through the projection of alterity, that "the drive to be modern has always *already* presumed the alterity of Others as the fulcrum point of Western self-elevation" (emphasis in original).[41]

In addition to the scientist located in the metropolis, those who directly participated in the colonial enterprise—the administrator, the explorer, and the missionary—played a pivotal part in transforming Africa according to the needs of the colonial master. While the trope of the savage translated into the Christian vision of "fallen creatures," the biological terminology of "physical degeneration" expressed a similar notion in racialist science. Yet the "truth" sanctioning the credibility of Christian discourses was able to lay claim to the ultimate authority of the divine and its institutional representatives. Already in 1493, the papal bull on the status of the *terra nullius* "denies non-Christian natives the right to an autonomous political existence and the right to own or to transfer ownership."[42] This disfranchisement of non-Christian populations will undergo an unexpected turn in Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *A Farm Called Kishinev* (Chapter 3), since the novel's Jewish protagonists project a troubling figure of difference for Christian settlers and legitimize their claim to colonial space with the authority invested in God's chosen people. The papal bull, however, aided in propagating colonialism as a morally justified project of cultural and spiritual conversion designed "to engineer a historical rupture in the consciousness and space of Africans."[43] For the Christian church, its insistence on embodying the absolute truth necessitated the continual adaptation of missionary policies in response to increasing anticolonial resistance. Missionaries like Bernard Mels, speaking in

1947 to his fellow Scheutists in the Belgian Congo, were profoundly aware of the shifting power relations that mandated new pedagogical approaches. The African *évolué* became a partner, if only a junior partner, in a conversation in which the missionary was to speak less, and to consider not only the content but also the rhetorical tropes in which the Christian message, itself unchanged, was being conveyed.[44] Cautiously avoiding some of the most offensive metaphors of the colonial archive, Mels employs a series of euphemisms that paraphrase "paganism" or "primitivism" in terms of "tradition," and thus shift to the functionalist vocabulary that had become prevalent in anthropology since the 1920s.[45]

For Mudimbe, these changes in rhetoric "have never fundamentally modified the meaning of African conversion, but only the policies for its ideological and ethnocentric expression and practice."[46] Premised on the superiority of Western cultures and epistemologies, conversion policies insisted on their privileged—because rational—insight into human existence. In its close association with the hallmarks of Western modernity—with the cultural (and political) capital of reason, literacy, and progress—Christianity delivered a powerful critique of the alleged falsehood of other religions, offering the only *rational* alternative to African belief systems and, as added incentive, the possibility of social mobility within the colonial system.[47] In contrast to the close (though contested) relationship between secular and modern culture in the West, colonial modernity required the embrace of new religious practices that promised both progress and salvation. Besides encouraging new types of employment and professionalization, missionary centers introduced several other cultural practices—monogamous marriage, patrilineal authority and kinship, a hierarchical ordering of European and African languages—"concerned with conversion to a new order, that is, the erasure of tradition and the production of the convert within 'modernity.'"[48] It is this close relationship between social and religious change and its association with the institutions of colonial modernity that, in the narratives discussed in Chapter 2, inspires the desire for reclaiming the modern through the historical authenticity of the past.

Though colonial modernity established its normativity by defining Africans (and Western minorities) as nonrational others, it still had to force them into its institutional apparatus to ensure the political viability of the colonial system. How, then, did Africans respond to their precarious position as simultaneous insiders and outsiders of modernity?[49] If colonialism compelled African men to negotiate conflicting cultural values, how did this conflict unfold for African women

and girls, whose access to colonial institutions and educational opportunities, and hence to wage labor and land ownership, was severely limited? Since women were less likely to possess the professional skills desired in the colonial urban economy, their movements were often strictly monitored. Colonial laws emphasized the need to regulate "female morality," while limiting women's economic influence to the rural sphere and marginalizing girls as students within the educational system.[50] Yet once anticolonial resistance gained political momentum, African leaders emphatically rejected Western labels denouncing their societies as "pagan" and "primitive," and instead worked toward the interdependent goals of cultural rehabilitation and political liberation. In their attempt to reconcile nationalist and theological interests, they advocated for a new model of conversion that allowed the converts to achieve in Christ a cultural and spiritual heritage still considered authentically African.[51] Though missionary and colonial policies intended to erase African cultural practices for a new, modern order, the "two cultural memories" often coexisted; the political realities even demanded the fusion of cultural practices "in order to project a promise of being modern and African."[52]

In colonial and postcolonial discourses, "tradition" and "modernity" remain highly ambiguous and contradictory categories. In fact, the simplified binary skillfully conceals the political interests enabling its formation. To address the often fictional and performative character of behavior deemed either traditional or modern, it is useful to consider Hobsbawm and Ranger's distinction between cultural customs and invented traditions (1). While customs evolve according to the changing needs of their practitioners, invented traditions suggest politically motivated responses to contemporary situations; they authenticate a particular normative structure with reference to the past and insist on the historically continuous performance of such practices. In the colonial setting, though, dynamically transforming customs and socially engineered traditions were not always clearly distinguishable. As Europeans confused invented traditions with local customs, Africans actively manipulated these invented traditions for their own purposes.[53] That modernity indeed offers both a geography of imagination and a geography of management is persuasively illustrated in the colonial invention of "tribal identity."[54] In order to satisfy the need for political control and administrative efficiency, while conveniently exploiting the prejudiced assumption that all Africans live in small, culturally and spatially confined societies, colonial policies actively promoted the creation of "African tribes." Though such clearly demarcated "tribal identities" contradicted the multiple

social and political networks to which Africans claimed belonging, their need to negotiate colonial interventions oftentimes encouraged the acceptance of ethnicity as a strategy of collective identification. Increased competition for resources in overpopulated "tribal reserves," as well as the desire for political mobilization within and beyond the colonial framework, motivated Africans to participate in what Iliffe poignantly describes as "progressive traditionalism": "Just as later nationalists sought to create a national culture, so those who built modern tribes emphasized tribal culture. In each case educated men took the lead . . . The problem was to synthesize, to 'pick out what is best from (European culture) and dilute it with what we hold.' In doing so, educated men naturally reformulated the past, so that their syntheses were actually new creations" (ellipsis in original).[55] In their eloquent deconstruction of identity discourses, the texts of Macgoye, Kyomuhendo, and Owuor in Chapter 3 reflect on the political manipulation of colonial fictions of race and ethnicity and their disastrous consequences for the postcolonial period.

In general, the invention of tradition facilitated the colonial management of people and resources, providing whites with models of authority and offering Africans patterns of "modern behavior" considered compatible with their subservient position in the colonial system. That European colonialists also had to reinvent themselves is evident in the transformation of menial occupations (farmer, shopkeeper) into gentlemanly professions. This strategy proved effective for empowering an often dispersed white population and provided their activities with an aura of respectability. Macgoye's novel *A Farm Called Kishinev* delivers a telling example of how the farmer and shopkeeper were elevated in status to a genteel ruling class and thus "[felt] entitled to hold sway over their subjects not only through force of arms or finance but also through the prescriptive status bestowed by neo-tradition."[56] It is certainly not without irony that the invented traditions of nineteenth-century Europe and their negotiation in colonial space authorized white colonialists to perform their roles as agents of what appeared an "authentic" Western modernity.

The symbolic register of invented traditions could also be utilized to shape relations of power and authority within a particular African society. As invented traditions were codified, they often privileged the interests of those populations—the educated, chiefs, and local elders—who had been actively involved in their emergence. Elders thus found it opportune to invoke tradition to control the aspirations of the young, men appealed to tradition to delegitimize the concerns of women, and dominant ethnic populations referenced tradition to

assert their rights over immigrants and minorities.[57] Invented traditions, together with the manipulation of ethnic identities and the adaptation of cultural metaphors to respond to a deadly pandemic, are a recurrent theme in the literary texts under study and their attempts to envision modern identity in politically and culturally viable terms. Such literary imaginations reflect the continual inscription of power and authority into a society's normative structure through which dynamic change blends with deliberate intervention. To authorize their claim to power and generate a cohesive identity, national and ethnic communities rely on symbolic practices "authenticated" by the appeal to past traditions, even if reflecting the political needs of the present. Afrikaner nationalism, for example, found its first persuasive expression in the centennial commemoration of the settlers' original journey into the South African interior. The Second Trek in 1938 ritually reenacted the original event as a galvanizing spectacle and thus dramatized historical experience for the contemporary purpose of securing a coherent Afrikaner identity. The positioning of women in these national narratives is often highly ambivalent, full of praise for their allegorical role as "mothers of the nation" yet highly critical if they deviate from the preferred performance of gender.[58] The gendered subtext of nationalist rhetoric tends to erase women's participation in the freedom struggle or, as in the case of Fanon's repeatedly unveiled Algerian women, reduces their political commitment to the shape-shifting performance of gender in the service of racial liberation.[59]

Mapping the discourses of otherness in the Western imagination, Mudimbe is equally disinterested in the gender-specific implications of colonialism and anticolonial resistance. Rather, his concern lies with the distinctive epistemological formations, in particular within the discipline of anthropology, that have shaped the politics of transcultural encounters. Once structuralism and the work of Claude Levi-Strauss acquired increasing prominence in anthropological, as well as literary and linguistic, studies, the Western focus shifted from measuring cultural difference to the search for the discrete foundations believed to organize all cultural activities. Together with Marxist analyses of local forms of power and production, structuralism introduced new areas of synchronic investigation into the study of foreign cultures. Meanwhile, ethnophilosophical inquiries contradicted Levy-Bruhl's infamous opposition between the (Western) rational and the (primitive) prelogical mind by affirming the capacity for a rational *Weltanschauung* as a universal human feature.[60] The synchronic emphasis of these theoretical perspectives was supplemented by the emerging field of

ethnohistory, which validated orally transmitted historical accounts by African informants and thus reclaimed the diachronic dimension of knowledge about African cultures. These epistemological shifts successfully questioned the singular position of "the universal subject" and thus required a corresponding shift within the disciplines (anthropology, history, psychoanalysis) that had been actively involved in the invention of Africa. As Western scholars began to acknowledge their role in the formation of politically biased theoretical vocabularies, their African colleagues employed the tools of critical analysis "[to establish] themselves as subjects of their own destiny, taking responsibility for the 'invention' of their past as well as of the conditions for modernizing their societies."[61] These objectives are clearly apparent in the works of Ghanaian philosophers Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu and their respective attempts to conceptualize alternative African modernities. Gyekye, whose work will frame the analysis of the novels discussed in Chapter 2, envisions an African modernity that aspires to some of the technological, scientific, and managerial features of (Western) modernity, while remaining committed to what he perceives to be the communitarian ethos of African societies.

In its attempt to negotiate hybrid and, at times, competing cultural influences, Gyekye's project bears some relation to historically earlier attempts to write Africans out of the biased representations of the West and into their own liberatory narratives. Nationalist movements confronted the difficult task of reasserting African traditions as the preferred site of a decolonized modernity, while embracing an African rationality shaped "by now familiar categories such as the opposition between secular and religious practices, the efficacy of tradition, the existence of a progressive temporality and the division of labor."[62] Pan-African commitments to a collective black consciousness, premised either on the shared history of slavery and colonialism (Nkrumah) or the racially distinctive notion of a black personality (Blyden, Crummel, Négritude), inspired many independence leaders of the 1940s and 1950s. The political program of E. W. Blyden (1832–1912), a diasporic African by birth and West African resident by choice, offers a historically early case that demonstrates the near impossibility of reconciling different cultural and political interests. In his campaign for independence, Blyden emphasized the need for a sustained critique of the psychological effects of colonial indoctrination, for a formal education that combined classical teachings, including Islamic scholarship, with nationalist agendas and for the further development of a collective African personality representing "the body of qualities which make up the distinctiveness of the people of Africa."[63] Though

highly critical of slavery and imperialism, Blyden still accepted the primacy of the English language as a tool for "moral and intellectual conquest" and affirmed racialist theories when he promoted a unique "black personality" that excluded those of mixed heritage.[64] His equation of "purity of race" with "purity of blood or personality" finds an uncanny echo in the representation of the callous and lascivious mulatto in Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* (Chapter 2).

Gyekye's vision of an alternative modernity committed to humanistic values, Blyden's notion of an exclusive racial personality, and also Kenyatta's use of the ethnographic monograph to affirm Gikuyu culture from an anthropological and nationalist perspective provide a few poignant examples illustrating the difficulties of articulating liberatory ideologies through and, possibly, beyond Western epistemologies. In a similar attempt, the Négritude movement employed the literary expressions of its iconic writers—Léopold Senghor (Senegal), Léon Damas (French Guiana), and Aimé Césaire (Martinique)—to appeal to a unifying black tradition in defense against the potentially destabilizing influences of Western modernity. In its quest for an "authentic" Africaness, Négritude emphasized the difference between Western analytical reason and the intuitive reasoning of "the black race." Though prominent critics like Fanon and Soyinka rejected the movement's essentialized notion of racial difference early on, the gendered implications of Négritude were largely ignored until female writers and critics began to claim "literature as a weapon" against stereotypical representations of gender.[65] Mariama Bâ's appeal "to no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother who, in his anxiety, man confuses with Mother Africa" is aimed at idealized portrayals of African women that, ironically, found their inspiration in Senghor's poetic tribute to the African continent in the romanticized image of a black woman.[66] Even as the Négritude poets subverted colonial images of Africa, they displaced racial stereotypes through a sexual allegory that praised women for their dutiful guardianship of "African traditions." The portrayal of female characters is thus restricted to the trope of the caring mother, who faithfully safeguards the nation's cultural foundations, or the stereotype of the prostitute, who surrenders her integrity to neocolonial exploitation. In her study *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*, Florence Stratton traces the subsequent development of the trope in the works of prominent African authors, and concludes that regardless of whether a female character "is canonized as a mother or stigmatized as a prostitute, the designation is degrading, for he does the naming and her experience as a woman is trivialized and distorted. Metaphorically she is of the

highest importance, practically she is nothing" (52). As a paradigm for the fate of the African nation, women's oppression here primarily signifies the need for alternative sociopolitical models, rather than allowing for the analysis of gender-specific forms of social discrimination. Confined to the reproductive sexuality of their bodies and the domesticity of familial life, female characters serve as the privileged site for cultural continuity and are effectively excluded from public positions of authority. That these antithetical representations provide a residual template even in women's writing is apparent in the texts of Carolyne Adalla and Hope Keshubi (Chapter 4), where sexually promiscuous characters operate as convenient signifiers for the self-interested behavior that threatens the nation's moral and sexual reproduction in the time of AIDS.

In his eloquent mapping of the invention of Africa, Mudimbe notes the importance of twentieth-century shifts from a colonial perspective eager to classify normative deviations as "savagery" to the arguments of African scholars reclaiming "the authority of local systems of rules, signification, and order."[67] What distinguishes these new epistemological vocabularies from the "imperial power of the Same" is that while the colonial archive "negate[s] the possibility of a plural rationality and history; the more recent theories impose them, and would even extend to the understanding of marginalized experiences in the Western culture itself."[68] Acculturation ceases to be perceived as "an African disease" but emerges as the general and inevitable condition of intracultural change and transcultural encounters. But Mudimbe also cautions that new theoretical registers are underwritten by their own political interests. Is the institutionalization of pluralized difference only interested in empowering the local to ensure its exploitation for global consumption?

> *The dual reception of the Palm-Wine Drinkard remains perhaps the most glaring example of how the dominant categories of modernity—temporality, subjectivity, and rationality—have been and should be at the centre of any systematic attempt to understand African worlds, and conversely, of the important ways in which our engagement with Africa challenges our dominant explanatory models and theoretical categories.*
>
> *—Gikandi, "Reason" 141*

The Return of the Plural and the Emergence of the Local: Alternative Modernities

Mudimbe's critique of the epistemological foundations of Western modernity anticipates current studies and their emphasis on the political narratives behind the contested meanings of modern and modernity.[69] As the focus of the human and social sciences shifted toward the acknowledgment of local systems, attempts to understand contemporary society turned toward "the institutionalization of pluralism" and its corresponding paradigms of "globalization" and "postmodernity."[70] Not surprisingly, the conceptual problems characterizing the debate on modernity and postmodernity resurface in the discussion of globalization: is globalization a postmodern or modern phenomenon or does it testify to the cultural dynamics predating the modern?[71] How does globalization relate to modernity and its privileged relationship with the nation-state?[72] Will globalization result in the increasing uniformity of the world or will its uneven distribution and local adaptation generate heterogeneous cultural practices? In *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*, Featherstone warns against limiting the local to a geographically bounded space with close-knit social relationships, sustained by rituals and collective memories, thereby allowing for a stable cultural identity. Such definitions recycle the tradition-modernity binary in the spatialized terms of a seemingly pluralized epistemological vocabulary and also neglect the ambivalent connotations of community and home for women who are subjected to discriminatory practices.[73] He furthermore advocates for relating globalization to the transregional cultural exchanges that preceded the nineteenth-century formation of nation-states. Indeed, the transatlantic interactions of African diasporic populations, the shifting political and economic alliances of societies that navigate the Indian Ocean, and the migration of Bantu peoples across the African continent offer several historical precursors to contemporary global networks. I

argue, therefore, that globalization is best understood as the general *condition* that has facilitated the multidirectional exchange of economic and political formations, cultural practices and knowledges, and has contributed toward the emergence of global modernities.[74] The question of how older forms of globalization, which enabled the dissemination of colonial modernity, interact with new forms of transnational capitalism and information exchange, with the challenges of health pandemics and the production of modern sexuality, will inform the discussion of literary representations of HIV/AIDS in Chapter 4. I am particularly interested in how a global epidemic engages with the celebratory and dystopian narratives of globalization as the proliferation of sexual scripts meets the defensive retreat into moral propriety. To what extent do these ambiguous impulses echo the contradictory notions of promise and fraud that frame the experience of modernity? Sylvia Tamale's and Deborah Posel's work is of significance here since both authors examine how local institutions engage with globally circulating biomedical knowledge to influence the rhetorical construction of modern (female) sexuality. Not surprisingly, it is the threat of AIDS as a sexually transmitted and terminal disease that initiates a new debate on the role of individuals and nation-states in the responsible management of life and death. The struggle for democratic access to national resources resurfaces once again in the context of global capitalism and health, especially when self-interested (sexual) consumption is perceived as betraying the promises of postcolonial modernity.

In general, the study of the alternatively modern has forced a theoretical shift beyond sociological definitions, which tend to emphasize the institutional dimension of modernity, toward an understanding of modernity in its various social, political, cultural, and symbolic manifestations. Clearly, modernity is not sufficiently understood through an emphasis on the usual sociohistorical phenomena (capitalism and industrialization; bureaucracy and technological development; urbanity and the nation-state) but also needs to consider how individual agency and desires are implicated in the institutional and cultural fabric of a particular society. Equally important is the acknowledgment that socioeconomic and sociopolitical formations stereotypically associated with the West developed independently in different cultural locations. The emergence of an urban, economically competitive, and cosmopolitan-oriented Kiswahili culture along the East African coast from Southern Somalia to Northern Mozambique offers a poignant example of patterns that the West has been inclined to monopolize.[75] Instead of "belonging" to a privileged cultural site, modernity is often shaped by negotiations within and between cultural systems.

Several recent theoretical and empirical approaches to the alternatively modern are therefore invested in Fernando Ortiz's concept of "transculturation."[76] In contrast to related terms like acculturation and assimilation, "transculturation as the process whereby subordinated or marginalized groups select or invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" implies active exchanges between the participants of different cultural systems, though these contacts might not lead toward equal and reciprocal encounters.[77] Even the export of colonial modernity produced diverse results in its interaction with local cultural geographies and the distinctive needs of individual actors and, therefore, as Gikandi's mapping of the "culture of Englishness" clearly demonstrates, reshaped colonized as much as imperial cultures.[78] Consequently, transitions to modernity not only "produce different results that reflect their divergent starting points"[79] but also respond to transcultural networks outside the colonial orbit and the internal dynamics of each social system.

For this reason, my study of the alternatively modern in East African literature extends beyond the institutional dimensions of modernity or the concern with modernist vocabularies. I examine the culture-specific engagement with modern institutions (the church, the school, and the nation-state), categories (subjectivity, temporality, and rationality), and phenomena (ethnicity and race, migration and displacement, and HIV/AIDS). Such theoretical interests require a dialogic definition of culture that considers individuals and groups as active participants in shaping their environments, a theory of culture that contemplates intracultural differences and thus reclaims gender relations as a fundamental characteristic of modernity, and a theory of culture that relates past to current transcultural exchanges and envisions modernity and globalization as mutually interdependent processes, which continue to transform in an age of global consumption and communication. Certainly, East African narrative prose can be expected to engage with the shape-shifting vocabulary of modernism, reinventing and supplementing its representational repertoire through orally transmitted idioms and, in particular, by reclaiming the epic as a suitable mode for narrating the present (Chapter 2). In this context, modernism transcends the specifics of literary style and historical period to capture the expressive registers of culture-specific modernities.[80]

My interests and concerns differ in some decisive aspects from Meyer and Olver's otherwise insightful article on "Alternative Modernities in African Literatures and Cultures" in a 2002 special double edition of the *Journal of Literary Studies*. Premised on Goankar's study of the alternatively modern, the authors examine African modernities

as the result of transcultural interactions within a capitalist exchange system dating back to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries. In the case of East Africa, such approaches also have to consider the extensive economic exchanges, shifting political alliances and migratory patterns that, for centuries, have united the regional cultures of the Great Lakes or those societies surrounding the Indian Ocean. By extending Wallerstein's notion of the world system, Meyer and Olver argue that exchanges between the indigenous populations of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the invading Europeans "foisted an attitude of questioning tradition in the light of the present upon everyone in the contact zones and thus, along with the technology which accompanied it, ushered in global modernity" (6). While transcultural contacts are certainly fundamental to modernity, the impulse to question tradition cannot be considered the prerogative of such external interventions, especially if these are restricted to the encounter between colonizer and colonized. Instead, the interrogation of tradition also results from the competing aspirations of groups and individuals within a particular cultural system. These intrasocietal conflicts, as I have argued previously, do not shy away from "inventing tradition" in order to support new claims to power.

Understanding modernity in both singular and multiple terms, since communities exist within a global system of communication even as the dynamics of these global exchanges may vary, Meyer and Olver conclude that modernity, in its engagement with diverse local traditions, inevitably produces multiple and culture-specific configurations.[81] How, they wonder, do local modernities create their own normativity by breaking with previous practices? Their inquiry into the culture-specific normativity of the modern, however, needs to be supplemented with an examination of African responses to the normative orthodoxy of a West still hesitant to rethink its prejudiced vocabulary. As part of the colonial project, colonized populations were "written into the dominant European narrative, a narrative that defined itself in categories—modernity and a bourgeois identity—which even the colonized came to admire and emulate."[82] Yet as Attwell explains in *Rewriting Modernity*, black South African intellectuals used the cultural repertoire of colonial modernity, and especially print culture, to establish themselves as modern subjects "in direct opposition to the identities ascribed to them in colonial and apartheid ideology" (3).[83] To what extent, then, are ideologies of becoming modern associated with anticolonial and nationalist agendas? Which gender-specific subtexts define the nationalist rhetoric of modernity and its often competing claims of national autonomy and cultural authenticity? How

are women positioned in relation to political discourses and strategies of resistance? If Gikandi is correct in relating the failure of modern institutions and nationalist rhetoric to the prevalent economic, social, and political crises in postcolonial Africa, then in order to address the "African present as a conceptual problem, we have to reflect on the origins and status of many of the theoretical problems inherited from modernity and its rationality."[84]

This relationship between "the grammar of modernity [and] contemporary attempts to grapple with the African crisis" supports King's insistence that examinations of the alternatively modern cannot be limited to notions of the modern as progressive and positive.[85] When Knauft restricts the interdisciplinary debate on global modernities to the ways in which "standards of social advancement and progress are seen to differ depending on cultural and historical conditions" (1), he neglects to address the "Janus-faced dimension of modernity" as a simultaneous force of emancipation and of destruction.[86] To better understand the ambiguous position of African subjects inside and outside colonial modernity, we have to consider their exclusion from the theoretical registers and privileges of Western modernity while being "politically forced into its institutional apparatus."[87] The paradox outlined by Gikandi is also reflected in Attwell's notion of a "fugitive modernity," the result of postcolonial attempts to reinscribe modernity into the cultural fabric of a specific geographical site and, in the process, situate oneself "outside of received, colonial versions of authority" (24).[88] How, then, have women engaged with dominant representations of gender, race, and modernity in an effort to define their own fugitive modernities? Feminist and postcolonial critiques have only begun to examine the double erasure of women of color in the practices of modernity, their representation in colonial and nationalist discourses that either reduces them to "a sign for the repressed or irrational other of rationality defined as male [and white] or [to] a means to celebrate the power of human nature uncorrupted by the decadence of the civilizing mission."[89] The Christian imperative of monogamy and the economic marginalization of women as managers of households and farms are just two examples of colonial interventions that excluded women from access to the new institutions of power and left them ill-prepared to confront imported and indigenous patriarchal structures.[90] If, as Tambu's spirited struggle for further education in *Nervous Conditions* illustrates, women's interests are, at times, aligned with dominant conceptions of the modern, alternative modernities should be less compromised in what they have to offer to women, especially when these different expressions

of modernity are shaped by women's actions and concerns. Marshall remains optimistic that the relationship of women to modernity, even if ambivalent, still allows for emancipatory opportunities, while Felski values modernity's potential for authorizing contramodernities when oppositional groups challenge institutionalized patterns.[91] How, then, does "our understanding of modernity change if instead of taking male experience as paradigmatic, we were to look instead at texts written primarily by or about women"?[92] And how does modernity evolve, mutate, and reinvent itself if we consider texts authored by Kenyan and Ugandan women? To celebrate such alternative modernities as oppositional countercultures within and to modernity, however, might be premature. As I will argue throughout the following chapters, subversion and complicity, compromise and innovation, interact in often unpredictable ways in the literary texts of East African women writers and demand a careful assessment of the relationship between the alternatively and the critically modern.

Even if familiar distinctions (traditional and modern, modern and postmodern, colonial and postcolonial) primarily reflect the desire of the West "to master its others in order to understand itself," modernity still plays a fundamental role in any attempt to understand the relationship between the West and Africa.[93] Acknowledging the persistence of modern categories (rationality, subjectivity, temporality) in the postcolony, Gikandi concludes that to examine modernity in relation to African cultures is both an impossibility and an imperative: an impossibility because colonial modernity established its normativity by defining Africans as its nonrational others; an imperative because of the pervasive opposition between tradition and modernity, and between reason and superstition, that continues to furnish the dominant paradigms through which images of self and other are articulated. That these paradigms of self and other affect relationships not only *between* but also *within* social systems is evidenced by literary texts unsure of how to negotiate the humanity of ethnic and racial "strangers" (Chapter 3), or even of fellow citizens who represent an undesirable (because self-interested and materialistic) modernity (Chapters 2 and 4). Though alternative modernities undermine the hegemonic aspirations of Western modernity, they cannot be considered immune from recycling its epistemological contradictions and institutional flaws in their struggle for a desirable social order.

Not only Gikandi but also Habermas and Bhabha have to agree on the incompleteness of "the project of modernity." But while Habermas emphasizes the unrealized potential of modernity, Bhabha's notion of incompleteness is premised on the persistence of fundamentally

negative aspects of modernity, in particular, the continuation of neocolonial "social, political and economic structures (and ideological forms of Othering)," as well as the unacknowledged role of non-Western cultures in the formation of Western modernity.[94] His assessment that "each repetition of the sign of modernity is different, specific to its historical and cultural conditions of enunciation" challenges the epistemological monopolies of the West and emphatically insists on the possibility of culture-specific modernities.[95] He calls attention to the disjuncture between the Enlightenment ideals of progress and liberation and the everyday practice of racism and exploitation through which the colonial past transitions into the neocolonial present. This disjuncture results in the belated recognition of people of color as human beings and, hence, "problematizes the legitimacy of the universalized and transcendental category of Man as 'unifying reference of ethical value' which underwrote the new episteme of modernity."[96] The belated entry into modernity, however, also opens up a "time lag" through which the postcolonial subject can articulate an identity different from the pejorative repertoire of the colonial archive. The discrepant temporality and culture-specific idiom of the alternatively modern thus disturbs the linear narratives of national and global progress by introducing incomplete, not yet realized, and not yet represented social and political identities and practices. Modernity is "kept open," not only through multiple geographical sites but also via a disjunctive temporality through which new sites of expressions are available for those formerly excluded from its foundational narratives. Being in the postcolonial beyond—the transitory space of disorientation and restlessness that allows for the revision of cultural difference and subjectivity—means to inhabit an intervening space and a revisionary time that performs modernity according to the needs of the present and hence unsettles its previous normative trajectory.

My study of literary representations of East African modernities is equally interested in the negotiation of modernity within and across cultural communities, in the engagement with a colonial modernity designed to promote "the culture of Englishness," and with global modernities reflecting contemporary migrations of people and flows of ideas, goods, and information. The next chapter on "Historical Modernities: Epics of Love and Literacy" examines the colonial institutions of church and school, and the efforts to reclaim the rhetoric of individual and national progress articulated through these institutions at a time when the postcolonial nation-state has betrayed its promises of prosperity and peace. If the novels in Chapter 2 eventually recover the utopia of progress and development in a morally redeemed

modernity, then the texts discussed in "The Dark Sides of Modernity: Citizens, Strangers, and the Production of Moral Indifference" (Chapter 3) only allow for a vision of dystopia unable to claim the modern nation as a vehicle for liberation and solidarity. Instead, the space of the postcolonial nation seems fated to repeat the exclusionary rhetoric and violent practices of empire in its intolerant attitude toward those considered "different" by virtue of their race or ethnicity, religion or class, and who are therefore excluded from the protection of the state. In the final chapter, "Mapping Global Modernities: Property and Propriety in the Time of AIDS," my examination shifts to the production of modern sexuality. In their reliance on cultural metaphors and institutions to better comprehend a global disease, the selected texts are as interested in reimagining the disciplined exercise of modern sexuality as they are in challenging the nation-state to responsibly manage life and death in the age of global consumption and disease. In the narratives under study, transnational movements of refugees and exiles, state-sponsored violence and aggression, but also the lasting desire for social mobility and democracy, suggest that the ambiguous legacies of modernity continue to resonate in the era of postmodern globalization. Against the persistent experience of crisis and the continued exile from one's own humanity, Owuor's short story "The State of Tides," discussed in the book's conclusion, argues for the possibility of reasoned insight into the consequences of modernity. The short story by the 2003 winner of the Caine Prize rewrites imperial modernity from the perspective of Conrad's "savage and superb woman," whose contemporary sister embarks on a journey to the postimperial metropolis, where she is destined to encounter Marlow's itinerant descendant. In its eloquent appeal for an intersubjectively negotiated modernity that addresses the legacies of the past, the narrative envisions transcultural encounters in terms radically different from (and yet tightly interwoven with) Marlow's ill-fated journey down the Congo River.

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Chapter 2

Historical Modernities

Epics of Love and Literacy

A single, poignant scene from *The Invisible Weevil* eloquently speaks to the vision of modernity informing the works of Margaret Ogola, Jane Kaberuka, and Mary Okurut.[1] Heading home from the Ugandan capital Kampala to the rural areas, a group of passengers finds themselves squeezed into a group taxi. As the vehicle moves along cautiously, most of the passengers enjoy the soothing lyrics of Jim Reeves's song "Precious Memories," with its promise of moral redemption in the afterlife. But the moment of social harmony is rudely interrupted by two young men presented in the fashionable trademarks of globalized consumer culture—baggy pants, sleeveless T-shirts, crew cuts, and the always essential chewing gum. Their aggressive masculinity is channeled into greater speed, louder music, and absolute contempt for those fellow passengers uninterested in instant gratification: "'They play that outdated music to remind themselves of their days of sin. Precious memories. What memories? We are living in today not in memories. Give us some hot number men (sic)'" (145). The narrative, however, leaves little doubt about its own allegiances when gleefully pointing out that one of the young man wears a T-shirt with the imprint "lost generation," while the one of his companion reads "identity crisis." The recklessly speeding car morphs into the allegorical vehicle for a secular and materialist society that, driven by its capacity for accelerated movement and uncontrollable change, metaphorically reenacts Giddens's "juggernaut of modernity."

As nation-states and capitalist economies, processes of industrialization and militarization operate across social and geographical spaces;

they continually reshape social relations and individual biographies, creating a landscape of shifting temporal and spatial coordinates no longer routed through the specifics of place. If Giddens offers some hope that humans might successfully adjust to the juggernaut of unparalleled change, the novel tenders a much simpler antidote for the "identity crisis" of a "lost generation." "In an authoritative hard hitting voice" (146), one of the female passengers admonishes the two young men for their disregard of the other passengers' safety. Her moral reprimand is directed not only at the young men, who feel appropriately chastised, but also at fellow passengers who willingly surrender to their own abuse. As the novel expresses cautious optimism in the human ability to proceed at a desirable speed, a moral imperative enters the disembedded institutional and social structures of modernity, reminiscent of the work of the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye and his appeal to an alternative African modernity that desires measured progress for all. The shift in focus to the normativity of the modern is facilitated by a corresponding shift to smaller social units than the nationally operating institutions that attract Giddens's interest. If Marshall wonders where institutions such as families or households fit into Giddens's conceptual framework (19), then Gyekye reclaims the extended family as a fundamental social institution in the design of a morally invested modernity. Sharing the concern with passengers in single cars, with intimate social relations shaped by marriage and parenthood, the novels I will discuss in this chapter seem to concur with Gyekye that "the decline and fall of a nation begins in its homes" (293), even as the institutions of church and school fundamentally alter cultural identities. But can the appeal to moral responsibility have any impact when cautiously moving cars are easily overrun by those proceeding at a different speed?

Even though the British social scientist Anthony Giddens and the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye write from different cultural and disciplinary locations, they share a concern with modernity's institutional and psychological effects as they interrogate how self-identity has been shaped by modern institutions.[2] Giddens queries how institutional change has affected the individual's ability to construct a coherent biographical narrative and to negotiate social relations predicated on trust rather than on the genealogical criteria of kinship. He wonders how "the reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choices as filtered through abstract systems."[3] Once social change is no longer channeled through clearly defined rites of passage, how do individual actors articulate their

desire for ontological security and cultural continuity? Gyekye, on the other hand, is primarily concerned about whether the social and institutional landscape of modernity can be reconciled with a distinctively African normativity, with a communitarian ethos that demands the investment of individual achievements for the benefit of a larger community. His vision of an alternative modernity, suited to the specific demands of the continent's diverse cultural environments, aspires to at least some of the features associated with Western modernity. Yet even as Gyekye applauds the innovative ethos of Western society with its emphasis on technology and science and embraces certain forms of capitalist production, he cautions that such imported practices need to be integrated into an African normative structure that privileges socially conscious techniques of economic management, consensus politics, local self-government, and the needs of the family. The Western promise of social and economic progress has not lost its attractive appeal, but its individualist and secular philosophy needs to be carefully separated from the communitarian humanism Gyekye identifies as "essentially African" and claims as a desirable ethical framework for the alternatively modern. Such a communitarian ethos will both "allow the practice of a free or private enterprise" and "demonstrate commitment and sensitivity to the needs and welfare of the disadvantaged" (293); indeed, Gyekye argues, the pursuit of the common good is "always a matter of rational or moral choice that human beings are free to make" (297). A quintessentially modern, rationally and autonomously acting subjectivity is here recuperated into a moral narrative in which the only responsible choice is the one for the attainment of the common good. Gyekye's attempt to define a consistent social and ontological model, which is to provide a viable basis for the alternatively modern, is certainly problematic in its inevitable neglect of the cultural diversity of African cultures; his frequent references to Akan culture and history clearly demonstrate the conceptual limitations of his ideal-type sociopolitical system. However, his concern with the normative structure of modernity, Western as well as African, addresses some of the moral choices and dilemmas that have been persistently excluded from the dominant scripts of Western modernity, and thus anticipates recent studies of the alternatively or critically modern. Even if informed by schematic binaries, Gyekye's arguments resonate profoundly with the novels' portrayals of protagonists whose desire for self-advancement sometimes contradicts the normative preferences of a continually changing cultural environment.

In general, Gyekye's and Giddens's interest in the shifting and mutually constitutive configurations of individual agency and social

institutions has proven useful for my study, which extends beyond sociological definitions of modernity to include representations of temporality and historical consciousness as well as the concern with the psychological effects of the colonial encounter. These issues are of particular relevance in the three novels under study, which imagine the fate of their respective protagonists in the epic terms of cultural identity, social change, and historical past. If the epic chronicles the adventures of an exceptional hero, whose innovative deeds explain the social ideals (if not the social reality) of the present, then its dual function of commemorating and institutionalizing cultural change is reflected in novelistic discourses that reroute the individual achievements of the present through the generational and epistemological continuity offered by the narrative of the past.[4] In spite of far-reaching institutional changes, these texts argue that modernity can be claimed through the normative and narrative templates of the past.

Not surprisingly, Gyekye and Giddens oppose the postmodern break with the epistemological and institutional formations of modernity, and refer to the proliferation of the alternatively modern in the twentieth century as solid proof for the continuation of historically established paradigms. Gyekye understands such culture-specific responses as positive signs toward the self-willed entry into modernity, while Giddens reads them as an inevitable consequence of the global spread of Western institutions, even as their control over increasingly diverse centers of power steadily declines.[5] Though interested in the dynamics of transcultural encounters, both scholars are unwilling to engage with the contradictory racial and sexual politics of colonial modernity. Hence, it will be crucial to examine whether novels that insist on a modern subjectivity shaped by the opportunities afforded through formal schooling and monogamous marriage address these exclusionary politics any more convincingly than Gyekye or Giddens. Can intellectual skills and emotional maturity, first proven in intimate social relations, indeed redeem a postcolonial nation in crisis? Can love and literacy, church and school, reclaim the nation and its fraudulent promises of liberation?

These fraudulent promises return us, once again, to the prominent role accorded to reason in the epistemology of Western modernity and its effect on the oppositional construction of traditional and modern societies. It is in regard to these issues that the British social scientist and the Ghanaian philosopher disagree most explicitly. Gyekye reclaims human reason as the opportune tool for creating a desirable modernity, predicated on both indigenous and imported cultural practices. For Giddens, rationality has lost its privileged association with order

and control; instead, doubt prevails as the self-reflexive organization of institutions and identities leads to further shifts in knowledge and a constantly changing social landscape. Their contradictory reading of rationality demonstrates the historical legacy of both scholars' cultural position.[6] Gyekye's desire to reclaim reason as the organizing principle of society and subjectivity, and his insistence that Africans continually examine the effectiveness of their cultural practices, responds to the systematic exclusion of non-Western cultures from modern rationality. Gikandi's poignant question of whether "we [can] think of an African identity that is not haunted by the shadow of Western reason or the temptation of the noble savage" retains its relevance in spite of the proliferation of the alternatively modern.[7]

Securely positioned within the privileges of Western epistemology, Giddens is at liberty to interrogate the "dark sides" of rationality, its limitations as a tool for order and prediction, and its manipulative use as an instrument of subjugation. He argues that while all cultures modify social practices when new information becomes available, modern societies radicalize these revisions "to apply . . . to all aspects of human life, including technological intervention into the material world."[8] The reflexivity of modern life entails the constant reexamination of cultural practices "in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character."[9] The institutionalization of doubt in the contemporary period of high modernity thus signals the limits of a rationality that will always be partial and incomplete.[10] Though Giddens's arguments illustrate that the critique of reason is not the prerogative of the postmodern, they remain limited to sociological (and Eurocentric) models that carefully distinguish between the premodern and the modern and often conflate the "traditions" of non-Western societies with the sum total of their cultures. Giddens maintains that critical reflection in premodern societies is limited to the reinterpretation of tradition—that all experiences are integrated into a historical continuum held together by the repeat performance of certain social practices.[11] The security afforded by tradition therefore restricts a culture's ability to engage with the openness of counterfactual futures; ultimately, moral imperatives enter into the cognitive preferences of premodern societies, for "[t]he world is as it is because it is as it should be."[12] In this assessment, Giddens not only rehearses old stereotypes about the collective and confirmatory quality of African systems of thoughts that erase the possibility of an autonomously acting subject but also validates one of the prevalent myths of Western modernity that its radical self-reflexivity does indeed allow for a sweeping break with the past.

Gyekye, of course, refuses to accept the exclusionary binaries of Western sociology and instead claims change as an intrinsic element of every social system. African societies, he argues, have always been successful in negotiating internally and externally induced change; their dynamic nature in the past continues in their contemporary ability to articulate the alternatively modern in empowered acts of transculturation.[13] Cultural practices are not intrinsically authorized by virtue of their past effectiveness but are continually evaluated by subsequent generations. If, for Giddens, tradition signifies security but also stasis, then Gyekye insists on the copresence of change and continuity in every social system. Given the continual adaptation of cultural practices and the fact that modernity itself is an amalgam of historically and culturally diverse influences, Gyekye prefers the "modernity of tradition" and the "tradition of modernity" to their antithetical opposition.[14]

How useful, then, are Giddens's and Gyekye's arguments for understanding narratives that eagerly embrace the innovations of literacy and romance, even as they remain deeply committed to the continuation of the family epic? How do the novels of Margaret Ogola, Jane Kaberuka, and Mary Okurut situate cultural influences within the potentially ambivalent minefield of tradition and modernity? Is human reason claimed as an opportune tool for shaping a desirable modernity? Or does increased knowledge only lead to further doubt when it fails to explain a continually shifting social landscape? Does modernity indeed emerge as an often threatening juggernaut or does cultural change, even under the violent conditions of colonial occupation and postcolonial dictatorship, allow for the deliberate intervention of human actors? How are the risks of rapidly changing social environments negotiated, and what is their impact on the narratives of cultural belonging, of ontological security, and of biographical continuity that different protagonists desire to articulate?

FAITH IN REASON: MARGARET OGOLA'S *THE RIVER AND THE SOURCE*

The River and the Source by Margaret Ogola offers an epic vision of female resilience, courage, and determination.[15] Presented in four parts, the narrative extends over a century from the 1870s to the 1980s, from the precolonial times of the Luo chiefdoms to the postcolonial realities of present-day Kenya. Such historical depth allows for a panoramic vision of the life of Akoko Obanda, first-born daughter of a local chief, who becomes the source of a matrilineal tradition

that will flow like a river through an epoch of Kenyan history. The text prefers to narrate the lives of mothers and daughters rather than trace the patrilineal succession of rulers. The gendering of the epic and its cultural regrafting onto a national, even global, canvas redirects the focus of the story from localized culture to nationalized gender, from blood relations to spiritual affinities, thus acknowledging that life's crucial struggles are no longer enacted in royal courts and on the battlefield but in the nursery, the kitchen, and classroom.[16] The novel's opening scene is already troped in the generic conventions of epic storytelling: "One night, in the smoky hut of Aketch, the second wife of the great chief Odero Gogni of Yimbo, a baby was born. It was about thirty seasons before that great snaking metal road of *Jorochere* the white people, reached the bartering market of Kisuma" (9).[17] Though the spatial, temporal, and social markers locate the chronologically told narrative in the historical present, the immediate reference to a cultural landscape visibly altered by colonial technology provides the first of many proleptic interventions. Repeatedly asserting that "[t]hings would never be the same again though the girl did not realize it then" (59), the extradiegetic narrator effectively turns the present into the past while anticipating a future that is already in progress.[18] Focalized commentary offers a coherent interpretation for the playful interweaving of different time levels. And thus the narrator does not neglect to draw the reader's attention to the exceptional qualities of Akoko, a physically and intellectually gifted child, diminutive in stature yet physically fearless: "Everybody remarked that she would be a very determined person some day" (12). Rehearsing the extraordinary talents of the epic hero, Akoko early on demonstrates "the highest ideals to which a society can aspire in its search for excellence and security."[19]

Indeed, her exceptional social position as the first daughter of a chief who had already "sired seven sons" (9) calls for an immediate narrative intervention. The insistence of the proud father that "a home without daughters is like a spring without a source" (9) offers the figurative template in which the achievements of a female-centered genealogy will be chronicled. Thus, the novel recounts "the journey which would bring [Akoko] and her scant offspring to a new era; for the great river starts its journey as a little stream which at first meanders around without any apparent direction, sometimes disappearing underground altogether, but always there, always moving towards the sea" (71). The metaphoric leitmotif suggests the purpose with which a naturally evolving community moves through history, absorbing new impulses into the rhythm of its flow and heading

toward a clearly stated goal, even if its occasional detours suggest otherwise. The organic terms in which the novel imagines personal and cultural identity mediate against epistemological and social rupture and instead ground innovative acts in the fabric of the familiar. Not surprisingly, it is on the initiative of Akoko's father, respected chief and family patriarch, that the status of women in the homestead is officially acknowledged. The political leader himself allows for a shift in the social fabric that will eventually result in an alternate, female-centered "tradition." This close affiliation with institutionalized authority develops into a persistent feature of Akoko's and her daughter's life stories, and successfully mitigates against their social vulnerability as widows and orphans.

Like the epic hero, Akoko matures rapidly, and her biography showcases a series of successfully accomplished rites of passage: the naming ceremony, the initiation ceremony, and, eventually, the prospect of marriage. Her superior abilities and noble ancestry endow Akoko with a sense of entitlement that results in proud, even defiant, behavior. But the customary pride of the epic protagonist is moderated by her knowledge of *Chik*, the customs and values of her people, which require her to prove herself in the daily battles of womenfolk—in the fields, in the house, and through impeccable moral conduct.[20] Even as a member of the elite, marriage threatens to deprive her of the protection of the father's house. And yet for two consecutive seasons, the steadily arriving suitors are frustrated by "hostile brothers and an impossible to please father" (15). Only "one fine morning" (16) will the daunting task be mastered, when a young chief from the neighboring location enters Akoko's compound and casually accepts the excessive bride-price. The unspecified temporal referent, the impossible task of pleasing overprotective in-laws, and the sudden appearance of a courageous suitor offer narrative paradigms drawn from the repertoire of epic stories. The relationship between Akoko and Owuor is most memorable for Owuor's romantic attachment to his wife and his insistence on a monogamous marriage. In the union of the couple, the novel positively sanctions a tight-knit nuclear family that embraces the values of romantic love and of disciplined labor. Acquisitive rationality and personal romance, the defining paradigms of the bourgeois ethos of success, are here reclaimed as an integral feature of a Luo sensibility not yet affected by the dynamics of Christian morality and capitalist production. The fact that arranged marriages, reflecting the interests of kinship groups, still allow for the expression of emotions stereotypically reserved for relationships based on personal trust, signals the potential correspondence of diverse cultural practices. If Western

discourse insists on the normative incompatibility of arranged versus individually negotiated marriages, then the novels under study instead emphasize cultural and epistemological continuity. The privileged status of the *mikai*, the first wife, even anticipates the exclusive position of the wife in a monogamous relationship. Romantic sentiments are not the prerogative of a "modern subjectivity," and though gender relations in *The River and the Source* are phrased in an increasingly progressive idiom in the postcolonial era, mutual support, respect, and trust are already cultivated in Akoko's and Owuor's union. Female valor is established through moral integrity, the care for children, and a disciplined work ethic, but the novel is equally concerned with the changing qualities of male heroism: men prove themselves by sharing their romantic affections, and their moral strength is measured in the respect they accord to their wives.

However, in his firm refusal to marry another wife, Owuor also defies the authority of a mother who had hoped to see her son conform to social expectations, and whose resentment of her daughter-in-law escalates into the accusation that her son's "unreasonable" behavior is the result of Akoko's witchcraft. Akoko responds with fierce anger to the allegations questioning her moral integrity. At the council meeting, during which the conflicting arguments will be debated, she insists on being accorded the respect befitting her social conduct and emphasizes a clan-based notion of honor: "I have always been taught that honour and pride in oneself and one's people were of the utmost importance for one's sense of being, for as the wise men tell us, 'How can you know where you are going if you do not know where you come from?'" (38). The careful public negotiation of the conflict demonstrates the flexibility of cultural norms—the elders supporting polygamy for the biological and social continuity it provides, Owuor emphasizing the privileged role of the *mikai*, the first wife who is "the centre post that holds up a man's hut"—and holds each party equally accountable for the deterioration of social relations. Though colonial discourse comprehends "witchcraft" only in the prejudiced discourse of irrationality and superstition, the novel demonstrates the emotional frustrations and social tensions leading to the rhetorical deployment of tropes of unsociability. In its rational debate of rights and responsibilities, the council of elders institutionalizes the judicious exercise of political authority that will later find its equivalent in the colonial court system. The novel's frequent juxtaposition of historical present and futuristic prolepsis already gestures toward the interplay of colonial modernity and what Attwell has so poignantly called "neotraditionalism" (75). Once precolonial Luo society is reimagined

as a modernized, rational order, it offers a potential home for the modern subject.

The text's ideological desire to portray the moral legitimacy of Luo political processes relates to Gyekye's vision of African precolonial institutions and their sensible exercise of power. Committed to arbitration rather than authoritarian decision making, Owuor's chieftaincy and the council of elders reflect Gyekye's ideal democratic features: rule by popular consent, freedom of opinions in the conduct of public affairs, and limitations on the chief's exercise of power (116). As Gyekye reclaims the people themselves as the basis of political authority, he is able to envision an alternative modernity predicated on the participatory political processes of precolonial African systems. The novel, however, while committed to the structural integrity of Luo political institutions, is equally interested in the morally corrupt use of power that, as in the case of Owuor's successor, defies consensual politics and economic justice. Threatened by the corrupt leadership of a brother-in-law who disregards even the needs of his most immediate family, the now widowed Akoko considers the decline in Luo political authority as the opportune moment for her self-willed entry into colonial modernity. The decision to claim her nephew's rights to the chieftaincy by appealing to the alternative authority of the colonial government indicates a shift from clan-based notions of honor and social responsibility to the negotiation of trust in relationships defined by personal needs. And, thus, she admonishes her daughter Nyabera for her reluctance to extend trust beyond the immediate bonds of shared ancestry: "And trust is something to give to people who have earned it and therefore you have to give them a chance to do so. I would not trust your uncle Otieno although he is as black as the bottom of the pot I boil rice and beans in" (69). Her earlier claim in front of the council of elders that respecting oneself and others sustains a sense of integrity is echoed in the mutuality of response and involvement with which "modern" trust relations are established.[21] Trust in one's own abilities sustains trust in the integrity of others and hence facilitates the confident negotiation of social conflicts and opportunities. For Akoko, an unpredictable life demands constant adaptation to change, and, in particular, a widowed woman who has lost the protection of her powerful husband has to accept the lack of security (122). A socially vulnerable, gendered identity intensifies the experience of risk and thus disproves Giddens's assumption that the struggle for ontological and social security is primarily the concern of a modern, Western subjectivity. If high modernity inevitably requires the choice of a lifestyle, "a more or less integrated set of practices [which] fulfill

utilitarian needs . . . because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity," then Akoko's bold choices already imply the presence of plural options, even in a society that prefers the ordered transitions of initiation rites.[22]

That social transitions require a repositioning in the narrative of self-identity and that such shifts are facilitated by the knowledge of "where you come from" is apparent in Akoko's journey to the regional court of the British colonial government (72–78) and her daughter's subsequent move to the mission (104–6). On the way to a new center of power, the women recite the mythological narratives in which Luo cultural and religious identity is framed: the stories of the creator spirit Were and the ancestral founder Ramogi, and the inspiring tales of historical warriors. The recital of familiar cultural epics enacts, in narrative, an identity potentially threatened by the progress-oriented forward movement into colonial modernity. The narrative performance of cultural identity soon expands to include the biography of the storyteller, whose courageous acts are absorbed into established narrative templates. And thus Akoko's migration to Kisumu will gain cultural currency through its translation into "a tale [that] took on mythical proportions" (81). Later, her daughter's account of her experience at the mission tells of such new wonders that it is immediately "placed into the realm of the mythical" (102) by her rapt audience. Conditions of displacement and liminality are thus commemorated as part of the collective memory and reclaim the individual act for the benefit of a larger community. Epic and myth rehearse the institutionalization of a new order and thus furnish the stories in which a social community expresses its moral imperatives and historical identity. The recital of cultural narratives in the novel fulfills a similar function and facilitates the integration of new spatial and cultural referents into an established normative repertoire.

Given the novel's desire for continuity in change, it will not surprise that Akoko's experience with the colonial justice system echoes her earlier interaction with the Luo council of elders. Then, as now, the rational deliberation of conflicting arguments takes place in an institutional forum that validates the concern of all parties involved. The council of elders had still aimed at a consensual outcome and distributed political authority among a group of "wise men," but the colonial court consolidates such power in the hands of a district commissioner who is physically and ideologically removed from the specifics of place in which the conflict occurs. In describing Akoko's physical journey to the court, her reliance on an interpreter, and the district commissioner's need to verify her claims, the novel acknowledges the spatial

and cultural distance under which the disembedded institutions of Western modernity operate in colonial Kenya. Yet the narrative is less concerned with such changes than with the continuity of political and legal institutions that will allow for an ordered historical transition. Hence, neither the institutionalized power of Luo councils and chiefs nor the colonial administrative and legal system is questioned for as long as such power is exercised with moral integrity, for a constituency, and not for personal enrichment.

Represented as "value-free" instruments, precolonial and colonial institutions guarantee law and order and only collapse if appropriated by morally corrupted actors. This vision of power explains why the subversive acts of Akoko and her descendants are designed to enable the alliance with institutionalized authority—with the colonial court, the Christian church, and the school—and why the nation is considered redeemable through the actions of morally committed individuals. To satisfy its desire for an ordered transition to the institutional structure of colonial society, the text has to engage in some daring rhetorical gestures. Since even the district commissioner's support for Akoko does not ensure the continuity of precolonial authorities, the novel explains that "[i]n spite of the DC's decision, it was only a matter of time before the hereditary chiefdoms were done away with totally. It was a changing world" (85). Conveniently ignoring the colonial impact on Luo political institutions, the impersonal dynamics of a "changing world" are instead held accountable for what appears to be a process of natural "evolution." The significance of the commissioner's decision hence lies in the "new vistas" it opens for Akoko's family—"the possibility of a different way" (85) based on a shared humanity and rationality. Insisting that "human nature is the same the world over" (61), that the rational debate of rights and responsibilities is ensured by local and foreign institutions, that reason mitigates against ethnic and religious prejudice (255), and that an unpredictable life can be explored in rational terms, *The River and the Source* embraces the promises of the Enlightenment even if has to forcibly erase colonial history from the text. Colonial and postcolonial politics rarely intervene in a narrative that privileges genealogical continuity and approaches cultural change almost exclusively through the perspective of the extended family. Sporadic and synoptic references to historical events—the emergency, *uhuru* (Independence), the postcolonial economic decline—monitor the reading of history from precolonial to postcolonial times and constantly redirect the historical focus to Akoko's family. Retaining its ideological distance to the many abuses of the colonial system, the novel welcomes colonial institutions

for the opportunities they afford but conveniently ignores the racial prejudices and imperial aspirations on which they were predicated and the cultural contradictions they generated. In a feat of historical amnesia, the narrative of gender emancipation is allowed to triumph.

Akoko's fierce resilience, her strength, and her determination provide the foundation for a vision of gendered progress continued (and hence immortalized) in a line of female descendants. In her quest for excellence, for the conditions under which an honorable and dignified life are possible, she exemplifies "[the] ideals that the heroic personality aims to actualize" while she is also concerned with "justice, accommodation, and conduct befitting an ordered society."[23] As the trials and challenges of the epic heroine increasingly adopt the social discourses of the novelistic genre, her visionary leadership resonates with the demands of Gyekye's alternative modernity. For the Ghanaian philosopher, individual acts of social innovation need to consider a culture's existing normative structure and contribute to the well-being of the community. Underlying his vision of cultural change is an ontological model that considers "the self both as a communal being and as an autonomous, self-assertive being with a capacity for evaluation and choice" (59) and that grounds a normative structure in which the decision for the common good is the desirable moral choice. In its portrayal of female characters endowed with the exceptional qualities of the epic hero, yet not given to the arrogance with which the conventional protagonist displays his considerable pride, the novel advances an ethos of strength and purpose, of discipline and hard work, which continually seeks to reconcile individual talents with the needs of the community and the commitment to justice. But unlike Gyekye's explicit interest in the need for economic progress and the leadership of an educated elite, the novel is less sure of how to situate its humanist ethos in relation to an economically and socially increasingly stratified society. The narrative thus presents the reader with characters for whom economic prosperity and social status are secondary to the quest for moral perfection, who prefer the priesthood to the status and wealth of political office (117), and who consider salaried work as a "means of sanctification" (222) rather than material improvement. In its quest for moral progress, the novel ignores the more problematic connotations of social mobility resulting from the same institutional context in which the desire for excellence finds its new expression.

Nyabera, Akoko's daughter and her only surviving child, continues in the iconoclastic spirit of her mother. After the death of her husband, Nyabera is consumed by bitterness and only reluctantly accepts the

institution of *tero*, the affiliation with a male in-law, aimed at securing the social position of the widow and the lineage of her husband. Like her mother before her, Nyabera relies on her ability to make "a ruthless decision" and transform an undesirable social position into the condition for liberating change. Marginalized by her own community, she feels entitled to migrate to a nearby Christian mission, especially since her only surviving child is a daughter, and "a girl . . . was a wanderer who would settle anywhere and marry anywhere" (92). Cultural marginalization does not only entail risks but also encourages risky choices, especially when displacement and exile are irrevocably inscribed into the gender identity of women who are required to move to their husbands' home. In Ogola's narrative, social vulnerability predestines women for the self-willed entry into colonial modernity and the selective acceptance of Western cultural practices and institutions. Though historical sources document the exclusion of African women from the institutions of colonial modernity, while neither Gyekye nor Giddens can even envision the gendering of modernity, *The River and the Source* rewrites narratives of belated entry into the inspired tale of cultural pioneers.[24]

The Christian church becomes a gathering place for the dispossessed who, by affiliating with a new source of power, will eventually advance to a privileged social position. Even if Nyabera's religious conversion is premised on "a ruthless decision," the transgressive act is recuperated in an institutionalized rite of passage with the prospect of restored order and harmony. Redefining herself in the Christian idiom of transcendental belonging, Nyabera "partake[s] of the body and blood of Kristo and become[s] a branch, finally grafted to a tree" (100). Organic metaphors of identity—the spring, the river, and the tree—have once again grounded the wandering self in a tale of continuity and authorized new beginnings as branches of an established source. The complementarity of Christian and Luo mythologies is poignantly demonstrated when Nyabera persuades her mother to relocate to the Christian mission and trade the status of disempowered widow for the precarious position of the convert. On their way to the mission, the two women are careful to rehearse the mythical narratives of Were, the Luo god, and the Christian God of the Old Testament for the two children who accompany them (104). Once Christian and Luo orality combine into a hybrid textuality and spirituality, the quest for excellence finds a new institutional medium. For the converts, "the principle of human perfectibility projected through the mission enterprise represented the grounds on which autonomy and social emancipation would be sought."[25] The harmonious layering

of Luo and Christian belief systems aims to reconcile nationalist and theological interests so that religious conversion still enables cultural autonomy and "accomplishes in Christ a spiritual heritage authentically African."[26] Nyabera's relocation to the mission is primarily a critique of discriminatory cultural customs (*tero*), which fail to provide for the most vulnerable members of Luo society. Christianity is here claimed as the spiritual extension of an indigenous religious idiom and, most importantly, a new cultural and political locus of authority amenable to the needs of women. What remains untold is the participation of the church in the colonial project and its transformation of the new converts into willing colonial subjects.[27]

The last two parts of the novel, recounting the life of Akoko's granddaughter Elizabeth and her steadily increasing family, switch from the dramatic events of colonial occupation and religious conversion to the mundane events of postcolonial life. This shift to the domestic rhythm of daily life allows the novel to reclaim the family as the trope and institution through which the reform of the nation can be imagined.[28] Ironically, an extended family removed from the controversial politics of colonial institutions and the pervasive experience of postcolonial crisis offers the model of multiethnic solidarity through which the nation can be redeemed. Thus, Elizabeth's marriage signifies the transition from arranged marriages to individual choice, from relationships defined by social and spatial proximity to those extending beyond familiar social networks, and from communally negotiated contracts to the risk of personal decision making. The integrity of self and other continues to guide relationships increasingly determined by individually negotiated trust, by the need for personal and sexual intimacy, rather than the ascriptive criteria of kinship and residence. Soon, Akoko's descendents include spouses from other ethnic groups and biracial children who confront separatist ideologies with cogent arguments exposing the "irrationality" of ethnic and religious prejudice. When Wandia's husband rejects ethnic stereotypes of the Gikuyu as materialistic, he relies on the integrity of romance, the language of science, and the individuality of moral choice to reclaim the common humanity of all Kenyans:

> "Father," Aoro struggled to control his voice. "Father, I don't know anything about the rest of the tribe, but I know Wandia. She is the one I have chosen. I love her—which is a feeling I cannot just transfer from one girl to another at will. In any case I have done anatomy, and beneath the skin everyone is remarkably the same. Even the blood, which is supposed to be thicker than water is all just a combination of

> iron and protein in every instance. Some people are good. Others are bad—it's got very little to do with their blood or tribe. It's all in the heart. I am sure you know that father." (254)

His passionate appeal reclaims marriage as the union of like-minded individuals rather than the kinship of blood. Like her future husband, Wandia was supported by a mother whose hard work and devotion to her faith and children make her Akoko's ethical twin (242). As the "facework commitments" of an extended family rehearse the "faceless relations" between national actors, a community of shared experiences and interests emerges whose normative consensus reestablishes an ethically grounded notion of kinship through which national history and national identity can be successfully performed.[29] Strangers become acceptable through their moral integrity (the district commissioner; Wandia), while kinsfolk might not deserve the trust invested in them (Owuor's brother; Becky). The environments in which the protagonists appear might be qualified by "modern" risks, such as the self-reflexive organization of individual biographies and the threat of existential uncertainty, and yet the contexts of trusts remain localized, defined by the stabilizing influences of kinship, religious cosmologies, and, yes, tradition: "Tradition . . . contributes to ontological security in so far as it sustains trust in the continuity of past, present, and future, and connects such trust to routinised social practices."[30] In *The River and the Source*, however, tradition is not constituted by time-honored cultural practices but rather by the generational continuity of a moral ethos and its attendant behavioral guidelines. Even as the novel chronicles profound social changes—from arranged marriages to individually chosen partners, from exclusive to inclusive definitions of kinship, and from narrowly defined gender scripts to educational success and professional careers—it continues to recycle the same normative imperative that promotes self-advancement through disciplined work and social compassion.

Like the epic—which celebrates the achievements of an exceptionally gifted protagonist whose visionary leadership prepares for cultural change and which commemorates innovative acts in a narrative less concerned with historical accuracy than with explaining the institutional structures of the present in terms of the past—the novel rehearses such interests through the gradual reaffirmation of once marginal acts of cultural innovation.[31] However, when trangressive acts are embedded into a "tale of mythical proportions" (81), they cease to speak of marginal identities and instead tell of transitions already successfully completed. Ogola's text certainly subverts

stereotypical notions about tradition and modernity by reclaiming the dynamic nature of precolonial societies, but as each innovative act is refracted through similar narrative and normative models, claimed as yet another episode in the epic saga of female determination, the story of change is forced into a predictable pattern. Each "ruthless decision" signals the alliance with a new center of power and, hence, initiates another rite of passage whose controversial politics are camouflaged by the humanitarian ethos from which the initiate derives her social and discursive authority. Once translated into a dominant normative script, such an ethos cannot allow for heterogeneous interests and internal dissent, but it ensures its survival through acts of surprisingly violent censorship. One life story that is deliberately omitted from the revisionist epic of gender emancipation is the one of Elizabeth's unruly daughter Becky. She appears the "evil twin" to her sister's generosity and compassion, a foil for the positive qualities enacted by her family. Her stunning physical beauty has instilled in her an arrogant sense of entitlement. Indifferent toward her family's values, she is considered materialistic and selfish; and even her desire to become a flight attendant is trivialized by her father. Her preoccupation with money suggests an emotional shallowness that culminates in the failure of her marriage and the emotional neglect of her children. Unwilling to acknowledge the social obligations of kinship and marriage, she leads a promiscuous life and eventually dies from AIDS. The yearning of an arrogant beauty cannot be accommodated by the novel's ethical imperatives; instead, her rebellious acts are considered a moral failure "punishable" by a terminal disease. There is no social place, no narrative vision, for a character who uncritically embraces an individualist and materialist modernity, who moves beyond cultural scripts without any emotional or social attachment to her own "traditions." Becky's life takes place in the "narrative off," her brief testimony is read as bitterness, not as strength and persistence. Her life exemplifies the limits of a communitarian philosophy that does not accommodate "evil twins" and inscribes their desires into the text only in the most stereotypical terms. Becky's liminality is permanently censored by a gendered epic that has defined its own dominant scripts and norms; the rejection of discipline, devotion, and faith denies the imperatives of kinship and spirituality, and thus has to be forcibly erased from the narrative of a desirable modernity.

Ogola's text concludes with a scene of proud success: when Wandia receives her medical doctorate from Nairobi University, the moment of professional triumph is validated through the approving looks of an audience equally impressed by her medical credentials and the

presence of her children. The narrator does not fail to remind us that "[i]n Africa the greatest accolade is still the possession of children" (280), that the emancipatory narrative of progress is securely anchored in the dutiful enactment of female domesticity. The tableau of success that so strikingly echoes similar scenes in *Silent Patience* and *The Invisible Weevil* unites Akoko's extended family, who all represent "able bodied Kenyans," "from bankers to teachers, doctors to lawyers, engineers to architects" (284). "[H]ard-working, self driven people who rarely ever took a day off" (284), they express their concern in the country's political and economic decline for which selfish politicians, "bureaucratically engineered setbacks," and suspended foreign aid are to blame. Even as this elite group recognizes the strength of "the common people," there is little doubt that rather than a peasant revolution, it is their academic credentials that might prevent the continuation of postcolonial crisis. Given Akoko's status as the daughter of a chief, the hereditary nobility of the epic hero seamlessly transitions into the acquired nobility of the intellectual bourgeoisie. In this final scene, the narrative openly acknowledges its romance with bourgeois success and its vision for redeeming the nation through a moral integrity tested in intimate family relations.

Once familial loyalty transfers to Wandia, an ethnic outsider, the moral community can expand beyond the limits of language, ethnicity, and region and introduce a model of nationhood that reclaims abstract and disembedded institutions in the intimate terms of face-to-face interaction, normative consensus, and organically grown community. Gyekye's appeal to a sense of moral responsibility not limited to immediate linguistic and ethnic communities is reflected in the novel's ontological shift toward a notion of personhood extending beyond the restrictions of narrowly defined social groups.[32] These changes are further evidenced in the narrator's attempts to map a progressively national idiom for the narrated events. Paraphrased translations initially focus on Luo society before integrating the Christian terminology of the new faith and the technical vocabulary of academic professions. Similarly, Luo oral expressions and proverbs fade into the background to make room for the lexicon and political slogans of the national language Kiswahili. Gradually, characters cease to address each other as *mikai* and *moro* and instead choose *daktari* and *mwalimu* (247); they are concerned with the trials of *Uhuru* and ponder the relevance of Kenyatta's *Turudi mashambani* (161), thus demonstrating the dazzling linguistic and cultural versatility of the postcolonial nation.[33]

The novel's optimistic hope that ethnic loyalty can be transferred to the nation-state—that the family can serve as the basis for the morally reformed state—assumes the structural equivalency and basic neutrality of modern institutions. Thus, it is possible to argue that larger social and political structures can be employed as successfully as smaller units in working toward the attainment of the common good. It is a vision shared with Gyekye's ideal-type modernity in which consensus is achieved through the "recognition of the political and moral values of equality, reciprocity, and respect for the views of others" (130). But while the Ghanaian philosopher acknowledges that a communitarian ethos embraces the essentialist view that human life is shaped by basic needs and that the ideal of a participatory democracy still requires the visionary leadership of intellectuals, *The River and the Source* is less inclined to admit to its essentialist underpinnings and the exclusionary acts with which malcontent flight attendants are permanently silenced. In its commitment to an innovative ethos, to change the values and practices "inherited from the past to a level of sophistication that will augment their functionality and relevance to modern (contemporary) life" and to appropriate relevant features from colonial culture, the novel's vision of a desirable modernity cannot accept the potential deficiencies of modern institutions.[34] Instead, the heroic deeds of the epic protagonist expose corrupt rule and restore political legitimacy through the just exercise of power; not unlike Sundiata, the founding father of the Mali Empire, Akoko's descendants might reunite warring factions into a prosperous nation if loyalty can be secured through common interests. Then and now, the desire for citizenship, sovereignty, and power drives "the reinvention of the epic as one of the modes of narrating the present,"[35] while envisioning a future in which it is "possible for the African people to embark on the 'technologicalization' of their societies without losing the humanist essence of their cultures."[36] Once the desirable elements of modernity are disassociated from undesirable ones, and ethical imperatives are institutionalized in a narrative of historical continuity, the future, however, will bear a striking resemblance to the past, "a barely visible break in the continuity of the weave of life" (59). In the utopia of a desirable and deliberately engineered modernity, the juggernaut finds its temporary master.

The Logic of Sacrifice: Jane Kaberuka's *Silent Patience*

Silent Patience by Jane Kaberuka attempts to reinvent the popular romance genre in the literary and cultural codes of a Christian morality play.[37] As Stella Dumba, the novel's homodiegetic narrator and main protagonist, reflects on her romantic life, the political regimes of Amin and Obote are barely acknowledged until the historical context forcefully reasserts its significance in the novel's last chapter.[38] Instead, the text focuses on Stella, the tragic accident of her husband and one of her daughters, and the pressure of having to reconcile personal interests with social obligations. She faces an additional challenge in her brilliant young daughter, whom she supports through a stellar academic career and the tumultuous romantic involvement with two suitors whose personalities could hardly be more different. Romance and tragedy abound in a narrative that advocates the imperative of silent patience for life's unpredictable turns. Strikingly similar to the concluding scene of Ogola's novel, *Silent Patience* frames its main narrative with an image of professional success and familial harmony; as Agnes Dumba Dronyi is sworn into office as Uganda's first female minister of health, her mother Stella remembers the words of her late husband: "'Leave Agnes to me, Stella. That girl will rise above the clouds. She'll honour me!'" (1). Since the scene anchors the extended analeptic narrative in which Stella will reflect on her and her daughter's life stories, it effectively reroutes present-day accomplishments through the normativity of the past, the code of honor sanctioned by a father who embodies the arranged marriages and hereditary nobility of a historically earlier political order. Strangely, the words of Akoko's father from the turn of the nineteenth century resonate in the pride with which a Ugandan chief in the 1960s approves of the cultural changes allowing for his daughter's success. Disrupting the teleological trajectory of the present with their recursive temporality, both novels locate the foundations for progress in the epistemological templates of the past and thus reassure the famous cultural pioneer Akoko, who once asked, "How can you know where you are going if you do not know where you come from?" (38). But while *The River and the Source* insists on the "ruthless decisions" of women who write themselves into the narrative of modernity, *Silent Patience* restricts human autonomy through the benevolent but unpredictable interventions of divine authority. The omniscience of a father who divines the narrative trajectory might hence appear surprising unless read as reaffirmation

of the supreme patriarchal authority to whom female characters learn to defer when they accept the ethics of self-renunciation.

Equally interested in the value of education than Ogola's narrative, *Silent Patience* claims "the culture of Englishness" even in its visual representation of the text. Prefacing each chapter with a Shakespeare quote, the novel demonstrates the supreme value of literacy through its expert play with the imperial canon.[39] The narrative and cultural authority derived from such knowledge relies on the familiar representational strategy of belletrism. In *Rewriting Modernity*, his examination of South African literary history, Attwell identifies belletrism as a feature of transcultural writing concerned with "displays of gentility, often in a code that is Shakespearean, Romantic or Victorian" (54). In Kaberuka's text, these belletristic inscriptions attempt to refine popular romance with the universal aspirations of Christianity and man's quest for moral perfection. To this effect, the author even asserts her own voice in the novel's foreword, in which she reflects on the imperfect knowledge of human beings. As she contemplates the impossibility of shaping the future according to one's desires, she claims limited knowledge as an advantage wisely imposed by an omniscient creator.[40] An epigraph from C. S. Lewis's *The Business of Heaven*, which privileges the vulnerability of love over the isolation suffered by those who refuse to love, further maps Kaberuka's intention to situate romance within a moralistic Christian universe. Her limitation of human agency and deference to divine authority seems to negate the future-oriented premises of Gyekye's and Giddens's modernity. Once this seemingly "unmodern" gesture is juxtaposed with Shakespeare quotes that claim a Christian moral universe in the famed signs of Western modernity (writing and literacy; bourgeois civility and femininity), the novel's major dilemma becomes apparent: how can female characters actively participate in the bourgeois success ethos when the ideal of silent patience restricts women's ability to voice their desires?

While the Shakespeare quotes function as structural device and metanarrative commentary, their most important role is to articulate a normative ethos that privileges restraint, self-discipline, and empathy. These normative preferences resonate with Gyekye's communitarian ethos, if it were not for their gradual and radical transformation into the ideal of self-sacrifice. The citation prefacing the first chapter—"How poor are they that have no patience! What wound did ever heal but by degrees?" (1)—already insists on the imperative of patience when coping with life's hardships. Invoking the novel's title, the quote validates Kaberuka's authorial choice and reiterates in a

sophisticated literary idiom the concern of the romance novel with the supreme value of patience. Other quotes emphasize the value of acceptance and poise, sacrifice and humility,[41] especially in relation to the transcendental agency determining man's destiny: "What can be avoided whose end is purposed by the mighty gods?" (141). Since loss and death are inevitable (199), and since every tempest is followed by a period of calm (92), grief needs to be endured "to be crowned with consolation" (189) and to enable the successful quest for human perfection. Offering a moral frame for the narrated events, Shakespeare's citational authority encodes an ethos of gentility that facilitates the characters' transition from the established nobility of the chiefs to the new rule of the educated bourgeoisie. As the novel reworks romance into a global drama, the existential struggle with meaning and authority assumes a distinctly gendered subtext. Throughout the text, the Shakespeare quotes are strategically employed to emphasize a dutifully performed femininity, whose moral integrity in the private sphere eventually qualifies for a more public role in reforming the postcolonial nation. Stella Dumba's efforts to reinvent herself in the image of bourgeois femininity, for whom love is simultaneously reasonable and sublime, reflect the attempts of other colonial subjects, fictional and historical, to fashion their gendered identity in the cultural codes of (mid-Victorian) Englishness—"individualism, moral restraint, and public duty."[42] If human perfection is achieved through self-control and the consideration of the greater good, then marriage and parenthood provide the ideal institutional frame for attending to the needs of others.

Stella first confronts a normatively scripted gender identity when her plans for advanced schooling and her romance with a fellow student are interrupted by the arranged marriage to the son of a local chief. Soon she has to accept that a young woman's obedient enactment of her parents' wishes extends into her relationship with her husband, and that the notion of marriage as a contractual bond between kinship groups still privileges a husband whose "pride" is to be protected by an accommodating wife (11). As Stella attempts to explain to a disbelieving parent that they "are living in the sixties; people marry for love," her mother discounts such aspirations as the result of missionary education and "silly books," which have obviously "gone to [her daughter's] head" (7). In spite of Stella's emotional distance to a cultural practice hostile to her own desires, she anticipates the response of a reader not versed in the normative structure of her childhood and, hence, potentially critical of Stella's submissive compliance: "Like the woman who suckled me on her breast, carried me

on her back and sang me lullabies as she put me to sleep, I first say my husband clearly on our wedding night. Surprising? Maybe to you. But to me and those of my generation, this was the norm. In those days marriages were arranged" (4). Situated in the modern present, the adult narrator both claims and doubts the legitimacy of practices that were acceptable in the past but have since lost their cultural validity. Though she here acknowledges a shift in social norms, the experience of her own marriage mitigates against such epistemological discontinuities. Her marriage to Michael blossoms into a genuine romance and, not unlike the union of Akoko and Owuor, demonstrates that respect and honesty are highly desirable qualities for marital relations, then and now. It is a universal narrative that honors the integrity of Ugandan cultures while allowing for the social changes conducive to the needs of its people. The perils of colonialism—and the "silly books" that instilled the idea of romance—thus are conveniently ignored.

After a few years of marriage, Stella and Michael's relationship suffers through a profound estrangement resulting from their disagreement over sexual abstinence and reproductive rights. She would prefer to limit the number of their children (and her pregnancies); he insists on the rights of a husband to sexual gratification and the social status accorded to large families. Though Michael initially insists on the primacy of his needs, he gradually admits to the legitimacy of her complaints; while she appeals to his conscience ("'You are an adult, you are supposed to know what is right and wrong'"), she also senses his hidden insecurities and his continued love for her (32). Ultimately, the need for forgiveness and reconciliation makes greater demands on Stella than on Michael and leaves the question of reproductive rights unaddressed. But in their attempt to rebuild their marriage, the couple rehearses the central role of trust in personal relations, the mutual process of self-disclosure that relates the discovery of the other to the discovery of the self and, hence, the reflexive organization of modern biographies.[43] As the novel transitions from kinship relations to friendship and romance, notions of sexual and social intimacy are gradually transformed. No longer exclusively defined by external criteria, relationships are valued for the rewards they offer to the individual.[44] But since the text insists on the sanctity of marriage, a contractual relationship only to be dissolved if partners fail in their moral obligations, it inevitably reaches a narrative cul-de-sac. Once divorce becomes socially unacceptable, unfaithful spouses need to be morally redeemed, and then, if necessary, killed off to ensure that Stella's patience will finally be rewarded with marriage to the man she had previously desired.

The novel also demonstrates its familiarity with bourgeois society and identity through the inclusion of lengthy letters. Indebted to the cultural insignia of empire (Christian morality and femininity; disciplined work ethic and moral restraint), the letters mediate, in writing, a modern subjectivity shaped by the institutions of church and school. In contrast to Ogola's and Okurut's texts, however, it is not the overt presence of the church that articulates Christian values but rather their sublimated, literary expression in Shakespeare's works and their performance as a morally impeccable femininity by the female protagonists. While the letters present an opportune structural device to disclose the thoughts of other characters to which the homodiegetic narrator would normally not have access, at times, they also allow for a tense exchange between characters whose mutual confessions and accusations are a dramatic sign of social relationships in crisis.[45] In general, the letters articulate an educated subjectivity that relies on the exploratory act of writing to debate social expectations in a rapidly changing cultural environment. In their exchange of letters, Stella and Agnes struggle to explain the experience of loss and pain in emotionally and intellectually satisfying terms. In particular Agnes's letters to her mother reclaim writing as a therapeutic medium in which the competing idioms of reason and faith—and their impact on morality, normativity, and the performance of femininity—can be effectively negotiated. At times, imitating in narrative prose the anguished soliloquies of Shakespearean protagonists, these letters negotiate social contexts no longer defined by spatial proximity. Toward the end of the novel, however, Stella also acknowledges the limitations of writing as a medium for interpersonal communication and reasserts the value of face-to-face interaction for human dialogue (190).

In contrast to Stella's efforts to derive her cultural (and narrative) authority from the impeccable performance of her roles as mother, wife, and widow, her young daughter Agnes seems to gravitate toward a more assertive gender identity. The first letters she sends home from boarding school testify to her location at a modern institution associated with the expansion of knowledge. Following the death of her father and sister, she debates the demands of religious faith versus the relative merits of a secular rationality. At the tender age of 13, the intellectually gifted child is an astute observer of social relations, and she objects to the importance attributed to external characteristics such as skin color and its racially codified meanings, which tend to privilege the "white colour of innocence [over] the blackness of the soul" (24). She even criticizes her mother's servant-like status at home, arguing that Stella is not "weak or irrational" (23) but rather

a victim of gender discrimination. In her ability to critically interrogate the beliefs and practices of postcolonial Ugandan society, Agnes's character translates the exceptional abilities of the epic protagonist into a psychological narrative interested in hierarchical social relations and discriminatory behavior. The struggle against injustice is no longer fought against clearly visible enemies on the battlefield but shifts to the irrationality of internalized prejudice. As Agnes articulates her opposition to dominant normative scripts, her letters advance, in a modern medium, the progressive desire for gender emancipation. Allowing Agnes to present her views without having to respond to the potentially critical remarks of other characters, the novel here seems to consider an epistemological shift in its approach to gender relations. The roles of parent and child are even temporarily reversed when Agnes educates her mother on the psychological ramifications of feminine servitude. At a time of profound cultural and normative change, Agnes's letters illustrate the importance of narrative for the discursive mediation of the self. If the protagonists in *The River and the Source* secure social and biographical coherence by modernizing cultural epics, then Agnes's struggle for a consistent biographical narrative demonstrates the possibilities and perils of a self-reflexively organized modern identity. Insisting that compassion needs to be prioritized over religious doctrine, she finds no support among friends and teachers and experiences a profound sense of "unbelonging" (36) when "her reasoning contradicts her religion" (35). Though Giddens argues that models of self-identity are premised on the ability of human beings to "provide discursive interpretations of the nature of, and the reasons for, the behaviour in which they engage," Agnes's social isolation testifies to the dilemma of a subjectivity whose interpretative preferences cannot be accommodated by dominant social narratives.[46] Encouraging her daughter to patiently wait for people to change (26), Stella provides little moral guidance for a daughter in distress. Even the letter in which she responds to the death of Agnes's classmate from a botched abortion can only explain death as "God's wish and will" (41). Agnes's earlier critique of social discrimination here shifts to Stella's religious explanation, which subordinates human agency to divine intervention. While death translates into a moral lesson for those left behind, it presents few reasons to interrogate religious teachings or social structures. Instead, Stella advocates for honest communication between parents and children, for sexual education and abstinence, and hence allows for carefully monitored social changes that encourage discussions of sexuality without, however, questioning the moral economy of Christian doctrine.

But how can women actively participate in the narrative of bourgeois success when the ideal of moral duty severely restricts their ability to articulate their needs? Even as the ethos of silent patience prevails throughout the narrative, the novel asserts the individual agency of its female characters in the negotiation of trust in interpersonal relationships. When Stella insists on the primacy of trust in romantic relations—and encourages her daughter and her partner "to trust each other, learn to expose their innermost selves and risk the consequences. That is growing up and that is what love demands of each one of us. Out of vulnerability, trust is born" (124)—her language reflects Giddens's emphasis on modern trust relations as premised on the mutuality of response and involvement, so that "faith in the integrity of another is a prime source of feelings of integrity and authenticity of the self."[47] The imperative of trust also defines the relationship between Stella and her daughter's partner. Upon meeting Steve, Stella expresses her surprise at how easily trust is established between them, rendering it possible for her to entrust him with the well-being of her daughter (72). Repeatedly, she insists on her complete trust in him (125), while he vows never to betray her confidence (126). After a prolonged absence and some unfortunate misunderstandings, he despairs when he believes himself to be distrusted by her (193), and both he and Stella are immensely relieved when the integrity of their relationship is restored (204). The anxious, repetitive affirmation of her judgment of his character speaks to the insecurity with which she claims her authority as her daughter's sole guardian. Cultural shifts are here projected onto the figure of the widow, who has to navigate a changing social landscape in which the family has been separated, socially and economically, from larger kinship groups, while kinship, in general, no longer provides the defining criteria in organizing mutual obligations and support.[48]

The gendered coding of patience and humility, so poignantly articulated in Stella's (and Agnes's) romantic relationships and the dilemmas they generate, extends the ideal for moral perfection beyond the need for self-control and compassion. Soon the aesthetics of patience translate into the ethics of self-renunciation. What had previously been visualized in the Shakespearean citations consolidates into a tightly woven code of sublimated desires and repressed needs. In contrast to *The River and the Source*, which is equally concerned with sibling and romantic relationships and allows for the inclusion of romantically unattached women into its epic canvas of cultural change, Kaberuka's novel restricts its vision to romance and the sacred bond of marriage. And thus the reader follows Stella's tormented relationships with

Peter, her brother-in-law, and David, her suddenly reappearing first love, neither of which is permitted to blossom until she has sufficiently demonstrated her impeccable moral character. Only toward the end of the narrative, when David's estranged first wife dies, will Stella be rewarded with the blissful union she deserves.

The romantic feelings between her and Peter offer an interesting commentary on the possibility of reconciling historically recognized cultural practices such as the levirate with the modern aspirations of the educated middle class.[49] After her husband's death, it had been impossible for Nyabera to find emotional comfort and social protection in the practice of *tero*, the marital affiliation with a male relative (*The River*). Stella's and Peter's mutual affection demonstrates however that, if premised on individual commitment, an established cultural practice can indeed be modernized as a rational and romantic choice. Repeatedly, the couple debates the emotional and social ramifications of a potential marriage. Though he asserts the legitimacy of their feelings and the unreasonableness of her self-denial (117), she insists on his "sensible" relationship with a younger woman less burdened by a troubled past (90). When her wish materializes, she applauds herself for "[a]t least [her] conscience was clear. Patience pays" (131). The rewards for exercising control are demonstrated in a "clear conscience" that signifies continued progress in the quest for moral perfection. Years later, this pattern undergoes a subtle but decisive shift in Stella's affair with David. Though the explicit sexuality of their relationship breaks with the chaste encounters of conventional romance narratives, Stella abruptly ends the affair once there is reason to belief that David's estranged wife has disavowed the abusive behavior that previously caused the marriage to fail. She encourages David "not [to] fight destiny . . . Let's consider our sacrifice as a gift to [the children], and those who may come after" (164). Once romance is sublimated in an act of renunciation, the religious discourse that surrenders man's agency to fate and destiny reclaims the individual act for the benefit of an extended community. The logic of sacrifice enables Stella to chastise David's plea for their love as "not being rational" (174) and as "spoilt and possessive" (175). Whereas Peter had still been able to critique the unreasonableness of Stella's behavior, in her relationship with David, repressed desires are elevated to willing acts of sacrifice. Indeed, as normative preferences are progressively mapped onto the narrative of moral perfection and social progress, sacrificial gestures become rational choices, effectively authorizing acts of self-denial "behind the mask of norms and rules."[50] The ethics of self-renunciation

are effectively employed here to provide female characters with a moral compass for navigating social and personal change.

However, neither Stella nor Agnes, but a minor character, Debbie's mother Monica, becomes the ideal embodiment of the values of patience and sacrifice. Her graceful acceptance of life's hardships first impresses her daughter, who "feel[s] greatly inspired by her silent patience in all her sufferings" (61), before encouraging other female characters to similar behavior. Monica, who has lost her legs in a car accident, leaves her family rather than burden them with the care of a physically disabled woman. Her selfless decision to prioritize her family's happiness over her own needs for companionship is finally rewarded when the family persuades her to return to them (95). In the character of Monica, the ideal of a self-sacrificing femininity finds its most extreme and problematic manifestation. As her angelic act of sacrifice sublimates physical and emotional pain and cultivates those qualities deemed essential in the quest for human perfection, the maimed female body transforms into the supreme sign of a morally irreproachable femininity. Visibly inscribed onto their bodies, the truncated desires and repressed needs of women might herald moral perfection, but only at the prize of surrendering the integrity of the body and, ultimately, of the self. In their attempt to enact the imperative of sacrifice, the individuality of each female character is gradually restrained within a tightly controlled normative script. Moving from patience to sacrifice, from Agnes's rebellious voice to Monica's scarred body, the novel supports an increasingly conservative gender ideology that applauds women for their self-imposed acquiescence yet adopts a conciliatory tone toward men's weaknesses (Michael; David) or presents them as near-ideal embodiments of masculine perfection (Steve; Peter). Not unlike Odysseus's defeat of the luring appeal of the Sirens, the mastery over the "impure" aspects of the self is here celebrated as the reasonable choice of autonomy over dependence. Repeated acts of self-censorship successfully conceal the internalization of dominant normative ideals. In its association with social and moral improvement, Christianity offers a cultural script deemed superior to other normative arrangements, and thus the irrationality of self-denial easily translates into the supreme manifestation of reason. Horkheimer and Adorno would not have been surprised that the "busy adaptation to reality becomes more reasonable than reason for the individual" (203). Yet the novel's vision of a subjectivity both rational and feminine is more complicated than *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, with its primarily class-based analysis, could have imagined. As female bodies are celebrated for their beauty and appreciated for their sexual passion,

while otherwise maimed and disfigured to satisfy the imperative of moral duty, bourgeois desires and Christian values prove impossible to reconcile.

Deeply invested in the notion of sacrifice and the conditions under which love finds its most sublime and hence morally rewarding expression, Agnes's story eventually returns to the narrative's earlier concerns with illegitimate pregnancies, moral failure, and the demands of parenting. Unaware that her daughter has been drugged and raped by her boyfriend Jimmy, Stella responds with icy silence to the news of Agnes's pregnancy. The pregnancy develops into a moral test for both women: will Stella look beyond religious dogma and trust her daughter's integrity? Will Agnes privilege her child's rights to his biological father, and what is considered a socially acceptable home in spite of Jimmy's violent rape? The decisions of both characters are limited by an ideology that holds them accountable for creating "the proper home environment" (202) and thus validates their sacrifices as rational choices for a morally redeemed society. Though victimized by Jimmy, Agnes believes herself no longer "good enough" for Steve, the man she really loves, and surrenders her future (and her emancipatory agenda) to a disastrous marriage. Gone are her earlier appeals for cultural change and behavioral reform. Trapped in her ideological commitment to the sanctity of marriage, Stella can only encourage her daughter to "make her marriage a success" (191) and reiterate her belief in the inevitable prevalence of good over evil.

Good does indeed prevail over evil, but only after a few more narrative detours have demonstrated, yet again, that an unpredictable fate requires woman's moral strength and perseverance, even if such qualities visibly disfigure the female body. The loss of the body remains the highest sign of selfless perfection. When Agnes is badly burned while saving her son from a fire, the loss of her physical beauty not only challenges her own ability to accept her "grotesque appearance" but tests the affection of those men competing for her love. Not surprisingly, it is Steve whose love sublime remains unaffected by her maimed body, while Jimmy's superficial desire for a wife who is "the perfect ornament" (203) will inevitably lead to the failure of their relationship. His "heartless" and "immoral" response to Agnes's predicament provides the moral grounds on which she can seek the dissolution of their marriage. Within the ethical confines of *Silent Patience*, divorce is only acceptable if all hope for redemption has been lost.

Yet the novel's ambivalent attitude toward the politics of human perfection persists even in Agnes's subsequent marriage to Steve. If progress is predicated on moral integrity, then how are the trivial

concerns with wealth and beauty to be included in the Christian ethos of a novel that remains profoundly interested in the bourgeois trappings of the romance genre? Though the plot demands of Steve to charitably invest his personal wealth in the construction of a community hospital, it still allows for the restoration of Agnes's physical beauty through the possibilities afforded by reconstructive surgery. The beauty of the female body might be reclaimed as an external sign of ethical perfection, but the acquisitive rationality and materialistic aspirations that enable the accumulation of wealth have to be cautiously guarded. Though the narrative embraces the opportunities offered by science and technology, it insists on their pragmatic and ethically committed application.[51] Only within the narrative of moral progress and humanitarian commitment can science serve its purpose of simultaneously improving body and soul. Like Akoko's descendants, Steve and Agnes train as medical doctors, and their intellectual mastery of the medical sciences bodes well for the Christian quest for moral perfection. Through its careful avoidance of colonial history and the ideological context in which the institutions of the boarding school and monogamous marriage originate, the novel legitimizes its infatuation with a bourgeois identity and lifestyle that transitions from the nobility of the chiefs to the aspirations of an educated elite. Women, however, have to first demonstrate their moral integrity in the private sphere before they can qualify for a more public role in reforming the postcolonial nation. In Agnes's case, the dutiful enactment of the roles of mother and wife prepares her for the moral demands of political leadership, and hence illustrates "[the fusion of patriotic duty] with the romance of bourgeois self-making."[52]

Following Agnes's physical renaissance, the narrative offers a synoptic account of national political events, which progressively seep into Agnes and Steve's private lives: the political deterioration of the country, the couple's collaboration with the rebels, their long exile in Tanzania, and the eventual victory of the rebels and the promise of a democratically elected government. These monumental events in the history of Ugandan politics extend over only a few pages (214–17), clearly indicating that the novel is primarily interested in the value of personal redemption for the political landscape rather than allowing politics to trouble the quest for human perfectibility. In its final chapter, when the text returns to the frame narrative that had prompted Stella's contemplation of the past, the reader begins to realize that the submissive femininity of the past is indeed not so different from the demure femininity of the present. Once the present has been routed through family history, the narrative can

safely transition from the privacy of romantic relations to the public terrain of national politics. With Agnes's appointment to the ministerial post, the novel seems to gesture beyond female domesticity, but the self-imposed imperative of sacrifice restrains the individuality of each female character within a carefully defined normative script. Their authority is predicated on mastering the culture of Englishness *while* embracing the Christian ethics of self-renunciation, in which the quest for human perfection finds its ideological coherence. Since similar notions of restraint and discipline informed the femininity of the past, women can serve as the privileged site of cultural continuity *and* progress, at least for as long as they limit their aspirations to the continually perfected performance of moral duty. Supported by the Shakespearean authority prefacing the final chapter—"Those that with haste will make a mighty fire, begin it with weak straws" (218)—Stella's epic recollections insist that the postcolonial Ugandan nation can only be built on the morally fortified characters of women who have literally walked through fire.

In a lengthy speech at the conclusion of the novel, Agnes identifies the moral failure of political leaders as the source of the country's persistent decline:

> The enemy we have now is more difficult to deal with; it's an enemy that won't fall at the contact of a bullet. I'm talking about the *moral decay* of our people. We have to try to find a way to win back people's *trust* in our country's leadership. We have to try and make people have *faith* and trust in one another, and pride in their country. We have to convince everyone to stop thinking only of the individual gain in every venture but also of the country's gain. (219; emphasis added)

Faith and trust are again claimed as the most effective antidotes to the selfish desires that inevitably herald moral decay. Although political leaders have failed in the past, she continues to argue for the crucial role of the intellectual elite in setting a positive example for a population brutalized by years of violence: "[A]n educational system which promotes critical thinking" is to counteract years of "intellectual enslavement and confusion" (219). "Change requires a sacrifice" (219), Agnes insists, and needs to include the peasant population whose "minds are virgin lands, unexplored and uncontaminated" (220). The Fanonian rhetoric in which she gestures toward the elimination of cultural dependence and social inequality appears fundamentally insincere in a novel that has persistently celebrated a modern subjectivity shaped by the literary and moral codes of the

middle class. Simultaneously asserting the role of the elite in shaping the future of the postcolonial nation and voicing doubt in their integrity, Agnes seems conflicted about her position in the political apparatus and her relation to an electorate who, until the novel's final page, has not dared to make an appearance. Ultimately her (and the novel's) vision for the political future remains as contradictory as the last sentence in which she acknowledges that "this time we shall need more than silent patience" (220). A text that takes its cues from the religious coding of patience finds it difficult to retain its credibility when promoting the Fanonian appeal for action.

Silent Patience follows the trajectory of the romance novel in its admiration for a bourgeois lifestyle—wealth, professional success, and spectacular physical beauty—yet feels compelled to sublimate these shallow desires with a Christian ethos of moral duty and sacrifice. Though the inconsistencies resulting from such conflicting intentions are many, they are most apparent in the miraculous recovery of Agnes's striking beauty. Giving in to its own need for perfection, the novel does not dare to leave the floor to a severely maimed and disfigured protagonist. As the reader follows Stella and Agnes through their romantic relationships, the correspondence between local and Christian gender ideals is striking: the submissive femininity demanded of Stella when agreeing to an arranged marriage transforms into the demure femininity on which her status as widow and her cultural authority as female professional are predicated. The narrative carefully mediates against radical epistemological and cultural shifts by demonstrating, in Stella's marriage to Michael, that arranged marriages can still lead to romance and mutual respect. Once Agnes's rebellious vision has been erased from the text, the prospect for more radical social reforms has been successfully averted. The Shakespeare quotes certainly speak to a modernized gender identity shaped by Christianity, literacy, and professional success, and translate the institution of marriage into a postcolonial context defined by the negotiation of trust, the opportunities afforded through education and public office, and the frank discussion of reproductive rights and sexual needs. Yet the normativity of the past persists into the present and continues to demand the dutiful performance of parental and conjugal obligations. In fact, while a young Stella had dared to oppose her parents' wishes, her cultural and narrative authority as widow and her public role as manager of the family's farm demand that she self-impose the behavioral restrictions qualifying for a socially acceptable femininity. Liberated into autonomy by romantic love, the freedom of the modern widow and professional is still curtailed through the Christian insistence on

monogamy and "the need to keep a pure conscience."[53] Though the manifestation of this pure conscience in the severely maimed bodies of women offers a deeply troubling vision of "emancipatory progress," the novel validates the sacrifices of its female characters as the desirable model for the reform of the postcolonial nation.

A self-sacrificing femininity, however, enters a contradictory dialogue with the desire for social mobility informing the culture of Englishness. Once individual agency is curtailed by the ethos of self-renunciation, the biographies of different female characters are consumed by a normative script that promises individual and social perfection and, therefore, can easily be embraced as a rational choice. Though the irrationality of this choice is barely hidden behind "a mask of norms and rules," its validity is secured in a narrative that continues to defer human agency to the unpredictable interventions of divine authority. Even under conditions of modernity, as Giddens asserts, the acknowledgment of fate can provide welcome relief from the demands of a continually shifting social landscape. Fate offers a "sense of trust in distant events over which one has no control—relieves the individual of the burden of engagement with an existential situation which might otherwise be chronically disturbing. Fate, a feeling that things will take their own course anyway, thus reappears at the core of a world which is supposedly taking rational control of its own affairs."[54] Stella might acknowledge "the whirlwind of a changing society" (37), but such changes are not attributed to the unintended consequences of human knowledge or the heterogeneous interests and power struggles informing Ugandan society; rather, as human autonomy contends with the limitations imposed by divine authority, the possibility of intervening into the future is restricted to the dutiful enactment of moral restraint. *Silent Patience* offers a clear map for a better postcolonial future yet insists on restricting the agency of its female characters in shaping a desirable modernity. Modernity's potential for open-ended, plural possibilities is curtailed by the generic conventions of the popular romance that plots narrative events according to a remarkably predictable pattern: life requires patience; sacrifice promises moral redemption. All's well that ends well.

The Cycle of Disruption: Mary Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil*

If the title of Kaberuka's novel offers a synoptic image of a desirable femininity, then *The Invisible Weevil* by Mary Okurut returns the reader's attention to the figurative inscription of cultural landscapes.

A small beetle feeding on grain and other seeds, the weevil denies the life-sustaining connotations of rivers and instead offers a metaphor of pervasive destruction.[55] Death and destruction indeed prevail in a narrative that, just like *Silent Patience*, takes place at the time of the dictatorial regimes of Milton Obote and Idi Amin, and concludes with the coming to power of Yoweri Museveni and the restoration of some semblance of postcolonial order. While these historical events remain a distant echo in Kaberuka's text, only intervening when the female protagonist has acquired the moral strength to contend with political turmoil, they are tightly woven into the plot of Okurut's novel. Though a frame narrative introduces the main protagonists, Genesis and Nkwanzi, and concludes with Genesis's death from AIDS, the plot centers on an extended analeptic account of Nkwanzi's childhood, her marriage to Genesis, and the couple's participation in the resistance movement. Their very names, Genesis and Nkwanzi—from *kwanza*, Kiswahili for "first"—foreshadow the novel's transcultural narrative of crisis and renewal.[56]

It is Genesis's medical condition that introduces the discussion of the novel's dominant motif. For his mother Kaaka, the progress of a modern disease can be best understood in a familiar language: "'I know what this plague is. It's like a weevil. The weevil eats up a bean. When you look at the bean, you think it is healthy. Then when you open it, you find that the weevil ate it up a long time ago and inside, the bean crumbles to dust. It's nothing but dust inside'" (5). Though different characters will offer competing explanations for a mysterious disease, the metaphor of a secret parasite provides the figurative template through which an agricultural society can comprehend a terminal disease.[57] Soon "the accursed invisible weevil" (201) will acquire distinct moral connotations and extend throughout history to reference diverse calamities. From agricultural disaster to the modern horrors of industrialized war and an incurable disease, the recurrence of the invisible weevil suggests man's failure to act responsibly in times of need. "The rule of illiterates" (96), the dictatorial regimes of Opolo (Obote) and Duduma (Amin), further expands the moment of crisis into a reign of terror and unleashes "the weevil of bribery and greed" (118) on a disenfranchised population.

The notion that those succumbing to AIDS have failed to honor a moral code of socially (and sexually) acceptable behavior is emphasized in Kaaka's argument that "'[t]his disease which we still fear to mention; this leprosy has taken us back to the first book of the Bible and the beginning of the world'" (5). When translated into a Christian idiom, the contamination with an invisible weevil rehearses man's

fall from grace. And thus, the character so fittingly called Genesis personifies the archetypal protagonist in the drama of human existence, whose story simultaneously testifies to man's failure and the possibility of a new beginning. Kaaka's similes, however, are not restricted to the Bible. She translates the Christian fall from grace into a local vocabulary that reflects the struggle with established cultural authorities in the concept of *Baaya*, of a curse spoken by an elder against those who have wronged him (6). For Kaaka, the fall from grace and the curse of the elder is "a happening so terrible that it makes you shake and wonder what we're doing in the world" (6). To defy moral standards is to invite social disruption and existential crisis. That the normative structure of the past resonates with Christian imperatives is poignantly illustrated in the unforgiving attitude of Nkwanzi's mother, for whom "'there's no small sin. That which you call an innocent sin is like a weevil. It will eat you from inside until your whole person crumbles like a bean eaten up by a weevil'" (44). In contrast to *The River* and *Silent Patience*, however, Okurut's novel exposes the gender-specific ramifications of such normative standards. The catastrophic tale of Nkwanzi's pregnant friend Goora, who is publicly shamed and expelled from high school while the teacher responsible for her rape is protected by his Christian reputation, exposes a society that fails to recognize deceptive appearances (76). In its debate of culturally scripted gender identities, the novel suggests that to guard against invisible weevils does require more than the simple enforcement of a strict moral code. Advocating for an awareness of gendered inequalities, the text also appeals to the responsibility of those who witness such discrimination and hence complicates the roles of "victim" and "perpetrator."

Similar to Kaberuka's novel, *The Invisible Weevil* opens with a spatial and temporal detour: dying from AIDS, Genesis returns to his hometown, and the biblical epic of new beginnings promised in his name appears betrayed by the finality of an incurable disease. This time, it is not triumph but imminent death that prompts the introspective analepsis of Genesis's mother with which the novel transitions from the present of the prologue to the past of the main narrative. Reminded of the helpless infant when witnessing her son's frail health, Kaaka insists that the story of his birth has to be situated within the epic cycle of her own identity as woman and wife. Thus, she reminds Nkwanzi, "'I cannot tell you the story of his birth without telling you about my own life as a girl and how I met your father-in-law'" (9).[58] The fundamental importance of narrative in sustaining cultural and biographical continuity, already demonstrated in the frequent references to Luo myths

and epics in *The River and the Source* and in the proliferation of letters in *Silent Patience*, is here illustrated through the repeated inclusion of orally transmitted stories, ranging from fables and parables to morality and ogre tales. Often providing further commentary on major plot events, these tales assist in the scripting of Banyankole culture and forcefully argue for the importance of storytelling in constructing a coherent narrative for otherwise fragmented human experiences. If, as Geertz once famously asserted, culture is an ensemble of stories we tell about ourselves (448), then the multivocal quality of *The Invisible Weevil* testifies to a discursive diversity remarkably different from the tightly controlled narrative (and normative) script of *Silent Patience*. Though the tales originally engage with the risk environments of "premodern societies," with threats resulting from nature, from human violence, or malicious magical influences, their thematic repertoire is effortlessly updated to comment on the unpredictable risks human actors have to confront in the postcolonial present.[59] Thus, Goora's catastrophic tale of rape and pregnancy is delivered in the narrative conventions of the classical ogre tale (78–79).

In addition to folktales, fables, parables, morality tales, and ogre stories, the novel enjoys the stylistic diversity of modern orality, including the tabloid-style rumors about the murder of a politician's mistress (132–33), the public chorus of citizens commenting on the behavior of military and civilian leaders,[60] and the frequent inclusion of song lyrics, which range from slave spirituals and civil rights anthems to global pop culture and its bold celebration of "the good life."[61] In particular, the radio occupies a crucial role in disseminating political news and reorienting local communities toward the national capital Kampala.[62] A coveted status symbol, the radio signifies a modern society shaped as much by localized activities as by the disembbeded institutions and social networks of the national political economy. As the voice of a central political authority whose monopoly over the media directly impacts the narratives of identity circulating in local contexts, the radio exemplifies both the institutional and the identitarian effects of modernity and simultaneously demonstrates the continued importance of storytelling in articulating a culture's ideological preferences.[63]

The novel, however, pairs its fondness for orally transmitted knowledge with the embrace of literacy and education while carefully maintaining its critical distance to the famed institutions of colonial modernity, the church, the school, and the nation. Though Kaaka prefaces her memories of colonialism with the words, "'Child, times have changed and it is good'" (11), and applauds her father's acceptance

of the "new master's wisdom," her account also acknowledges the exploitation of a new monetary economy and the loss of political control to the authoritarian rule of the district commissioner (13). Kaaka's initial horror at the grotesque physical appearance of "men without skin" (10) cheerfully envisions the invaders within a geography of monstrosity that imperial culture had so carefully reserved for the colonized. Still, in her critique of sinful local customs, in particular those obligating women to be sexually available to their in-laws (12), she reenacts the prejudiced rhetoric in which colonial Christianity has always lamented the moral inferiority of African cultures. In general, Christianity agrees with the disciplined work ethic of Kaaka's family (13) and the submissive femininity of Banyankole culture.[64] If modesty and shyness, a quiet voice and lowered gaze, are considered attractive female qualities at the time of Kaaka's marriage (14), then Christian morality translates the docile femininity of the past into the obedient femininity of the present.[65] These subtle epistemological changes are reflected in corresponding linguistic shifts: the reference to female genitalia as *kooko* or "animal" in Runyankole is thus replaced by the English term "shameful" (48). When the child Nkwanzi is sexually assaulted, she can only interpret her assailant's demand for secrecy as the logical extension of the shame of female sexuality. Later, her first menstruation is followed by a ritual that teaches her "how to take care of herself in her new situation" (51); it is a ritual that simultaneously elevates her to a new social status yet threatens severe punishment should she fail to safeguard her honor. Intrigued by the responsibilities of her social role and its metaphorical inscription into a discourse of blood, which prizes the purity of virginal blood while condemning the uncleanliness of menstrual blood, Nkwanzi embraces the significance of women for her community's survival: "Blood is important. That is why sacrifices are important. Blood is life, therefore women were the knot of life, Ssenga had said" (54). Once the ambiguous rhetoric of blood rewards compliant behavior as "sacrifice," women are encouraged to police their bodies in the quest for moral perfection.

While the novel opposes these cultural ideals through the defiant attitude of the adult Nkwanzi, it reserves its harshest criticism for the hypocritical religious practice of born-again Christians. The character of Matayo, for example, personifies a self-righteous Christianity with a disturbing tendency toward violence. In an obviously ironic gesture, the narrative portrays Matayo as the community's shepherd, a pious Christian to whom mothers blindly entrust their children, only to have this trust violated when he sexually assaults Nkwanzi while singing

Christian hymns, modulating his rising sexual excitement in the hypnotic crescendo of "Oh happy day when Jesus washed my sins away" (30). Another modern-day version of the ogre, Matayo's deceptive appearance is reflected in the behavior of fundamentalist Christians at Nkwanzi's boarding school, who resort to lies and even physical force to pressure students into publicly recanting their "evil ways." The school itself fails Nkwanzi as an institution of enlightened culture and intellectual progress. The despotic rule of teachers who humiliate and sexually assault their students, the physical violence of boys against their female classmates, and the suppression of "inferior" Ugandan languages introduce students to a culture of fear and its strictly enforced social hierarchies. Students imitate this authoritarian society when they subject new arrivals, "the tails," to elaborate hazing rituals. These hazing rituals derive their authority from the church and the military, two institutions that enter a particularly vicious alliance as the newcomers' fear of being physically punished by their tormenters, all of whom impersonate military ranks, combines with their anxiety to fail in the performance of a church ritual: "The senior girls would clap as each one of the 'tails' finished receiving the 'holy communion.' None of them dared refuse: the 'Brigadier' was standing by with a big stick and looking more than ready to hit anybody who refused to go to the holy table" (61). But the Holy Communion they are forced to consume makes a mockery of their devotion to religious doctrine. Instead of partaking in the transubstantiated blood of redemption, they imbibe only the urine of their tormenters. In its caricature of Christian and military rituals, the novel critiques modern institutions and their rhetorical inscription into a narrative of progress and civilization. But it also refuses the myth of female innocence as a potential antidote to such abuse; when Nkwanzi contradicts her friend Goora that "'[t]he culture is that we must make next year's newcomers suffer,'" the latter replies that "'[i]t's the tradition. It's right, it's right'" (61). Once repeatedly performed, even the most violent of cultural spectacles derive their authority from the logic of tradition.

In contrast to *The River and the Source* and *Silent Patience*, the text offers a scathing critique of teachers and preachers who betray their institutionally invested authority, though it never falters in praising the value of education. Although the institutions of church and school require structural reform, the novel envisions relief from the corrupt exercise of power through the leadership of an educated elite, trained in the institutions of colonial modernity yet committed to investing their considerable skills for the benefit of the community. In its argument for structural change, *The Invisible Weevil* goes boldly

where Ogala and Kaberuka did not dare to venture; in its reliance on a communitarian ethos, it steps assuredly on familiar ground. The uneducated businessman with his penchant for jungle-fever music and the ignorant street urchins who laugh at the plight of those dying from AIDS (195) are just two examples of the persistent equation of lack of education with lack of civility. Confronted with modern technology at her daughter's boarding school, Goora's mother can only resort to the irrational vocabulary of evil spirits to explain the mystique of indoor plumbing (59). Goora's father fares even worse; an unsightly, bad-mannered, and foul-mouthed tyrant, his uncultured behavior locates him in the nether lands of human existence: "[Children] all referred to him as Zinje, short for Zinjenthropas—early man—which they had learnt in history" (54). Those not blessed with knowledge of the evolutionary ladder are likely to occupy its lowliest ranks, ridiculed by a generation of mission-educated students who marvel at the survival of the savage under conditions of modernity. Straight from the textbook of colonial iconography, the representation of the uncivilized other further highlights the achievements of Genesis and Nkwanzi, who, even if subjected to abusive teachers and classmates, still gratefully internalize the "wisdom of the new master." The adult protagonists thus can only watch in horror when a military coup brings to power the "uneducated" Duduma, a thinly veiled foil for Uganda's most notorious dictator, Idi Amin. His future violent excesses are literally inscribed into his inaugural speech; unable to articulate even a simple sentence in intelligible English, he fails to master the linguistic codes and civilizational authority that are "[the] mark of an educated person'" (88). His unorthodox code switching between a version of English, rudimentary at best, and a Kiswahili associated with the increasing brutality of the army, disqualifies him for national office and instead turns him into a broadly painted caricature of political incompetence.

Written into a series of binaries, the antagonistic encounter between illegitimate leaders and educated dissidents articulates the novel's vision for a desirable postcolonial future and its successful negotiation of tradition and modernity. While Duduma's and Opolo's regimes descend into orgies of blood-soaked horror, deliberately manipulating cultural practices to terrorize a population with the threatening authority of tradition (160), the members of the resistance invent their own rituals of sacrifice, spilling animal instead of human blood, however,

> "Comrades," soothed Mama, "we're not wizards. But we believe in doing things of our fore-fathers. Those things which weren't bad. Whenever there was war, and the clan warriors were called upon to set off, blood would flow. The blood of a live thing: be it a bird or animal. Blood must flow and melt in the earth from which we come, from which we eat and return when the breath ceases in our body. It is this earth which will give us the strength to struggle. Earth is nature: God is nature. And we must look to Him for guidance. We feed on ourselves, food grows on our bodies and this soil is our father and mother and our God and so our struggle must be tied with the earth our parent, our God. Do you understand?" (128)

Testifying to the organic continuity between soil and human body, spilled blood reclaims the life-sustaining bond disrupted in times of crisis and war. It redeems a social order both natural and divine, and absorbs the mortal body into the continuous weave of human existence. When the redemptive meaning of blood in rituals of resistance confronts the army's disregard for the spilled blood of their opponents (123), the text once again relies on the rhetorical alliance of blood and sacrifice. This metaphorical framing of social identity speaks to the political interests written into a culture's norms and values. Since the dissidents selectively revive "those things which weren't bad," a proud heritage of valor is carefully disassociated from social elements unacceptable to a rational subjectivity. Once the integrity of the past transforms according to the needs of the postcolonial present, cultural practices are successfully reinvented to allow for an identity both authentically African and thoroughly invested in the achievements of modern politics ("comrades") and education ("we're not wizards"). The "progressive traditionalism" of political rhetoric has no place in Gyekye's alternative modernity ruled by reason and untroubled by social dissent. While the Ghanaian philosopher insists on the strict separation between real and invented cultural practices, *The Invisible Weevil* fearlessly articulates an idiom of political resistance through the authority of a selective past and the modernity of an expanded vision.[66] Hence, the dissidents embrace slave spirituals and civil rights songs as signs of diasporic resistance (125), insist on natural hairstyles (130), and even reclaim Kiswahili as an opportune medium for its ethnically diverse membership (122). But much like Gyekye, the novel cannot envision the future in a language other than the voice of reason. To escape from the repressive surveillance of an abusive regime, resistance fighters adopt many disguises and even simulate madness to escape detection (128). If the

state has been reduced to an irrationally acting monster, the deliberately performed madness of educated dissidents further demonstrates their control even in moments of crisis; not surprisingly, they hope for "an enlightened group" of leaders to deliver them from the violence of Duduma's and Opolo's rule (131).

While Kaberuka's text presents only a synoptic account of the fight against despotic Ugandan regimes, and Ogola's novel insists on the seamless transition between the old and the new political dispensation in Kenya, *The Invisible Weevil* claims the instrumental role of Ugandan politics in shaping gender and cultural identities. However, all three novels trope the success of the daughter in the farsighted vision of the father. Like Kaaka's father, who accepts the wisdom of the new master, Agnes's and Akoko's fathers proudly acknowledge the potential of their daughters to succeed in the new sociopolitical order, even if they themselves remain firmly rooted in the established power of hereditary chiefdoms. It is this past with its stratified social system headed by a royal elite that provides the model for the modern aspirations of an educated elite. Nkwanzi's and Genesis's attempts at a "civilized" political debate (151), however, are doomed to fail when the majority of political candidates openly "play with the ballot" (154) by manipulating an inexperienced electorate. The couple's new political group competes with established parties whose alliance with influential religious denominations, access to state coffers, and manipulative use of the security forces is reflected in one candidate's assessment that "[his] party is sponsored by the state and the people will vote for the state" (154). To overcome such deeply entrenched authoritarian structures, the text does not (exclusively) rely on "civilized debate" but suggests the inadequacy of multiparty democracy, which has failed in its promises of peace and progress and instead maps religious divisions onto existing ethnic rivalries (150). In a gesture more radical than Kaberuka's and Ogola's fiction, the novel argues not only for the moral redemption of the country and its educated leaders but also for significant structural changes to assert Uganda's cultural and political autonomy.

The historical events in reference to which such structural reforms will be debated are easily recognizable as Museveni's 1986 coup and his subsequent institutionalization of the National Resistance Movement as a one-party state. Considering the author's participation in the current government, her fictional tribute to Museveni and her thinly veiled admiration for his agenda are hardly surprising (173).[67] Museveni's fictional stand-in, the rebel leader Kazi, promises radical political change to address the country's substantial problems and the

persistence of sectarian violence (172). His Kiswahili name, *kazi* or "work," advertises his pragmatic discipline as well as his advocacy for an ambitious program intended to suspend all political parties that, he argues, originate in the colonial mapping of ethnic and religious divisions. He concludes that "the democracy that the Western world talked about was only conducive to their situation and not for African countries because the contexts pertaining in these continents are different, they are at different stages of development" (173). As he gestures toward the evolutionary discourse of political development, Kazi cannot break free from the pervasive grip of Western epistemology and the paradoxical inscription of tradition and modernity into the rhetoric of nationalism. Reclaiming the nation as an agent of modernization, he insists on the possibility of a radical break with colonialism through the rehabilitation of African traditions, even though these traditions are articulated in the temporality (stages of development) and categories (rationality) of Western modernity.[68] These contradictions are further evidenced in Kazi's approach to gender identities and relations. While his vision of institutional change is predicated on women's active role as combatants and leaders, the female protagonist who initiates Nkwanzi and Genesis into the dangerous world of political resistance is known under the *nom de guerre* Mama. In its conflation of biological and political motherhood, the text ultimately relies on the sexually conservative norms of the past to legitimize the cultural innovations of the present. But while the novel's understanding of gender and sexuality at least gestures toward inclusiveness, its notion of race remains profoundly troubling.

Represented in the bold, caricatured character strokes of the folktale, Rex, one of Genesis's fellow students at Makerere University, epitomizes a materialistic modernity defined by racial and cultural impurity: "Rex was a half-caste. He was tall and handsome in a ragged manner. He always sprayed himself with a very generous portion of 'Gift of Zanzibar,' a very strong, cheap perfume. It was always said that one could tell his whereabouts ten miles away. A typical playboy, he did not care about any body's (sic) feelings. 'Hi men!' he shouted thumping Genesis back. He always tried hard to feign an American accent." (103). Rex's narrative function is reduced to the archetypal villain whose corrupting influence is coded in terms of racial degeneration (half-caste), Western imitation (feigned American accent), and a coastal locale known for its transcultural exchanges. Racial and cultural deficiencies are signified in the Orientalist trope of an effeminate and hedonistic masculinity. Throughout the novel, he opportunistically aligns himself with various political forces and gradually devolves

into the bestial sexuality of a barely recognizable humanity.[69] In its hostile inscription of racial and cultural hybridity, the text subverts its earlier acknowledgement of Pan-African history, when Makerere students had chanted slave spirituals and civil rights songs to signal their alliance with diasporic culture. Through the character of Rex, the undesirable modernity of materialistic and promiscuous flight attendants (Becky) and spouses (Jimmy) is written into the exclusionary narrative of racial purity. The racialist premises of Western epistemology resurface in the liberatory agenda of a novel that seems to have taken its cues from the ambivalent rhetoric of Pan-Africanists like Blyden and Crummel, who argued for a racially exclusive black personality as the preferred site of decolonization and hence excluded those of mixed racial heritage from their vision of racial liberation.[70] Once Kazi's appeal for cultural and political autonomy translates into the notion of racial authenticity, the perils of claiming independence through the institutions and rhetoric of Western modernity are visibly demonstrated. In the novel's vision of the alternatively modern, the exclusionary politics of race coexist, however, with the acknowledgement of emancipatory gender identities.

Introduced as a supportive spouse to a husband dying of AIDS, Nkwanzi seems to embody the honorific name given to her after marriage, *Bacureera*, a name applauding her quite and humble demeanor. Her accommodating femininity in the novel's prologue echoes the normative expectations of Kaaka's youth, when gentle, soft-spoken, and shy girls were lauded for their "pleasing" behavior (14). In contrast to Kaberuka's novel, though, the narrative does not further insist on the desirability of silent patience for its female protagonist; instead, it exposes the authoritarian rule of a patriarchal order that continues into the present when educated girls are manufactured into desirable commodities for successful men (81). While romance and monogamous marriage are as central to Nkwanzi's biography as they are to the female protagonists of Ogola's and Kaberuka's fiction, these relations interact with her public role as a political dissident and her subsequent participation in Kazi's government. Most importantly, her intimate and political relationships remain open to constant debate and often defy the search for normative closure featured so prominently in the other novels.

Throughout the narrative, Nkwanzi struggles to position herself in relation to local and foreign, Christian and secular, gender practices and identities; these discourses—at times, mutually reinforcing; on other occasions, antagonistic—frame a social identity defined primarily through a woman's sexuality: menstruation and virginity,

reproduction and childbirth, socially acceptable intimacy (marriage) and sexual transgression (premarital sex; rape). The underlying conflicts are embodied by Ssenga, a respected village counselor on gender-appropriate behavior, and Mama, political dissident and urban combatant, whose *nom de guerre*, however, subverts the temporal and spatial dichotomy that otherwise informs these oppositional models.[71] When Ssenga instructs the young Nkwanzi on the virtue of sexual purity, she is equally invested in the normative ethos of local and Christian gender practices (52). Though Nkwanzi rejects the appeal to female acquiescence, her positioning in an ambivalent social environment does not allow for simple gestures of emancipatory progress. In the end, it is her firm belief in the value of premarital virginity and her sexual violation by Rex that undermines any attempt at a viable cultural synthesis. For Ssenga, "the unspeakable act of rape" (182) needs to be silenced to prevent the public shaming of a victim held accountable for her own abuse; for Mama, the crime requires public acknowledgement. She insists that educated women "'must be role models for the youth, we must fight the traditions which doom women to passivity. We must fight against outmoded ideas and prejudices and then the young will follow suit'" (183). While her appeal to fight against stifling traditions is dressed in a rhetorical garb that betrays the novel's (and Nkwanzi's) more nuanced efforts to negotiate normative contradictions, her passionate plea also recognizes that these competing norms are often enacted on the bodies of women. Agnes's disfigured face and Monica's maimed body certainly bear testimony to these dilemmas (*Silent Patience*). In her public acknowledgment of the rape, Nkwanzi rejects responsibility for the crime and contradicts a normative orthodoxy that stigmatizes those female bodies marked by a less than ideal femininity. Ssenga, on the other hand, can comprehend Mama's advice only as a sign of madness, the behavior of an "unnatural" woman whose political activism upsets the established order: "'When a woman behaves like a man as you did, then madness has entered the country'" (183).

Genesis backs his wife through the public ordeal and her subsequent career in national politics, but his support wanes when he feels neglected by her professional success (196). He is not the proud spouse of Kaberuka's idealized romance or Ogola's women-centered epic; instead, he resumes the role of malcontent patriarch whose behavior foils the tableaus of success the other novels offer. The trajectory of progressive gender relations is effectively undermined by Genesis's adultery, allowing the new weevil of an incurable disease to infiltrate their relationship. As AIDS mocks the country's newly found political

peace (201), the narrative seems more concerned with the continuity of social disruption than with rewarding its characters for their sacrifices (*Silent Patience*) and moral commitments (*The River and the Source*). Nkwanzi, however, forgives her dying husband and reserves her scorn for one of his mistresses, whose explicit sexuality, arrogant behavior, cheap wig, and bleached skin (198) contrasts unfavorably with the appearance of the legitimately betrothed wife who refuses makeup to "remain herself" (185). Obviously, the bloodied sheet as the sign of the virgin's honor has been replaced with the commodified artificiality signifying on the lover's dishonor. The fight against "outmoded prejudices" might have given a choice to Nkwanzi, but even the modernity of women fighting repressive regimes is shadowed by the exclusionary politics of (marital) privilege.

Eventually, the novel returns to the present; the events introducing the analeptic main narrative are resumed in an epilogue that frames Genesis's death from AIDS with the soothing presence of the pastoral landscape and the mourning rituals of his rural community. The moment of his death is announced in the return of Kaaka's labor pains, further signifying on the recursive temporality of a narrative in which the present achieves its full significance only through its historical resonance in the past. The authority to reflect on the future of the postcolonial nation is left to Nkwanzi, who muses, "Yes, a mustard seed had been planted in the land, but would it survive the invisible weevils?" (205).[72] Not surprisingly, it is the figure of the widow on whom the novels project the institutional and biographical shifts of modernity. Even as Akoko and Nyabera, and Stella and Nkwanzi, claim the autonomy promised by romantic love and educational success, their freedom is restricted by the firm belief in the sanctity of marriage and the need to keep a pure conscience.[73] The path to this clear conscience might include numerous familial and professional choices devoted to the community's benefit (*The River and the Source*), or it might be limited to the quest for perfection in the Christian context of duty and sacrifice (*Silent Patience*). Only in *The Invisible Weevil* do the perils of modernity, simultaneously engendering vulnerability and opportunity, include a need for structural reforms that carries the vision of change beyond the appeal for moral redemption. Okurut's text does not quite muster the optimism of the other narratives, though it concludes with an image offering women—Nkwanzi, her daughter, and the former combatant Mama—as the symbols of emancipation: "The sun bathed the land with its increasing warmth as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs [Nkwanzi] entered her car, with Mama on the other side and Ihoreere cushioned comfortably between them"

(205). As the sun sanctions the conflation of biological and political motherhood with its radiant approval, cultural innovation is legitimized in the historically established, sexually conservative norms of the past. And thus Nkwanzi claims her public role in national politics through an authority derived from her status as forgiven wife, nurturing mother, and dutiful daughter-in-law. Reclaiming the extended family as a fundamental social institution and an instrument for moral education, the novels concur with Gyekye that "the decline and fall of a nation begins in its homes" (293). The fight against invisible weevils demands the moral integrity of women who believe in the value of literacy and love, and who tirelessly invest their individual talents for the greater good of their communities. In its critique of morally corrupt half-castes and foul-mouthed mistresses, however, the text denies the possibility of a secular, materialist modernity premised on the needs of the individual, and thus partly surrenders its earlier appeals for normative plurality to the exclusionary politics of race and sexuality.

Epics of Love and Literacy

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the culture of Englishness has lost none of its appeal. The seductive promise of emancipation through the embrace of love and literacy lingers long after the official end of colonial rule, and the *athomi*, the one who reads and is "civilized," still remains the crucial figure through which the successful reform of the postcolonial nation can be articulated.[74] Conveniently forgotten are the physical and epistemic violence of colonialism and the persistent experience of postcolonial crisis that carries the nation-state to the brink of collapse. Once these colonial and postcolonial predicaments are largely elided, the narrative of moral redemption, social progress, and institutional integration unfolds with relative ease and demonstrates that the alternatively modern also engages in politically opportune acts of historical amnesia. But even though the novels revalidate literacy and romance as the signs of civilization and conversion, they cautiously avoid the equation of Western institutions with Western values and instead negotiate the effects of colonial modernity through the normative and narrative templates of the past. Carefully mediating against radical epistemological shifts, analeptic narratives chronicle the formation of a historical subjectivity interested in claiming new institutions for previously established desires. The quest for excellence and for a clear conscience already apparent in Akoko's pride in her impeccable conduct, the imperative of moral duty and restraint, the desire for romance even in arranged marriages, the commitment

to a disciplined work ethic and the prosperity of the community, and even the struggle against invisible weevils and restrictive gender codes offer cultural continuities that question the established binaries through which "tradition" and "modernity" often circulate. Once the progressive vision of proud fathers authorizes the success of the daughter, the values and conflicts usually associated with the colonial intervention are reclaimed through the historical modernity of successive generations. The layering of cultural memories partly reroutes the normativity of the modern through the African past and thus facilitates the transition from the hereditary nobility of the chiefs to the new rule of an educated elite.

In its simultaneous promise of moral improvement and social progress, the guidance offered by a clear conscience, and the public respect accorded to academic professions, Christianity indeed appears a *rational* choice. Discipline and restraint, the skills cultivated in the institutional landscape of boarding schools and universities, enable the movement toward progressive social relations and hence furnish the abilities central to the reform of the postcolonial nation. But the dream of bourgeois success is carefully balanced with the commitment to the needs of familial and national communities. Never is a purely formal rationality allowed to triumph over the substantive goals of social emancipation and equality. Though the subjectivity of most protagonists is fashioned in similar institutional and social contexts, the novels offer a surprisingly diverse reading of human agency and autonomy. Only in *The River and the Source* does the self-willed entry into colonial modernity allow for a predominately positive reading of human agency. By contrast, *The Invisible Weevil* is hesitant to embrace a morally ambivalent subjectivity whose repeated failures result in chaos and violence, while *Silent Patience*'s preference for a self-sacrificing femininity effectively (and unintentionally) undermines the individuality of its female characters.

Rationality and subjectivity, two of modernity's principal categories, at times drift in unexpected directions in the fiction of Kaberuka, Ogola, and Okurut, and so does the temporal structure of narratives that are simultaneously progressive and recursive. Analeptic narratives route present-day accomplishments through the experiences of the past and hence explain the tableaus of success concluding each novel in terms of individual achievements and communal struggle. Driven by the desire for citizenship, sovereignty, and power, the epic becomes the opportune narrative (and political) template for institutionalizing social change, for explaining the present though the past efforts of the heroic personality, her quest for excellence, and her concern with

justice and order.[75] Once historical achievements continue to resonate in the present, the future can be safely grounded in the epistemological and generational continuity of the past. Thus, the importance of narrative for the representation of cultural and personal identity is repeatedly emphasized: from the layering of epic and mythical stories to modernized orality and Shakespearean literacy, the reflexive reconstruction of identity is poignantly evidenced in the persistent yearning for a coherent biographical narrative.

As the alternatively modern positions itself in relation to modernity's dominant tropes, it inevitably has to contend with the treacherous grounds of political exclusion and normative orthodoxy, the conflicting myths of historical continuity and radical renewal, and the contradictory desires for the safety of an established social order and the possibilities afforded through change. Though all texts address the discriminatory politics of gender and offer an emancipatory agenda that writes women into political office, the underlying strategies of empowerment are far from unproblematic in their alliance with institutional authority, their rhetoric of political motherhood, and their ideal of silent patience.[76] Even as they acknowledge the gendered stratification of postcolonial society, the novels are eager to eliminate dissenting voices whose secular and materialistic aspirations deny the moral reform of the postcolonial nation. Once intracultural dissent has been successfully sidelined, the alternatively modern is allowed to develop its full potential. The reflexivity and temporality of the modern is thus restricted to the familiar scripts of an appealing political future, which, on occasion, might bear a striking resemblance to the generic conventions of the romance novel. Only in *The Invisible Weevil* do competing gender discourses result in a normative ambiguity that complicates the choices of the protagonist. *Silent Patience* and *The River and the Source*, on the other hand, gravitate decidedly toward a normative orthodoxy that turns the doubt generated by a changing cultural landscape into a predictable rite of passage.

"Modern" risk environments are hence partly negotiated through localized contexts of trust and the comforts offered by religion, kinship, and "tradition." What appears "traditional" in Giddens's schematic classification, however, is continually reclaimed for the modern present, as kinship expands into a community of shared interests and commitments, as the quest for excellence continues to be influenced by the normativity of the past, and as religion simultaneously implies the conversion to (colonial) modernity and the presence of an authentically African spirituality. In their fusion of cultural memories, the novels demonstrate the desire for a subjectivity both autonomously

African and cautiously modern, for an identity shaped by modern institutions and thus successfully aspiring toward the "invention of the productive and disciplined citizen."[77] But even as new gender and national identities are sanctioned through the appeal to past traditions, this past is often predicated on newly invented symbolic practices: the genealogical importance of daughters authorized by Akoko's father (*The River*), the prediction of the daughter's success in the prophetic words of the father (*Silent Patience*), or the validation of political resistance in cultural rituals (*The Invisible Weevil)*. Though the novels effectively reclaim the dynamics of cultural change for African societies often denied such agency, their equally strong need to invent the past to suit the needs of the present rehearses the temporal paradox of modernity (Walter Benjamin). This fictional mapping of progress through the authority of "archaic practices" reflects the ambiguity of nationalist rhetoric, situated between the yearning for radical renewal and the deliberate romance with the past. Most importantly, the "invention of tradition" demonstrates how easily social norms are manipulated in the pursuit of political interests.

At first glance, the vision of the nation's moral reform through the agency of women resembles the construction of gender in the Mother Africa trope and its juxtaposition of mothers devoted to protecting the nation and prostitutes willing to surrender their sexual (and cultural) integrity to neocolonial corruption. Though the Mother Africa legacy continues in the presentation of female characters who embody the normative ethos on which desirable sociopolitical models are premised, and who first qualify in the domestic realm for the moral duties they are expected to perform in the public sphere, these protagonists are not restricted to a primarily metaphorical role, nor are gender-specific forms of social injustice neglected over the concern with a postcolonial nation in crisis. When the conventional dichotomy of tradition versus modernity collapses, women cease to represent the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition, while men embody the progressive principle of discontinuity. Once spatial (private-public) and temporal distinctions (past-present) are no longer mapped onto the normative register of the Mother Africa trope, women's entry into the public sphere does not automatically signify their moral corruption, forcing them to adopt the corrupted masculine qualities of a competitive and materialist society. Instead, their participation in national politics offers the prospect of moral reform. Such reform, though, is no longer grounded in the essentialist notion of women's "natural" purity but instead results from their sustained struggle with the existential and ethical dilemmas of postcolonial life, often

allowing for their progressive collaboration with partners and spouses. As modernity is rooted in tradition, women emerge as its principal agents, while the family is reclaimed as the organizing principle of modern society, the trope and institution through which the transformation of the nation can be imagined and successfully performed. The family, however, can only serve as the basis for the ethically rehabilitated nation if we are to assume the basic integrity of a modern institution that promises sovereignty and democracy, even though its history is shaped by the exploitation of "citizens" and "strangers." The novels' own exclusionary politics already anticipate the limitations of an alternatively modern, postcolonial future. Can the nation be recovered as an agent of liberation, or "is the space of the nation, then, to be characterized as identical to that of empire"?[78] What if the nation, in spite of the impeccable moral conduct of some of its citizens, only descends further into chaos? These are the questions troubling the narratives to which I will turn in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Dark Sides of Modernity

Citizens, Strangers, and the Production of Moral Indifference

Civilization means slavery, wars, exploitation, and death camps. It also means medical hygiene, elevated religious ideas, beautiful art, and exquisite music. It is an error to imagine that civilization and savage cruelty are antithesis.

—Rubenstein, quoted in Bauman,
Modernity and the Holocaust *9*

In Yvonne Owuor's award winning short story "Weight of Whispers," a Tutsi prince escaping from the Rwandan genocide laments the loss of his privileged life to the nostalgic tune of the "Indépendance Cha Cha Cha."[1] Once the desire for political power and sovereignty was famously immortalized in Kabasele's well-known song, yet now the historical figures lauded in the upbeat celebration of Independence—Lumumba, Tshombe, and Kasavubu—have become martyrs and assassins, the ghosts of a past that failed to deliver on its promise of prosperity and progress. As the prince applauds the colonial divisions of race and ethnicity, language and class from which he has profited, Kabasele's famed song transforms from celebratory dance into the mocked routine of epistemological and institutional violence. Surely, moral reform alone will not redeem the ambivalent sites and sounds of postcolonial modernity.

While the previously discussed novels recover the utopia of autonomy and development through the moral duty of their educated protagonists, the texts addressed in this chapter are unable to claim the

modern nation as a vehicle for liberation and progress. Instead, the space of the nation seems fated to repeat the exclusionary rhetoric and violent practices of the colonial empire. In the narratives of Goretti Kyomuhendo (*Waiting)* from Uganda, and Yvonne Owuor ("Weight of Whispers") and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye (*A Farm Called Kishinev)* from Kenya, modern institutions generate divisive political identities, which, based on fictions of ethnicity and race, encourage the production of moral apathy toward those marked as "different" and therefore excluded from the protection of the state.[2] As "difference" mutates into a source of conflict and even genocide, leaving women and children especially vulnerable to organized hostility, these novels and short stories enter into a constructive dialogue with scholars who question the etiological myths equating the modern with civilizational progress and the social production of moral responsibility. Of particular relevance here is Zygmunt Bauman's work on modernity and the Holocaust, his examination of the systematic murder of a population deemed a threat to national integrity and racial exclusivity, as well as his discussion of the unruly figure of the stranger, who troubles the neat binary of friend and foe on which the modern state predicates its political maneuvers. On these issues, Bauman's arguments productively engage with Achille Mbembe's analysis of the shifting institutional landscape of the "African postcolony," where new forms of privatized sovereignty and violence have remapped the geographies of power and introduced different criteria for the politics of belonging.[3] As the configuration of settler and native, citizen and stranger, continues to shift, the crisis of the nation-state produces a corresponding crisis of citizenship in East Africa's Great Lakes region.[4]

In his well-known writings on the Holocaust, Bauman argues that genocidal violence should not be considered a testimony to the *failure* of modernity, a temporary malfunction of its social institutions, but, on the contrary, as the *product* of its technological advances and epistemological preferences, as the result of the state's monopoly on violence and its desire for a social landscape from which those groups perceived a threat to its territorial boundaries and political sovereignty have been effectively eliminated. Is, he asks, the deliberate production of moral indifference then the other manifestation of a modern society that we otherwise consider the suitable vehicle for progress and order? The state-sponsored violence in *A Farm Called Kishinev*, the 1994 Rwandan genocide in "Weight of Whispers," and the Ugandan civil war in Kyomuhendo's novel *Waiting* seem to answer this question in the affirmative. These narratives deny the etiological myth

that claims the progress of human civilization and morality from presocial barbarity and thus celebrates "the suppression of irrational and essentially antisocial drives, and the gradual yet relentless elimination of violence from social life."[5] Instead, they demonstrate the capacity of the modern state to employ its considerable technological and managerial skills to engineer a desirable social order. Surely, the possibilities afforded by modern bureaucracy and technology are as seductive as they are dangerous. To implement bureaucratic procedures is to follow an organizational routine, to defer responsibility to one's supervisor, and to effectively substitute technical expertise for moral concern. As Weber remarked about the civil servant, "through honour, discipline is substituted for moral responsibility."[6] Bureaucratic procedures combine with the state's monopoly on violence, which renders the general population defenseless and encourages their acquiescence to the use of violence as a means "subjected to solely instrumental-rational criteria, and thus dissociated from moral evaluation of the ends."[7] Once "the typically modern ambition of social design and engineering . . . mixed with the typically modern concentration of power, resources and managerial skills," the institutional landscape of modernity entered a particularly dangerous alliance with its epistemological preferences.[8]

The state's monopoly on violence also assists in producing the physical and epistemic boundaries that guarantee the nation's autonomous existence. The claim to sovereignty encourages the social production of moral indifference as nation-states collectivize enemies and friends, and promote an agenda of national unity through which subjects are converted into "natives." The appearance of the stranger, Bauman argues, introduces an ambivalent "third term" that negates the exclusive polarity of friends and enemies and unsettles the predictability of social and political relationships. In the drive for national self-production, the uncertain allegiance of the other can only be perceived as a threat to one's own autonomy. And, thus, the savage slot endlessly mutates, allowing for the exclusion of the migrant, the Jew, the refugee, and denying the stranger as moral object and subject. Meeting turns into mismeeting when social groups are differentiated into the marked and the unmarked. In Nazi Germany, Jews transformed into such a marked and abstract category to whom no moral responsibility was owed. Removed from social life and stripped of their citizenship, the gradual physical, legal, and moral segregation of the victims prepared for their total dehumanization. For Bauman, it is this *logic* of eviction that organizes the successive stages through which human beings are removed from the realm of moral duty, set

aside as a different category, "so that whatever applies to it does not apply to all the rest."[9]

While the myth of modern civilization clearly maps the route to moral progress, Bauman instead emphasizes that the modern state relies on a well-rehearsed epistemology and technology of segregation to promote indifference to the plight of those who would otherwise be the subject of moral consideration. Supported by the sovereignty of state power, these "morality-eroding mechanisms," at worst, escalate in the right to commit genocide.[10] In particular in situations where the state strives to assert its absolute authority over others—in apartheid South Africa or Nazi Germany, in societies condoning slavery and colonialism—sovereignty easily translates into "the power to transgress the law and the right to distribute death."[11] The critique of modernity's dark sides leads the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe to ask whether the Western drive toward sovereign mastery is not indeed a death drive disguised as "civilization" and "humanitarianism."[12] His provocative question relates the establishment of the sovereign state to the emergence of the sovereign subject within the Hegelian dialectic of slave and master. While the "crusading-proselytizing practice" of the Western nation-state "legitimized the sovereignty of society over its members as well as its contenders," the opposition between self and other in the colonial context elevates the victorious consciousness to the status of master and reduces the defeated individual "to the condition of *slave*" (emphasis in original).[13] In the quest for sovereign mastery, Mbembe warns, "the strangers of the savage slot" find themselves reduced to the conditions of animals.[14]

His critique, however, also considers the location of the postcolonial subject and state at the intersection of multiple cultural knowledges, philosophical traditions, and sociopolitical structures. Like his colleague Kwame Gyekye, he is interested in the defining features of "the African postcolony," its internal logic and historical legacies at the juncture of diverse practices of sovereignty, violence, and rationality. Though Mbembe acknowledges the hegemonic patrimony of empire and nation, he is equally concerned with recent social and political changes, the new types of privatized government and violence that work according to their own logic of transfer, allocation, and coercion. Sharing Bauman's skepticism of the ideological narratives that claim modern society as the road to peace and prosperity, he instead emphasizes the conditions of entanglement, the layering of multiple knowledges and temporalities, characterizing contemporary African societies. Entanglement inevitably produces displacement in that it requires postcolonial subjects to negotiate what is distinctive about

their particular material and symbolic practices. How, then, does the African subject engage in the rhetorical construction and material production of cultural memories? And how, asks Mbembe, does the colonial *commandement* with its authoritarian exercise of power continue in most autocratic postcolonial societies?[15] For Mbembe, the postcolony has indeed consolidated colonial practices of subjugation, when denying individual rights to its citizens and exploiting scarce resources as the vehicle for "deepening inequalities, expansions and enhancement of state power, and distribution of utilities."[16] Even as postcolonial governments attempted to provide basic services to the majority of their citizens, resources were being instrumentalized for political payoff, and thus the state emerged as the regulative mechanism behind the distribution of wealth. Instead of remunerating productivity, salaries were utilized to create relations of dependence, public resources appropriated to create allegiances, and thus "economic *things* were converted into political and social *things*" (emphasis in original).[17] As the postcolonial state operated according to its own rules of transfer, it modeled itself on colonial as well as African socioeconomic and sociocultural processes. Gyekye claims the logic of transfer as an ethical and mutually beneficial commitment to the common good; for Mbembe, however, such relations of indebtedness only provide mechanisms for subjugation and control since paying one's debt to society effectively puts others into debt. If Gyekye's assessment of the ethical and economic fabric of African precolonial societies appears too optimistic, providing him with a suitable cultural template for his vision of the alternatively modern, Mbembe's "cynical view of communal ties" is influenced by his pessimistic reading of African authoritarian governments.[18]

He does emphasize, though, that by the 1970s, the "trinity of violence, allocations and transfers" assumed diverse country-specific manifestations as national wealth found itself increasingly under the management of an autocratic leader. Fundamental shifts occurred in the 1980s when, under the influence of structural adjustment programs and deregulated world markets, African political systems struggled to profitably reintegrate themselves into changing global economies. Deregulated policies undermined the material and social bases of postcolonial states and the strategies through which they secured legitimacy. The resurgence of conflicts over the distribution of wealth and the moral questioning of these systems, as evidenced in the rising accusations of witchcraft to explain the illicit accumulation of power and wealth, testify to the new economic and cultural configurations with which the African state has to contend. Such uneven

economic shifts, argues Mbembe, furthered the internal dissolution of the state, which found its sovereignty restricted by the tutelary government of international creditors. As a result, sociopolitical and socioeconomic structures were undermined that involved not only coercion but also patterns of reciprocity and of legitimate political action: "Having no more rights to give out or to honor, and little left to distribute, the state no longer has credit with the public."[19]

Inevitably, the large-scale transfer of public capital into private hands affects the distribution of resources, the negotiation of ethnic relations, and the notion of public good. Deregulated global markets and political attempts to restore authoritarian rule create the conditions for private government since public functions are increasingly performed by private operators for private ends. Privatized forms of sovereignty reinforce the privatization of the instruments of violence because "control of the means of coercion makes it possible to secure an advantage in the other conflicts under way for the appropriation of resources and other utilities formerly concentrated in the state."[20] Established security forces, such as police and army operating for individual "big men" and warlords, but also new paramilitary and criminal groups are thus often responsible for the extraction of resources from the general population. What, Mbembe wonders, will be the new relations of servitude, coercion, and dependence in postcolonial African societies? And what happens to vulnerable populations when disputes over what belongs to whom are articulated through the manipulation of "indigenousness and ancestral descent"?[21] The crisis of the nation-state is also a crisis of citizenship that remaps the relationships between "natives" and "strangers." It is a process extending far beyond the boundaries of individual states into the fluid and volatile landscape of the Great Lakes. Shifting colonial borders in *Kishinev*, the movements of the displaced in "Whispers," and the presence of foreign armies in *Waiting* emphasize this transnational canvas on which the dynamics of occupation and liberation are played out.

How, then, do narratives recounting genocidal wars imagine the nation whose promise of liberation is compromised by its tendency to privilege only those in power? How do they engage with notions of sovereignty and territoriality, especially when privatized forms of autonomy and violence remap the nation's defining paradigms and generate a shift toward new forms of spatial organization and ethnic classification? Under conditions of scarcity and insecurity, when the state is likely to neglect its own citizens while struggling with the colonial formation of political identities, how does the production of moral indifference affect those considered unwelcome strangers? As

national homes exhibit decidedly unhomely qualities, how do gender and sexuality play into the experience of social and political crises? And finally, in narratives "bound to violence," are the dominant and the dominated doomed to inhabit the same epistemological and institutional playing field, or can the grotesque and the obscene work toward the deconstruction of "particular regimes of violence and domination" (105)?[22] Between resistance and complicity, the bourgeois dream of success and the nightmare of fratricidal violence, surely there must be "another way to live."[23]

Utopian Nations and Dystopian Ghettos: Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *A Farm Called Kishinev*

In *A Farm Called Kishinev*, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye imagines what might have happened had the Zionist Congress accepted the 1903 British proposal of territory in East Africa. The offer itself is as much an effort to reaffirm the image of a "new enlightened century" (14), tainted by the persistence of anti-Semitic violence, as it is a political strategy to protect the British homeland from the increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.[24] The text reclaims Kishinev, a town in what was then Russian-administered Bessarabia and the location of a harrowing pogrom, as a site of memory that physically inscribes the experience of anti-Semitic violence into the Kenyan landscape. Yet even as the novel's adventurous traveler Isaac Wilder implements his vision of a Jewish National Home, the utopia reclaiming Kenyan colonial space as a refuge assumes decidedly dystopian qualities. For a population with an ambiguous position within the fictions of "race" and "nation," an ideal political state might indeed be difficult to imagine. Thus, the novel anxiously debates whether the space of the nation doubles as a ghetto that protects and traps, and whether the sovereignty of some inevitably means the assimilation of others.

Delivering the same historical event in no less than three different versions, *Kishinev* leaves no doubt that narrating the nation requires a potentially unlimited imagination. The first three chapters provide a detailed historical account of the British offer to the Zionist Congress and are followed by the story of the Jewish settler Isaac Wilder, who acts on the British proposal and recreates the memory of Kishinev in a modest settlement on the Kenyan plains (36–95). Told by his grandson, the homage of a faithful relative sets the stage for Isaac's own testimonial, which imagines the establishment of a

Jewish National Home in (post)colonial Kenya (99–124). In the final chapter, the grandson Benjamin will embrace the ancestral vision and claim the Kenyan Kishinev as an act of collective triumph rather than a story of personal perseverance. What emerges in these conflicting and overlapping accounts is a narrative hybrid, cognizant of its fictionality and vested interests. But the collective memory of Isaac and Benjamin Wilder also justifies nationalist aspirations as historical destiny and claims the nation in the metaphoric texture of kinship and love.[25] Bound by memory and loyalty, the history of the Jewish National Home in Kenya, as imagined by the two homodiegetic narrators, is devoted to the needs of the patrilineage, and it is this emphasis on natural ties, rather than chosen affinity, that will prove unsettling for the Nandi wives of Benjamin and his father.

Opening with the eerie refrain "empty, empty, empty" (3), the novel's first chapter memorably inscribes the unease with which the Zionist commissioners survey the Kenyan land offered by the British. Is the British offer an improvement from being crowded into tight spaces or can East Africa, at best, be only a *nachtasyl*, "a training-ground for Jewish citizens, citizens not only of a transitional territory but of the nation of Zion" (16)?[26] In the famous words of Max Nordau, the *nachtasyl* acknowledges the need for shelter from persistent persecution while insisting on the inadequacy of a geographical location and a political situation in which such need finds only temporary relief. Perhaps the territory, like the offer itself, is only a mirage, as the continuing uncertainty about its precise location seems to suggest. The shifting colonial borders within which the proposed location finds itself, first in the Eastern Province of Uganda, then in colonial Kenya, eventually make it necessary for the British Foreign Office to clarify that "it was to be 5000 square miles on the Gwas Ngishu plateau of Nandi, south-east of Mount Elgon, with its southern border just five miles distant from the railway and the south west border near Lake Victoria" (19). Still, the novel continues to draw attention to an opaque territory by framing, with quotation marks, its inaccurate identification as "Uganda."[27] In its simultaneous meaning of "no place" (*outopia*) and "good place" (*eutopia*), the utopia of the Jewish nation seems to defy attempts at geographical and narrative mapping. Indeed, how easily does the utopia reveal its dystopian qualities when the anxious question remains as to whether "a colony [can] be a national home" (20)? As the Zionist Congress declines the "Uganda proposal" and the commissioners "wash their hands of the situation" (28), the biblical language of betrayal eloquently speaks to the narrator's disappointment that a potential refuge has been lost to a

lack of will and imagination. His grandfather's open-mindedness for the British proposal, on the other hand, is not burdened by the fear of empty space and the need to cling to "familiar celebrations and humiliations of home" (106). Rather, he is inspired by the collective Jewish memory of surviving in inhospitable spaces when he proclaims, "I am Isaac Wilder, the son of promise and, if you like, a man of the wilderness. I have built and planted for more than thirty years in this covenanted land of Kenya" (99). The scriptural experience of exile and diaspora frames Benjamin's and Isaac's narratives of Jewish identity in the Kenyan wilderness and facilitates Isaac's transformation from intrusive settler into visionary patriarch. An empty land requires acts of "taking charge"—of turning a shapeless territory into the readable script in which human strength enacts divine will (26). In its reflection on how a territory becomes an object of power and jurisdiction, *A Farm called Kishinev* links the Jewish National Home with the vast expanse of the Kenyan plains to which the romantic hero maintains an organic attachment.[28] Through the glory of his muscular masculinity and his ability to transform unproductive soil into "a habitation of shepherds," Isaac Wilder indeed appears a worthy representative of the national collective.[29]

Boldly, *Kishinev* imagines the Jewish nation as a religious community under divine sovereignty and as a secular nation, barely interested in the "niceties of ritual" (62). The eschatological temporality of the privileged covenant with God thus meets the homogenous empty time in which the nation, here represented by Benjamin's and Isaac's letters to relatives in diasporic locations, asserts its lateral links with other Jewish communities (45, 61, 91). It is this tension between religious and human sovereignty that the novel will, later on, attempt to resolve by relegating divine authority to the scriptural quotes that preface each chapter, while increasingly imagining the Jewish nation in the secular terms of political sovereignty.[30] Even the covenant between God and his chosen people will eventually be open to those who abide by the rules of Jewish life. The conflict between religious and human autonomy persists throughout the narrative, but the scriptural quotes allow the novel to recover the myth of the *terra nullius* from Christian claims of exclusive proprietorship over all foreign land. Although the 1493 papal bull laid claim to empty lands in the name of imperial Christianity, Judaism operates as an unsettling alter to Christianity, eluding the familiar tropes of pre- or postconversion, of paganism and heresy, and thus the productive transformation of uncultivated land in Jewish scripture subverts the privileged position of Christianity in the colonization of "empty space."[31]

Despite their desire for a national home, the narrators attempt to avoid the exclusionary rhetoric of the *terra nullius* that enables the settler to claim a land not "owned" before his arrival.[32] Instead, Benjamin and Isaac acknowledge the presence of other civilizations in the disputed territory, populations such as the Nandi, with whom the Jewish settlers will eventually intermarry, and the Sirikwa, the original but now vanished inhabitants of the land. Amazed by the stone kraals of the Sirikwa, Benjamin Wilder wonders whether the soundly built structures were used to protect cattle or as defensive forts against enemies (8). For Benjamin, they illustrate the ambivalence of the space of the nation, and, therefore, even as he declares his belonging to the Kenyan Jewish community, he worries that he "might feel trapped, as so many were trapped in ghettos and ovens, if I had to duck through the low entry passage of a Sirikwa hole" (95). Though Isaac's "conquest" of the Kenyan plains satisfies the longing for a politically sovereign nation, it cannot still the fear that such clearly visible boundaries will create another ghetto.[33] Throughout the narrative, Benjamin will contemplate that, as an enclave within a colony, the Jewish National Home can ill afford to be exclusive (111), that "enclave turns easily into ghetto" (29), and that even the ghetto of hybridity protects as much as it traps (90). For those with a distinct memory of confined quarters, the fear remains that a space of belonging might turn into a site of enclosure.

Early on in the text, Benjamin and Isaac insist on their close alliance with the original occupants of the land and shield aggressive acts of colonization behind gestures of solidarity and intimacy. "The satisfactory bargain" (39) Isaac Wilder strikes with his Nandi servant already anticipates the novel's vision of cross-cultural collaboration and prepares for the eventual intermarriage of settlers and natives. Skillfully avoided, however, are the thorny questions of servitude and proprietorship that inform the initial encounter between the pioneer and his faithful assistant. In their struggle for autonomy from the British colonial power, Jewish settlers share the political aspirations of the Nandi and other ethnic groups, "all of them wandering people" (101) in search of a permanent sanctuary. But only by erasing the Kenyan liberation movement from the novel can the illusion of commonality be successfully maintained. Rather than addressing the potential conflicts of two aspiring nations vying for control over the same territory, the narrative concentrates on Nandi women as the focal point for the assimilationist desires of the Jewish patrilineage.[34] What the Nandi might lack is the political capital of "victimhood" that the Jewish settlers, at times, find convenient to claim. Even in the Kenyan

colony, Jewishness signifies "an undesirable difference" in physical appearance, religious practice, and political interests, and is subject to interminable disputes over "what degree of civilization counted as 'white'" (47). Yet the same register of difference can also be employed to assert the cultural authority derived from a history of violence. And thus, the British colonialists feel obligated to accept Jews as Europeans since "[w]hat else, with such a history, could they possible be?" (48). In the rhetorical construction of "race," when ethnicity and class, nation and religion, easily translate into immutable difference, the definition of "Jewishness" has proven particularly vulnerable to shifting political agendas. In the novel, however, the racialization of religious difference is not just mobilized in the service of organized violence; ironically, it also operates as a source of political capital. For perpetrators and witnesses, the collective discrimination of vulnerable social groups does not quite suppress the narratives of shame and guilt that such violence inevitably generates. This ambivalence enables Isaac and Benjamin Wilder to simultaneously distance and align themselves with the colonial government, insisting, "[w]e were not much used to this being called white. It hardly fits with the other adjectives commonly applied to us" (112)—but still aspiring to the bourgeois dream of success. It is a dream best exemplified in the reinvention of the immigrant in the image of the gentleman (48), in Isaac's longing for "a lady of refinement" (45), and in the pride with which he strives to position himself within the "framework of British society—post office, groceries, newspapers, train tickets, agricultural shows" (42).

From an early age, Benjamin is aware that "Jews were the people of remembrance" (73), but rather than the barely observed religious rituals, it is the external pressures on Jewish life that define memory and identity. For the child, the collective experience of persecution is first experienced in the secretly locked-away photograph of his Aunt Rachel. In search of her Jewish roots in Europe, Rachel departs from Kishinev in the early 1930s, armed only with old addresses and half-remembered Yiddish phrases. Though initially believed to be safe in Poland with its half a million Jews ("Safety lay in numbers. Poland, we all believed, could not do without them" 66), her nostalgic longing to decipher the sepia photographs and unintelligible letters of the past delivers her into the modernity of a bureaucratically organized genocide. The frail figure of a young girl turns into a sign of enduring grief and ensures that the farm called Kishinev not only serves as a site of memory for the 1903 pogrom but also resonates with the atrocities of the Holocaust. The peripheral character of Rosa Levine, a middle-aged woman who seeks refuge in Kenya "since the UK visa

quota was full" (69), performs a similar narrative function in her continuous grief for lost lives and the profound sadness with which she contemplates an unimaginable crime (129). Gendered figures of permanent sorrow, Rachel Wilder and Rosa Levine evoke the Holocaust as a palpable presence of collective victimization and therefore serve an instrumental role in what Bauman has called the social production of guilt and innocence. The ghostly figures of Rosa and Rachel work toward a sense of hereditary victimhood, an imagined ancestry "acting through the collective production of memory and through individual acts of self-enlisting and self-identification," so that signs of future hostility, whether real or imagined, can affirm a familiar identity.[35] The memory of persecution gestures toward the "aristocracy of victimhood" and an implicit subtext of celebratory survival that morally legitimizes the Jewish presence in (post)colonial space. It might help to explain Benjamin's confidence in a marginalized identity and his insistence that "[i]f anyone makes a remark about my hair being too curly I tell them it's because I am one of the Chosen people" (77). The imposed narrative of race as a sign of undesirable otherness thus encounters the defiant narrative of religion as a sign of privileged knowledge.

The notion of hereditary victimhood provides a powerful rationale for the nationalist aspirations of the Jewish community in Kenya. For as long as the settlers' political authority is limited, they will remain a minor player at the table of international politics. The vulnerability of "people without a state" is poignantly illustrated in the historical memory of the 1938 conference in Southern France, where Western powers debated the fate of Jewish refugees. Remembered twice in the narrative, first in Benjamin's chronicle of the Wilder family (84) and then in Isaac's bold vision of a Jewish National Home in Kenya (122), both versions of the conference insist that the humanitarian proposals of European nations are framed by self-interest—by the desire to protect themselves from "the wrath of their unemployed millions" rather than assist a Jewish population desperate to escape the threat of Nazi Germany (85). Yet the "dual imagination" of the Evian conference also speaks to the ambivalent actions resulting from the logic of survival. In the political conflicts of the twentieth century, the Jewish community in Kenya will commit itself to neutrality to protect a fragile national home on colonial soil and ensure the survival of some while surrendering the safety of others (80). And thus the desire for political viability rehearses the compromises made in the name of individual survival when rational behavior serves primarily the purpose of the powerful. If "the rationality of the ruled is always

the weapon of the rulers," then it here not only invites the neglect of the local Kenyan population but also results in the strategic indifference toward one's own people.[36] Mbembe might wonder how to responsibly rethink "the ethical practice of freedom" in relation to those considered strangers or even enemies.[37] In the novel, however, even the moral commitment toward one's own community is sacrificed to the power hierarchies that privilege those whose sovereignty (and rationality) reigns supreme.

Aware of the compromises made in the name of survival, the novel carefully guards its options. If Jewishness can be condensed to barely observed rituals or to the genocidal violence reducing people to numbers (75), then it can also profit from diasporic expansion and the "loopholes" provided by a continually reinvented identity. As Benjamin contemplates the futile efforts of the Wilder family to protect Jewish "essence" in a Kenyan diaspora doubling as national home, he learns to manipulate the collective identifications available to him: "We had got used to lumping people together as 'Europeans' or 'Asians' although they came from different countries and religions. What would we have called ourselves? Not half-Jew: not half-anything. But we had learned too late that the faint chance of a Jew surviving openly in war-time Europe lay in being married to a Goy. Ourselves we were happy to become Kenyans and keep our land" (83). While the fictional identity of "Tutsi" proves deadly in Owuor's "Weight of Whispers," unstable and shifting affiliations in *Kishinev* provide the passport to survival. Benjamin's hybrid ethnicity complicates his location in the ambiguous narratives of race and nation. For him, "mixture of blood was as much an asset as a peculiarity [since] it helped you to distance yourself from factions" and exploit the insecurity of others unsure of "where you would position yourself" (89). His embrace of the antithetical desires for diasporic routes and national roots leaves open the possibility of both the "wandering devotee and the local patriot."[38] Yet even as multiple identifications supply welcome escape routes for Benjamin, the politics of gender and race in the colony, and in the Jewish community in particular, transform multipositionality from an asset for men into a liability for women. In the experience of Benjamin's mother Sophie, the Jewish National Home turns into a space of enclosure that traps rather than protects, an agent of patriarchal authority and forced assimilation that leaves her without social support. The utopia of multiple belongings thus devolves into the dystopia of permanent unbelonging when the nation reproduces its distinctly patriarchal image.

Seemingly unlimited in its historical imagination, *Kishinev* surprises through its inability to imagine female characters other than as iconic signifiers of exile and mourning. Introduced in various stages of vulnerability and transition, when their imminent arrival in Kenya calls for male protection (Sarah 46), when their departure for Europe signals certain death (Rachel 61), or when an "expected daughter is expelled in premature pain and blood" (Sophie 62), the novel's female characters fade away even before they fully appear. Though acutely missed when absent, they are barely perceivable when present, and their desire for roots in Europe is as fatal as their inability to find a place of belonging in Kenya. What indeed can be imagined in a narrative that pledges allegiance to the vision and deeds of male ancestors? Benjamin's mother Sophie repeatedly reinvents herself, first in the image of colonial Christianity, then of Jewish culture, only to be left without a viable community. Her ephemeral presence and early departure from the narrative signify on a limited (even if alternative) national imagination in which the politics of race and gender restrict a woman's spatial and social mobility. Uncertain about who will claim her, the child Sophie imagines herself as a fairy-tale baby "found" by a kind white farmer and delivered to school to enjoy the privileges of education: "Her surname for school purposes was Brown. Her Nandi name was Chemalel" (63). The child of a Nandi mother and one of the farmer's sons, the simultaneous stigma of social illegitimacy and racial hybridity is only lessened when the farmer provides shelter for mother and child. Relieved at her "daughter's prospects of a creditable life," Sophie's mother seeks refuge in a reclusive existence, isolated even from her grandchildren, whose perfunctory visits are marred by the fact that they "did not know the right questions to ask" (72). The mother's isolation continues in the life of her daughter Sophie, who does not know which questions to ask in order to retrieve her ethnic heritage. Aware of Kenya's status as a "white man's country," the adult Sophie can only listen to radio news of other places while her own world is painfully confined by the demands of race (64). Her bold marriage to Benjamin's father further restricts, rather than expands, her options. Even the protective gestures of a sympathetic father-in-law, less concerned with difference in skin color than with difference in religion, cannot compensate for the limited social and physical spaces available to a Jewish-Nandi couple. In a Jewish community considered "white" in colonial Kenya, Sophie's social position must remain precarious. Though she is willing to accept the rules of Judaism, her Jewish neighbors are ill at ease with the unorthodox racial composition of the Wilder household, "counting the months to her first miscarriage

and remarking with a chilly brightness on the need to get used to new things" (68). Even after her husband advances to the position of sole proprietor of Kishinev, Sophie remains painfully separated from the "expected world[s]" of the Nandi and the Christian communities, since "by converting she had cut herself off from the friendships the other women made in church." Forced to move "outside the network of authority and obligation" (71), her conversion to Judaism becomes the sign of both assimilation and permanent displacement. Religious compliance and cultural conformity fail to balance the visible sign of racial difference, and thus Sophie is obligated to stay away from official functions, "from school speech days and agricultural shows" (78). In the end, her son can only observe, with sadness, the fading away of a barely rooted mother (67) who will be mourned by Jewish and Christian communities with "nothing to say to one another" (78). Later, Sophie's story will find an uncanny repetition in Benjamin's short and tragic marriage to a woman of Nandi and British heritage. Persuaded by romance to convert to Judaism, against the staunch opposition of her Nandi mother, who firmly believes in "the superiority of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants" (91), only Hannah's sudden death in a car accident ends the conflict between the mother's and the daughter's oppositional alliance with colonial cultures. In their struggle to emulate either Jewish or Protestant settlers, Nandi women willingly sacrifice their own beliefs and familial ties. Tragic figures of loss and death, of the physical violence of genocide and the epistemic violence of conversion, the female characters in *Kishinev* demonstrate the vulnerability of women under the influence of patriarchal politics.

If Nandi wives are marginalized in Benjamin's narration of Wilder family history, then the practice of exclusion intensifies in Isaac's "alternative history" of a Jewish National Home. Though the settlers aspire to maintain friendly relations with their European and Nandi neighbors, the acceptance of Jewish sovereignty is the *sine qua non* for any attempt at inclusion: "We took the offered territory and made our own allocations within it. We did not entirely exclude the Nandi or the other Europeans—we did not want to create another ghetto for ourselves—so long as they conformed to our rules" (114). Once the spiritual commonalities with the Nandi are interpreted as "a miraculous sign of common cause" (110), mass conversion to Judaism seems a desirable route for the emerging nation. In part to avoid the aggressive competition of Christian missionaries, and in part because "as an enclave within a colony we knew we could not be exclusive" (111), the narrators insist on the reinvention of Judaism as a universal religion. The possibility of conversion inevitably shifts the notion of "God's

chosen people" from a privileged covenant to the explicit desire for imperial reproduction. As a political state and a universal religion, the Jewish National Home in Kenya aims to "naturalize" the chosen affiliation of those striving for citizenship by insisting on their assimilation and conversion. Cultural conformity signals political loyalty when the modern state insists on its right to ideologically unify the population within its territory.[39] In the "slippage between the nation as a political community bound by citizenship and as an ethnic or racial community bound by language and descent,"[40] the national home predictably reenacts the contradictions of the colonial enterprise, whose promise of "civilizational progress" remained tightly controlled by the imperatives of political subjugation and cultural assimilation. Even the otherwise enthusiastic narrator Isaac has to admit that the project of national expansion generates its own practices of segregation, especially when women and African converts are excluded from a district council dominated by white men: "If we admitted [women] without Hebrew, would we also admit the black Israelites?" (115).

Eventually, his grandson Benjamin will acknowledge that the alternative national history he is envisioning relies on the need to protect "our most general beliefs and the ethics of our social system" (130); and that, in its distinct needs for borders and surveillance, the national home indeed has to consider itself an enclave (131). As the nation oscillates between the seemingly contradictory impulses of expansion and ghettoization, it claims the right to punish those who defy official rules. When, seemingly without irony, Benjamin remarks that in the defense against the spread of HIV "our people are routinely screened and wear warning badges if they are found to be infected" (134), the nation has fully reclaimed its authority to police the "body politic."[41] The visible marking of a diseased, and hence undesirable, population echoes the historical ghettoization of those singled out to wear the Star of David. Segregation is thus, yet again, justified in the name of political and medical hygiene. Imagined within the paradigm of the nation, even the alternative history of a continually displaced population insists on the need to protect national health against those challenging to penetrate its defenses. Once the national home ceases to be "in narrative transit," it boldly claims the prerogatives of political sovereignty, from the monopoly on violence to the social production of moral indifference. The logic of survival justifies the logic of eviction when those most vulnerable are marked with the sign of deficiency, set aside as a different category and thus removed from the ethical responsibility of their fellow citizens.[42]

It is not without irony that those who, throughout history, have often been considered unwanted strangers, here reinvent themselves as agents of assimilation intent on preserving (and reproducing) the Jewish patrilineage. Ultimately, the nation cannot surrender the cultural distinctiveness that legitimizes its claim to political existence. Even as a potential vehicle for freedom, national (and domestic) homes are always also a force of discipline.[43] *A Farm Called Kishinev* baffles the reader with the poignant ambivalence of its excess and lack of imagination, with its simultaneous embrace of "the shreds and patches of cultural signification" and its final return to pedagogical coherence.[44] Critical of its own desires, mindful of the fictionality of nationhood, the novel acknowledges the shadowy presence of a diasporic elsewhere yet is unable to imagine Jewish and Nandi equality for fear of undermining the religious and historical rights of the Jewish National Home. Instead, the narrative transforms settlers into natives and natives into strangers, and translates the imperative of national self-production into a program of social engineering that perceives the sovereignty of the other as a threat to one's own.[45] Exhausted by seemingly endless narrative possibilities, *Kishinev* finally settles for the success of the national home. In its loyalty to the vision of the father, the novel aims to protect the memory of displacement and persecution, even if it has to trap vulnerable wives, and thus reenacts the ambiguity of the ghetto it has feared all along. For Nandi wives, acceptable only in the image of the same, the dream of Jewish political sovereignty soon slides into the regime of death. Though self-consciously gesturing toward the dystopian qualities of narrating the nation, the novel cannot quite muster the strength to explore the dilemmas of permanently uprooted wives. For a time, the experience of statelessness, of captivity and freedom, unites both Jews and Nandi in their struggle to escape from death in enclosed spaces. In the end, though, the attempt at a critical dialogue surrenders to the monologic imperative of cultural assimilation.[46] Apparently, the freedom of some will always be the nightmare of others.

Royal Desire and Fratricidal Wars: Yvonne Owuor's "Weight of Whispers"

In his historical study of the Great Lakes region, Mahmood Mamdani explains that "[i]f the Nazi Holocaust was testimony to the crisis of the nation-state in Europe, the Rwandan genocide is testimony to the crisis of citizenship in postcolonial Africa."[47] And if *Kishinev* reveals the construction of settlers and natives and their differential access to

power, then Owuor's story insists on deconstructing political identities that enable the state-sponsored persecution of "foreigners." The narrative's main protagonist, "a Tutsi of noble ancestry" by the name of Boniface Louis R. Kuseremane, escapes from the Rwandan genocide only to face persistent discrimination in Kenya. Progressively alienated from a fictional identity fashioned in the colonial discourses of race and ethnicity, the prince-turned-beggar has to contend with his new and undesirable status of refugee, with the burden of perpetual displacement and the terror of denied privilege.[48] Similar to the plot of Macgoye's novel, the atrocities that the short story evokes take place in the "narrative off." Yet both narratives succeed in exploring the enabling conditions of genocide: the historical formation of racialized identities, the capacity of the modern state to design a social order desirable to those in power, and the unrelenting logic with which private and public authority are exercised against vulnerable populations.

Leaving Rwanda with an entourage of female dependents, Kuseremane casually claims the right to purchase "the last seats on the last plane" out of a country descending into organized chaos. Europe is the final destination for the privileged travelers belonging to a carefully groomed elite who tolerate Kenya only as a temporary refuge. "Fortunately," the prince proclaims, "we were in transit. Soon, we would be in Europe, among friends" (14). Kuseremane's royal masculinity is complemented by the regal and ethereal appearance of his female companions.[49] Queen mothers and princesses in transit, they are unaccustomed to the practicalities of life, instead relying on the authority of the male protector and reserving their disdain for "inferior" Kenyan women unable to compete with the polished femininity of foreign royals: "'Their language and manner are not as sweet and gentle as ours' . . . The women giggle as do females who have received affirmation of their particular and unassailable advantage over other women" (15). Defined by "a self-conscious racialized elitism," Kuseremane's subjectivity testifies to the divisive politics of colonialism and its lasting impact on the construction of self and other "that partially enabled the 1994 genocide."[50] The tall man, whose Tutsi aristocracy is physically inscribed in the stereotyped features of his body, seems to have "swallowed wholesale the venom that was the Hamitic hypothesis" when he exploits a collective identity coded in colonial terms of racial superiority.[51]

For Kuseremane, the comforts promised by a privileged identity need to be vigorously defended. Throughout his sojourn in the Kenyan exile, he anxiously reiterates the paradigms defining his existence: "He is a member of a divine-right royalty who at birth was

'recognized by the priests as a man and a prince'; he is a former senior diplomat; he is a successful neocolonial elite partner in both a banking and gemstone business, he is a well-educated 'universal citizen' with a Ph.D. in diplomacy and a Masters in Geophysics."[52] Kuseremane cannot comprehend the possibility of an existence outside the circulating narratives of racialized ethnicity. Yet soon after his escape from Rwanda, the aristocrat-turned-victim will be confronted with the "weight of whispers" insisting on his responsibility for the genocide. But if he is a member of the Rwandan Tutsi monarchy that "was abolished just prior to the country's independence," how could he have been implicated in the genocide? Partington rightfully argues that such inconsistencies foreground the fictionality of the character and problematize any attempt at a sympathetic reading of his inevitable slide from power. While the untenability of Kuseremane's myth of identity deconstructs the elitist categories on which the "enforced and colonially-vulgar discourses of antagonistic Hutu/Tutsi racial identity" are predicated (117), it simultaneously demonstrates the impact of such identity discourses on the construction of self and other and their reliance on fears of "foreign" racial oppression that were so efficiently disseminated through the Rwandan mass media.

Authored by German and Belgian colonialists, the fiction of the foreign origin of the Tutsi could be skillfully exploited in the 1990s to evoke the fear of a return to "feudal servitude" and insist on the Tutsis' "repatriation" to Ethiopia. Colonial policies racialized previously existing political identities and translated them into the volatile distinction between indigenous "native" and alien "settler." Belgian colonialism thus relied on the Hamitic hypothesis to support the myth that those in power in the nineteenth-century Rwandan kingdom, the "Tutsi," were in fact foreigners with Caucasoid racial origins in Ethiopia who had successfully established their "racial superiority" over the local "Hutu" population. In the racial coding of "Tutsi" and "Hutu," a superior group of Hamitic peoples triumphed over an inferior race of Bantu negroids.[53] Only briefly puzzled by the "civilizational progress" of a well-functioning Rwandan kingdom, the European colonizers had discovered an explanation preserving the Victorian myth of darkest Africa. With the active participation of the Catholic Church, order had been successfully restored in the house of social Darwinism. As racial identity was visibly documented in identity cards issued since the 1930s, and power allocated on the basis of racial privilege, Tutsi administrators became the official face of colonial oppression. To the dynamics of power, Belgian colonialism had added the explosive politics of race and indigeneity.[54]

Under the increasing pressure of the United Nations, the Belgian colonial state was forced to reconsider its unilateral backing of the Tutsi elite after World War II and shifted its support to the emerging Hutu middle class. The Belgian shift from Tutsi to Hutu support successfully deflected "the basis of late colonial conflict from class (in which case the Belgians would have been seen as equally guilty) into race (sic), in this one move turning the racialised Tutsi from ally to enemy."[55] As Rwanda transformed from a Tutsi-dominated colonial administration into a postcolonial republic founded on Hutu rule, "race thinking that had once hardened identity categories and benefited the Tutsi minority now gave rise to ethnic nationalism. Rwanda's new Hutu leaders claimed independence in the name of the previously oppressed Hutu majority."[56] In the midst of a deepening political crisis in the 1990s, the Habyarimana administration found it opportune to divert accusations of neocolonial elitism and regional divisions among the Hutu onto issues of race.[57] An effectively mobilized program of ethnic nationalism denied the linguistic and cultural commonalities of Hutu and Tutsi, and instead insisted on a distinctive Hutu identity (and a history of victimization) to legitimize the exclusionary policies of the Rwandan nation-state and its definition of citizenship in ethnic and territorial terms. As a consequence, "an individual's enjoyment of civil rights [depended] on his appurtenance to an ethnic group or locality."[58]

The Rwandan genocide demonstrates the disastrous alliance between modernity's managerial tools and its epistemological preferences for a desirable social order.[59] In *The Order of Genocide*, Strauss emphasizes both, the logic and the modernity of Rwanda's genocidal violence since the country's Hutu elite, whose power had been severely eroded by the Arusha peace accord, the transition to multiparty politics and increased attacks by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), relied on colonial fictions of race to categorize all Tutsi, resident and exiled, as foreign enemies. Nationalist rhetoric fueled a defensive war, the objectives of which had been carefully framed and disseminated from the top down, for "[t]he leaders who controlled the state ordered the killing, and they deployed the resources they had at their disposal—loyal military units, government spokesmen, militias, and radio broadcasts—to spread the message of violence" (22). Official policies were mediated through a centralized state, whose local presence was effectively supported by a history of mandatory labor through which civilians could be called upon for defensive duties. Rwanda's densely populated landscape further facilitated the state's capacity for surveillance and the consolidation of its power. If

the role of state institutions and the mobilization of racialized ethnicity was crucial, then so was the war with the RPF and its logic of self-protection and order. In the contexts of political instability and crisis, violence appeared a legitimate strategy of self-defense, a morally justified means for restoring control and avoiding future victimization. Once genocidal violence was equated with state policy and authority, the necessity to comply became an imperative, even if the compliance of many unwilling executioners arose out of the desire to avoid punishment.[60] To follow the call to "national duty" was to eliminate a threatening foreign presence and to protect one's own life.[61] The discourse of Tutsi racial privilege had thus shifted to the imperative of racial exclusion, which encouraged the forceful eviction of "strangers" whose presence could only be perceived as a threat to national sovereignty. Securely constructed within the rhetoric of violence and autochthony, the victim who was also the enemy was blamed for the crisis of the postcolonial nation.[62] Thus, the seemingly contradictory characterization of Kuseremane as victim and *genocidaire* operates within the logic of organized violence and the mutual fear of victimhood through which today's victims become tomorrow's killers.

In the relationship between the prince and his majordomo, the servant whom he has trusted from childhood, class differences are powerfully rooted in the bodies of master and servant and the unpredictable semantics of "dirt." After the assassination of the Rwandan and Burundian presidents, an act that will soon spiral into genocidal violence, the prince indignantly declares that "the perpetrators must be hunted down. That evil must be purged from our lives."[63] Yet as the servant faithfully enacts the prince's appeal to justice, the power differential between master and servant undergoes a subtle but decisive shift: "It emerged later on, when it was too late, that an old servant took his obligations too far, in the name of his prince" (12). Kuseremane's call to order evokes Bauman's metaphor of modern culture as a garden culture, intent on designing a "better" society from which harmful elements have been successfully eliminated, even if such interventions, at worst, rationalize genocidal violence against "undesirable groups" as a question of political and medical hygiene. The infamous Nazi slogan of *Judensäuberung* finds an uncanny echo in the defamation of the Tutsi as *inyenzi*, cockroaches, and vermin to be exterminated for the sake of a desirable social order.[64] The animality of the other hence enables the physical violence with which the modern state secures its privileges. And thus the servant returns to the master to proclaim that "[a]ll has been cleaned" (14), that "the dirt" deemed responsible for the current crisis has been eliminated. But as

he supplements the restoration of order with the prospect of disorder—"'They are coming . . . Sir'" (14; ellipsis in original)—the reader wonders whether the deferential gesture ("Sir") in which he pronounces the possibility of imminent death only camouflages the true nature of his subversive acts. To the prince, who mistakes the pungent smell of a human being for the Gorgonzola cheese gracing his table, the disheveled appearance of the servant-turned-killer is clearly distasteful. But the dirty, dreadlocked, and half-naked appearance of the servant suggests the iconography of the Mau Mau resistance fighter, and thus not only forecasts the prince's own "distasteful" future as refugee and grave digger but also recuperates the concerns of *Kwani?* magazine with its frequent references to the Rwandan genocide and the Kenyan liberation movement.[65]

Once safely arrived in their Kenyan exile, the prince's call to order will become the curse that sanctions the genocide as well as his own destruction. The carefully spread rumors of a former servant-turned-master undermine Kuseremane's efforts to escape to the safety of Europe, the place of order and reason where rumors of culpability do not seem to matter (19). For Kuseremane, the belief in the language of justice and responsibility, in an opportune order securing his position of privilege, seems irreconcilable with the disorder of the servant, his unreasonable execution of the prince's wish, his propensity toward violence, and his untidy appearance. Yet the tension between the order of royal privilege and the chaos of the undisciplined servant reveals the irrationality of a social system mobilized for the sole purpose of securing political privilege. Is the violence of the trusted servant then primarily an act of self-defense against repressive regimes, testimony to how easily (and perhaps understandably) victims become killers? Those, like the prince, who perceive themselves as Tutsi aristocrats exploit a collective identity coded in terms of racial superiority and hence intimately associated with colonial and neocolonial aggression. Kuseremane's interactions with his servant and "ordinary" Kenyans demonstrate his self-confident reliance on inherited privileges and generate a casual violence toward those whose disheveled appearance offends the prince's sophisticated sensibilities.

In exile, Kuseremane's deliberately built ghetto of racial privilege soon turns into the ghetto forcefully imposed on stateless refugees. His slide from power proceeds quickly after his arrival in Kenya. Well-rehearsed securities disintegrate when he is faced with the slipperiness of a foreign tongue, the loss of authority, and the gradual depletion of funds. The contradictions of an unstable, delusional identity poignantly emerge when the former bank president proves unable to

convert foreign currency; when the erstwhile prince no longer solicits respect but only the epithet *takataka* ("rubbish") from the owner of a pawnshop; and when the son and brother fails to protect his female dependents (16). The steep social decline finds its spatial equivalent in the family's undignified departure from the comforts of the Nairobi Hilton to the squalor of River Road, shamed destination of the urban dispossessed. As the familiar world disappears, the body and its psychological defenses break down amid the anxious reiteration that "[t]he Kuseremanes are not refugees. They are visitors, tourists, people in transit, universal citizens with an affinity . . . well . . . to Europe" (16; ellipses in original). Though Europe has closed its doors to "the brother sovereigns in exile," Kuseremane refuses to exchange the narrative of privilege for the disenfranchised status of the refugee. Transit speaks of choice; permanent displacement signals the ghettoization of the powerless.

In its exploration of the metaphorical texture of wilderness, the short story debunks the myth of a carefully regulated and morally responsible modern society. While the commodified wilderness of exotic animals has been effectively domesticated for human consumption (22), real danger lurks in the wilderness of a scavenging humanity. Policemen and immigration officers, United Nations staffers and embassy personnel, seem ready to pounce on their unsuspecting victims. Though the physical wilderness in *Kishinev* can be tamed by acts of conquest, the allegorical wilderness of "Whispers" is dominated by the inhuman landscape of modern institutions. In Owuor's narrative, the violence generated by bureaucratic efficiency and the state's monopoly on power appears strikingly similar to the violence resulting from the performance of public functions for private ends, which testifies to significant shifts in power within the postcolonial nation.[66] Regardless of whether it is deployed in support of state-mandated policies or as a vehicle for personal profit, the administrative apparatus of various national and international organizations repeatedly fails those who seek out its assistance.

That the rules of bureaucratic culture allow for indifference to human despair is demonstrated in Kuseremane's futile attempt to secure an entry visa for the United States. At the American embassy in Nairobi, the prince encounters an employee who, in her insistence that he lacks the necessary documents to have his case processed, relies on the technical language of standardized procedures to rationalize her swift denial of his request. Through the routine performance of authorized actions, human beings are reduced to manageable objects and are dehumanized in the name of procedural

efficiency. Officially approved indifference, however, easily turns into hostility when such "manageable objects" resist the implementation of bureaucratic routine.[67] As the prince pleads his case, the employee's call—"Next!"—signals the finality with which his request has been denied (17). Even the immigration officer to whom the prince presents his accomplished résumé reminds Kuseremane that the privilege of education has been replaced by the impotence of poverty and statelessness: "'Ati Ph.D. Ph.D. gani? Wewe refugee, bwana!'" (22).[68] Citing the section of the immigration charter that obligates him to report illegal aliens to the police, the officer extracts an exorbitant bribe from his baffled victim. Money buys protection; public office ensures that the transfer of resources now follows its own logic of allocation and violence. Given the educational system in colonial Rwanda, with its distinction between a "superior" French education reserved for Tutsi and an "inferior" Kiswahili curriculum for those considered Hutu, it is only fitting that the former prince has to comprehend his new status "in the language of servants."[69] When Kuseremane is later arrested by the police for failing to produce the sign either of arbitrary order (a valid ID) or of organized disorder (bribe), his captors delight in tormenting him in the caricatured language of reason and justice. Each time they deprive him of one of his possessions (the sacred ring, the snakeskin wallet, the only photograph of his family), the bribe is rationalized in well-rehearsed legal codes: extortion translates into "evidence," while "resisting arrest" and "attempted escape" justify random violence. Official models of sovereignty and violence here deliver welcome examples for the privatized exercise of power and authority.

The representation of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in the short story presents, by far, the most disturbing testimony to the vulnerability of displaced populations and the role of international organizations in this new culture of immunity.[70] The presence of the UNHCR further diminishes the sovereignty of the Kenyan state, and its humanitarian mission is rendered absurd for as long as international help follows the procedures of the death camp and individual officials pawn refugees for the purpose of extracting bribes and sexual favors.[71] Apparently, the walk is short from Fanon's native village to the ghetto and on to the refugee camp. Once inside the United Nations compound, the Kuseremanes are documented and classified, photographed and registered, stamped on the wrist in a gesture eerily reminiscent of concentration camps (23). Separated into the undesirable and the desirable, only the latter are subjected to a medical examination that destines them as prey for future sexual

assault: "Annals of war decree that conquest of landscapes is incomplete unless the vanquished's women are 'taken.' Where war is crudest, the women are discarded, afterwards for their men to find" (29). For Lune, Kuseremane's fiancée, the threat of rape is only bearable when thought of as the cooperation necessary to ensure survival; once "discussed with family, it is not a question of being forced," she explains to a disbelieving prince, who feels "taunted for [his] ineffectuality by this woman who would be [his] wife" (29). Practicing familiar ballerina steps in front of the mirror, she attempts to distance herself from her own violation by performing a more opportune role. Though her compliance will win Lune the coveted passage to Canada, the logic of survival motivating her behavior primarily serves the interest of those who formulate the rules of exploitation.

Beaten by a fiancé who can only express his impotence in acts of domestic violence, Lune fares only marginally better than Kuseremane. As the familiar narrative of Tutsi aristocracy slowly disintegrates, the body of privilege defined by the consumption of expensive food and designer clothes dissolves into an undesirable body, malnourished and subjected to physical violence. Unable to recognize his own reflection in the mirror, the former prince finds himself progressively alienated from a self inscribed into the racialized and nationalist discourses of unwanted foreigners and disenfranchised refugees (17). Only in a moment of abject humiliation does Kuseremane begin to realize the limitations of what he considered to be his autonomous existence. When suffering imprisonment and police torture, the prince relives a memorable encounter dating back to the days of his privileged travels in Europe. Years ago, in a Dutch coffee bar surrounded by the carefully modulated signs of affluence, he had responded with anger at the appearance of another African man, whose ingratiating behavior rehearses European stereotypes and instantly turns the place of comfort into the colonial theater of race and animality:

> Most of the café turned back to their coffees and conversations. One man in a group of three put out his foot. The squat African man stumbled, grabbed his back to him. Rearranged himself and said to the man. "Heee heee heee, heh heh heh." He flapped his arm up and down. I wondered why, and then it dawned on me. He was simulating a monkey. He flapped his way to where I was, my acquaintances and I.
>
> Sweat trickled down my spine. I think it was the heat in the café.
>
> "What is your country of origin?" I ask him. Actually, I snarl the question at him and I am surprised by the rage in my voice. (24)

Angered by the shameful performance, the prince and gem dealer is not appeased when "his fellow African" professes his preference for trafficking in European desires, for performing the monkey and hawking pornographic magazines, to the humiliation of a custodial job. The integrity of the businessman appears seductive when compared to the shame of wiping off European shit. Though Kuseremane self-righteously admonishes the performing businessman, his interlocutor appreciates even this compromised attempt at acknowledging his humanity: "'Broda . . . Its fine to see de eyes of anoda man . . . it is fine to see de eyes'" (25; ellipses in original). If the interaction between strangers in modern societies only allows for temporary and partial contacts, for passing glances that recognize the other as a potential acquaintance, then the dynamics of race and citizenship turn such civil inattention into gestures of negation.[72] In the Kenyan refuge, the prince will have to accept that "[i]n exile we lower our heads so that we do not see in the mirror of another's eyes, what we suspect: that our precarious existence rests entirely on the whim of another's tolerance of our presence" (25). Long before his physical displacement forced him to lower his gaze in deference, he had already performed his role in colonial narratives of race and desire. Like the self-declared businessman satisfying foreign sexual fantasies, the prince had catered to the "European predilection for African gems" (13) and gratefully enacted his intended part among the neocolonial elite. It is not just the disenfranchised who feel the need for mimicry; even the privileged learn to perform according to a script that they insist to have authored.

When the Kuseremanes accept that "the first lesson of exile [is] camouflage" (28), they force themselves to believe that refugees have no other choice than to participate in their own violation. To survive in the domesticated wilderness of human civilization does require to "turn [oneself] into a log" (27). Ironically, it is an act of "thingification" that simultaneously participates in the rationality of survival—claiming surrender to the perpetrator's logic as a conscious choice—and the phenomenology of death through which negated subjects accept their reduction to nothingness.[73] In a social environment of crisis and negation, women occupy a particularly vulnerable position. Even a disenfranchised prince feels compelled to demonstrate his virility at the expense of "female fledglings" who have disregarded his counsel. His assault of Lune and Chi Chi, whose willing prostitution secures the papers promising safe passage to another country, attests to the mobilization of gendered subjects as signifiers for the dystopia of the postcolonial nation.[74] Under conditions of violence and war,

when scarce resources are reserved for those claiming "native belonging," national homes acquire a distinctively unhomely character for women subjected to multiple acts of physical and epistemological displacement. Female characters in the previously discussed narratives appeared to triumph over patriarchal domination when they morally redeemed themselves to reclaim the utopia of a democratic nation-state. Yet in "Whispers," blood does not promise redemption but only bears testimony to the failure of an untenable identity: "A body . . . my sister. When did a pool of blood become this . . . absence? They let me cover her face after I have kissed her eyes shut. Vain gesture" (34; ellipses in original). As Kuseremane ponders his sister's senseless death in childbirth, the narrative of sublimated sacrifice slides into the nightmare of obliterated existence. Fathered by an Ethiopian refugee, Chi-Chi's stillborn child is deeply implicated in the myth of Tutsi racial identity and the multiple registers of exile through which the Kuseremanes migrate as elite foreigners in Rwanda and exiled refugees in Kenya. Like the frequent miscarriages weakening Sophie in *Kishinev*, an identity perpetually displaced in the competing narratives of nation and race, ethnicity and gender, produces only death. Violated by the promise of romance, the frustration of emasculated brothers, and the struggle for sovereignty and power, the bodies of women provide the grotesque landscape for the enactment of fratricide:

> A doctor and a nurse struggle to bring to premature birth a child we did not know existed. Chi-Chi's eyes are closed. Her face still. When she left us, the moment she went, I felt a tug on my waist band and her body lost its sheen, as if a light within had gone off for good. She left with her baby.
>
> The child's head was in between her legs. A boy or girl, only the head was visible and one arm, small fists slightly open as if beckoning. Skin like coffee with cream. The offspring of African exiles. An enigma solved. The Ethiopians had abruptly disappeared from the radar of our lives and Chi-Chi had said nothing. The dying child of African exiles in an African land. I stroked the baby's wet head. Did baby come to lure Chi-Chi away? A word shimmers into my heart: fratricide. I douse it with the coldness of my blood. I am shivering. A distant voice . . . mine.
>
> "Leave them . . . leave the children." Keep them together . . . the way they are . . .
>
> Landscape speaks. The gesture of an incomplete birth. Of what should we be afraid? Metamorphoses of being. There must be another way to live. (34; ellipses in original)

The fantastic representation of a birth that is also an abortion, of a partly delivered child evoking the image of phallic penetration, of a mother and child laid to rest in an incomplete act of separation, resonates with Mbembe's interest in the grotesque and the obscene, and their potential to deconstruct particular practices of violence and domination. Can the aesthetics of vulgarity operate as a parody of official discourse, as Bakhtin had argued, or do they remain trapped in the same epistemological field, as Mbembe is inclined to believe? Though the scene might not gesture beyond epistemologies of race and nation, its grotesque representational vocabulary unsettles the reader with its simultaneous demonstration of the absurdity *and* the logic of identity discourses that enable fratricidal violence even as they promise privilege and authority. Here ideologies of race are as seductive as the imperative of assimilation, which refugees faithfully enact in the hope of increasing their chance of survival. Between a Tutsi prince unable to exist outside (neo)colonial discourses on racialized difference and the mimicry of refugees blending into nothingness, there are indeed many ways to erase human existence.

Once the Kuseremanes resign themselves to a state of perpetual transit, their hopes and frustrations are visibly inscribed into their migrations through Nairobi's urban landscape. From the luxury of the Hilton Hotel, they move to the squalor of River Road and, eventually, to Hurlingham, a neighborhood known for its population of Ethiopian refugees. When hope for forward movement has been lost, the anxiously repeated refrain, "soon [help will arrive]," and the call, "next [in line]," signal the collapse of time into the circularity of movement. A despairing mind denies the spatial and temporal premises of modernity for the comfort of repetitive movements, and thus Agnethe seeks solace in rocking her frail and aging body back and forth, Lune reclaims a violated self through well-rehearsed ballet moves, and the former prince obsessively imitates the daily migrations of the gainfully employed: "At six p.m. I rejoin a river of workers returning to so many homes. To be one of many, is to be, anyway, if only for a moment" (32). Under the "combined impact of war, the collapse of state order, and the ensuing forced migrations," the number of displaced people and the centers of displacement steadily increase: "[W]hat was supposed to be an exception becomes routine and the rule within an organization of space that tends to become permanent. In these human concentrations with an extraterritorial status, veritable imaginary nations henceforth live [and generate] new forms of socialization."[75] But the Kuseremanes' quest for meaningful patterns only produces a steady repetition of unreturned phone calls, abusive

state agents, and persistent whispers of guilt. Eventually, the former prince-turned-beggar will surrender to a landscape of death, faithfully watching over the graves of his mother and sister, "[w]aiting for the return of a name set ablaze when fire made dust out of two presidents' bodies" (36). Inevitably, the crisis of citizenship and the changing political configurations of power and belonging in the Great Lakes region contribute to the simultaneous dissolution of existing territorial frameworks and the proliferation of internal borders. "[W]hether imaginary, symbolic, or a cover for economic or political struggles," these internal borders insist on the prerogative of indigeneity and the identification with particular localities, and "give rise to exclusionary practices, 'identity closure,' and persecution, which as seen, can easily lead to pogroms, even genocide."[76] Though "Whispers" exposes an economy of coercion in which state authority has been supplemented by other, fragmented forms of sovereignty, the narrative's ultimate interest lies in the deconstruction of political identities enabling such exclusionary and violent practices. Between the Tutsi aristocrat and his sovereign drive to mastery and the vulnerable refugee complicit in his own dehumanization, indeed, "[t]here must be another way to live" (34).

The State's Bloated Belly and the Power of the Occult: Goretti Kyomuhendo's *Waiting*

The latest novel by Goretti Kyomuhendo, *Waiting: A Novel of Uganda at War*, locates the crisis of citizenship resulting from the collapse of the territorial state model in the intimate space of family and kin. The presence of racial and ethnic strangers even in the domestic setting of a Northern Ugandan village testifies to a shifting political landscape, where new forms of privatized sovereignty and violence have remapped the geographies of power and space. Told from the homodiegetic perspective of a 13–year-old girl, the story of a family waiting for liberation from Idi Amin's dictatorial rule illustrates the volatility of the Great Lakes region. While Ugandan exiles and Tanzanian troops "liberate" terrified civilians from state-sponsored aggression, Zairian refugees cross national borders in search of a refuge from Mobutu's violent regime, only to discover that, in the context of war and poverty, the stranger will be the first held responsible for a landscape of persistent fear.

The novel opens with the deceptively simply scene of a family gathered to share their evening meal. But the duties of the oldest

son posted as sentry and the anxious responses of the family translate the seemingly peaceful activity into a site of imminent threat. The mundane has become a challenge to survival, and thus the pregnant mother is repeatedly encouraged to eat her food and gather the strength needed to run away "just in case they come tonight" (4). "Drawing her readers unarmed . . . into the line of fire," Kyomuhendo's narrative waits to explain why the community finds itself under siege.[77] Even the identity of the homodiegetic narrator remains mysterious until much later when the reader learns she is Alinda (22), the eldest daughter of the family, whose name means "God is the Protector" (90). A survivor of state-sponsored violence, Alinda is, at times, an unreliable narrator who has been traumatized by the horrifying events she had to witness. Yet her age and traumatized mind do not deflect from the urgency with which the events are communicated, and thus the reader follows the family on their nocturnal journey to the banana plantation, where a haphazardly formed group of refugees hides from Amin's marauding troops. Kin and community, the old and the young, the internally displaced and those forced across borders like the Lendu woman from Zaire wait each night in their place of shelter for the threat to pass.[78]

Only identified in terms of a generic ethnic and gender identity, the Lendu woman remains nameless throughout the narrative and presents an unsettling figure of displacement on whom the hostility of the community will soon focus. Sleepless and silent in this initial scene, except for an anxious "'[b]ut suppose they came tonight?'" (6), her presence attests to the large-scale movements of refugees, the permeability of borders, and the intensity of conflict across the Great Lakes region. The nightly migrations between homestead and hideout are part of a larger canvas of displacements that speaks to the proliferation of internal borders and the confinement of space for those in need of shelter. The army's displacement from the center of power in the country's capital has disastrous effects on civilians who, first evicted from the urban areas of employment, then deserting the rural places of assembly, are finally restricted to the ever-diminishing space of an improvised refugee camp. Conditions of war affect not only the spatiality but also the temporality of identity, for Alinda and her family will spend most of the novel waiting for the threat to materialize, imagining the soldiers' arrival even if they are "not hearing anything" (23). Like Kuseremane, they find themselves in perpetual transit, where the exception has become routine and the makeshift camp doubles as shelter and confinement. If, as Daymond suggests, the novel offers only a suspended version of the conventional Bildungsroman, one has

to wonder what new forms of socialization are to result from a perpetual passage without the possibility of a redeeming arrival (129). Though the lack of destination is especially trying for resident aliens and ethnic strangers, as I will more fully explore later in this chapter, conditions of insecurity have bred a general climate of "uncivil" fear.

Reminiscent of Chi Chi's experience in "Whispers," the terrifying experience of childbirth in Kyomuhendo's novel juxtaposes political violence with the "natural" danger of human reproduction. After her grandmother is killed by Amin's marauding soldiers, Alinda is forced to assist her mother through the difficult process of childbirth and postnatal care:

> My hands trembled, and I could not hold the razor blade steady. I could not see the cord. I feared to look at the jellied blood next to the baby, I thought I might vomit and tried hard to contain myself. Then I saw something like a fleshy string, coiling out of the bloody mess and winding its way to the baby's stomach.
>
> I severed the cord. Nervously, too quickly. Only half of it was cut. It was thick, thicker than I had imagined. The baby was crying loudly. It had lots of hair, but it was covered in caked blood . . .
>
> I tried to get hold of the afterbirth, but it slipped through my fingers and fell back towards the baby. It danced around in the pool of blood still seeping from Mother's womb, swimming like an egg yolk. (41–42)

Her trembling hands and agitated mind betray the mental and physical symptoms of acute stress through which the scene of life can only be experienced as a horrifying nightmare. Dwarfed by the grotesquely disfigured placenta and umbilical cord, the baby seems insignificant, and the womb that had sustained new life now slowly hemorrhages to death. What was intended as a joyous reunion results in the painful separation of mother and child, assisted by a terrified sister, who, throughout the novel, will be haunted by troubling visions of blood. Unable to tolerate the sight and taste of meat, since "[i]t reminds [her] of blood—Mother's afterbirth, and the old man's leg" (72), Alinda will repeatedly move her weary body away from "the scene of blood" (68) and from bodies turned into "a mass of red meat" (67). As life-sustaining substances transform into visions of carnage, she finds it impossible to consume the food that would secure her biological survival. Reduced to blood and meat, the mutilated bodies of human beings have become expendable commodities in a war that also negates the existence of its survivors. Emotional stress results in Alinda's physical collapse. Though her attempts to disassociate herself

from a painful environment provide an effective defense mechanism, such coping strategies also affect her perception of herself and others. Estranged from the movements of her own body and a voice she barely recognizes as hers, she, at times, remains a disinterested observer to the events unfolding both inside and outside the house, and she even experiences the arrival of the Liberators in a hazy state of semiconsciousness (71).

As the Ugandan state finds itself at the intersection of war, coercion, and capital, the territorial state model defined by "institutional differentiation, centrality and verticality of political relations, spatial demarcation, monopoly of the exercise of legitimate violence and collection of authorized taxation" seems to have collapsed.[79] What remains of the institutional apparatus of modernity is the concentration of violence in military and police forces. In its focus on the redeployment of violence in the postindependent state, the novel dismantles the myth of the nonviolent character of modern society, and reintroduces Mbembe's provocative question of whether the sovereign drive for mastery is not, indeed, a death drive disguised as "civilization."[80] When the Tanzanian army violates the integrity of Uganda's national borders to assist local militia forces in "liberating" the country from Amin's despotic rule, the militarized landscape of *Waiting* effectively unites foreign state-sponsored aggression with the privatized violence of a disintegrating state. Though official and privatized sovereignty have a surprisingly similar effect on unarmed civilians, the novel retains a muted hope in the redemption of modern institutions and the capacity of the army to protect vulnerable citizens. The question, however, of why the Amin regime unravels receives as little narrative attention as the political agenda of the steadily advancing military opposition. The drive to power seems to have hijacked all attempts at political legitimation, and national collapse appears inevitable once the loss of centralized leadership motivates the criminal methods with which the retreating troops ensure their survival. As the experience of Alinda's family with Amin's army will demonstrate, the dissolution of existing territorial and institutional frameworks cultivates an economy of coercion intent on destroying "redundant populations" and exploiting gradually diminishing resources.[81]

Even as the brutality of Amin's soldiers contrasts unfavorably with the social justice and respectful masculinity promised by the Liberators, the resulting binary is somewhat permeable since "[n]o one knew what each group was likely to do to civilians" (11). "Fleeing towards the West Nile and Northern Ugandan regions, their home areas" (11), the looting troops turn "their shame into anger" (27).

Even if this understated phrase expresses some understanding for the psychological ramifications of military defeat and political impotence, the army's eventual appearance in the village is painted in the deft strokes of caricatured bestiality. Their animalistic brutality is reflected in the greed with which they devour food "like monkeys" and speak an incomprehensible language producing only "ugly sounds" (38). Complete with randomly fired shots and loud disagreements, they deliver a spectacle of militarized aggression, both ridiculous and deadly, for it will result in the murder of Kaaka, the grandmother, and contribute to the death of Alinda's mother during childbirth. It is a spectacle with a hidden audience, as Alinda and her father, though unable to intervene, witness the criminal excesses of an army without a state. Although the struggle for survival under conditions of war affects civilians and soldiers in similar ways, the utterly unsympathetic portrayal of the soldiers leaves no doubt that their excessive violence is considered an act of bestial regression. The soldiers' brutality, however, is matched by the abusive taunts of their eventual victim Kaaka, who commands without hesitation, "'Go, you beasts!'" (39). Her fearless resistance is shaped by an aggressive gender identity that reverses the dynamics of power in the domestic and political arena: "'Do you think you can scare me? Me, who used to beat my husband until he urinated in his trousers? Heeh,' she laughed. 'If you are real men, go and fight with your enemy, instead of coming here to terrorize a poor harmless old woman like me. Eh?'" (38).

Kaaka's defiance of male authority is unique in a narrative in which the sexual and social vulnerability of female characters motivates a number of pragmatic romances. These sensible alliances attest to the weakness of marital bonds and the liability of patrilocal residence through which women transform into the "gendered strangers" of their husband's family. One day, however, Kaaka had walked into Alinda's "house and [declared] that she had left her husband for good and had come to live with her nephew, our Father" (16). Outfitted with an enormously sized belly simulating a perpetual pregnancy, Kaaka is gradually revealed as a woman of multiple sexual and social transgressions. Her exceptional medicinal powers are said to result from the illicit act of gathering the "mating fluids" of venomous snakes (60). Yet such specialized knowledge commits her to the community of her birth and thus contradicts the displacement of marital life. Her mother had astutely observed that "'[p]eople like you, who possess such medicine, belong to the community. They can never leave. It would have been fine were you a boy, because then you would marry and remain here in the community. But as a girl, you have to go away when you

get married, and you cannot transfer your luck to anyone else!'" (60). Special knowledge is secret knowledge, having both medicinal and occult manifestations, and hence is required to be beneficially invested in one's own community. But the intrepid young woman had also defied other expectations when becoming pregnant as the result of an illicit sexual affair. While occult powers are quickly mobilized to camouflage the pregnancy and avoid the stigma of visible shame before the marriage can be finalized, the real pregnancy turns into the lasting union between an unborn spirit child and a fearless mother (60). Spiritual gain signifies biological loss, and, eventually, Kaaka's infertility will add to the mounting hostility between her and her husband. But in contrast to Owuor's short story, the fantastic image of an unaborted pregnancy here functions as a source of empowerment rather than the reason for imminent death. As a woman in possession of illegitimate knowledge, in control of her reproductive abilities and fiercely guarding her independence, Kaaka's transgressive identity is permanently marked in the bizarre form of her body.

In the portrayal of Kaaka and the Lendu woman—characters who fail to conform to the established roles of mothers and wives but are dangerous in the secret knowledge they possess—the novel writes gender into the realms of the occult and the grotesque. *Waiting* explores how these discourses contest established power configurations and engage with what Bayart has famously called "the politics of the belly."[82] In Kaaka's case, subversive power is quite literally embodied in her inflated belly, home to the spirit child, and thus related to cultural beliefs that the special forces living in a person's stomach entitle the proprietor to perform exceptional acts. Since these exceptional performances can be destructive or constructive, they defy the narrow definition of "witchcraft" in Western idioms.[83] Once, however, her vulgar language and grotesque shape confront state power and mock the soldiers, the politics of the belly translate from the domestic into the national arena. In her deliberate emasculation of the soldiers, Kaaka rejects a state inclined to illicitly accumulate power and wealth, an unaccountable regime given to devouring its citizens in order to satisfy the excessive needs of its own bloated belly. It appears no mistake that, in the midst of randomly executed violence, the soldier who kills Kaaka deliberately targets her stomach, as if to annihilate the transgressive power of her spirit child (38). Still, her spiritual powers transcend physical elimination. Even from the grave is she able to exercise her curse against Uncle Kembo and punish him for his former alliance with the Amin regime. As Uncle Kembo topples into her grave, the power of the occult cannot but resonate with the language

of the grotesque. Mbembe explains that "the aesthetics of vulgarity" allow postcolonial citizens to comment on the political and moral failures of African governments. Popular narratives and performances thus often feature an emphasis on orifices and protuberances—the mouth, the belly, the phallus—to mimic the state's bloated belly and critique its excessive taste for luxury.[84] With her curses and verbal abuses, the character of Kaaka performs a foul-mouthed defiance that shares the representational register of the state and enables the mouth of excessive production to imitate and ridicule the mouth of excessive consumption.

In the arrival of the Liberators—whose presence reclaims Kiswahili and, to some extent, the institution of the army—the novel does, however, express subdued hope in the institutional landscape of modernity and its epistemological preferences. Though previously identified as "a language mainly spoken by Amin's soldiers" (37), Kiswahili is also the lingua franca of the Tanzanian forces and their Ugandan collaborators, and thus evolves from an incomprehensible language of bestial behavior into a medium for political and even romantic alliances. Especially Bahati, the shy and reserved Tanzanian soldier, communicates his affection for Alinda's friend Jungu through the carefully designed language of the Kanga. Known throughout East Africa for the metaphoric inscriptions that grace their colorful designs, these rectangular pieces of cotton cloth provide the wearer with an additional means for expressing what often cannot be uttered explicitly. More than the language of harsh commands, Kiswahili here offers a sophisticated semiotic system able to articulate tender emotions. But language, in spite of its abilities to transcend ethnic and national divisions, can just as easily be embraced as the symbolic border safeguarding ethnic belonging. Upon hearing of the Tanzanian success in creating a unified national identity through a shared lingua franca, Alinda is disquieted by the prospective loss of ethnic identity: "'Then how can they tell what tribe someone belongs to? . . . I guess I like it better here, where people are able to speak the language of their tribes'" (82). Linguistic homogeneity inevitably disturbs in its threat to ethnic sovereignty. Especially in a nation at war with itself, the dissolution of ethnic borders and authorities appears less than desirable, and the community's tense response to ethnic strangers and resident aliens demonstrates its unease with those who defy the clearly demarcated categories of enemy and friend.

The movements of displaced populations inevitably have an impact on the notion of citizenship and the politics of indigeneity. Especially those who unsettle local communities with their racial and ethnic

difference complicate the question of who qualifies as indigenous. Even as the political landscape shifts, the colonial nomenclature of native and settler, of ethnicity and race, still resonates in the Ugandan postcolony. If Fanon demonstrated the colonial creation of disenfranchised "natives," Mamdani explores the legal apparatus through which such natives learned to claim belonging to different ethnic groups.[85] The creation of customary laws for each ethnic group, he explains, employed plural legal codes to produce plural political identities, and thus facilitated the politically opportune fragmentation of a new ethnic landscape.[86] To the ethnic "native" was added the status of "nonnative," defined in terms of racial difference and foreign provenance. In East Africa, the colonial distinction between native and "resident alien" singled out the Asians in Uganda, the Arabs of Zanzibar, and even the Tutsi of Rwanda and Burundi, as racial strangers who were to operate as intermediaries between European invaders and those considered indigenous to the region. Though the "colonial designation 'non-indigenous' [served] as a political and legal fiction, not a historical or cultural reality," it had far reaching implications for the postcolonial period when these former "subject races" became the target of sustained violence.[87] The Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 demonstrate the extent to which the alleged complicity with colonial regimes fueled deep-seated resentments among different social groups. If resident aliens can be codified as racial others, then ethnic strangers are vulnerable because of their late arrival in the national territory, since, legally, only residents at the time of colonization of the territory marked as "Uganda" could lay claim to citizenship in the independent nation.[88] As historical intervention or epistemological invention, colonialism thus provides a troubling reference frame for the definition of both ethnic and racial strangers. These definitions, of course, are subject to postcolonial shifts in social and spatial organization and are bound to influence disputes over what belongs to whom. In *Waiting*, such disputes further the definition of citizenship "in ethnic and territorial terms, [so that] an individual's enjoyment of civil rights depends on his appurtenance to an ethnic group or locality."[89]

Through the character of Alinda's friend Jungu, the novel imagines the volatile relations between African and Asian Ugandans as a history of economic exploitation and sexual abuse. Jungu is the child of rape, the offspring of the Indian manager of a cotton mill, who not only denies her widowed mother the salary of her deceased husband but, even worse, violates and abandons her so that she has to give birth in shameful isolation. Later evicted from the country he indiscriminately

exploits, the absent father and the unloving mother offer the hybrid child a disturbing legacy of racial difference and social illegitimacy. Alinda, however, is drawn to the marginalized Jungu, whom she meets at the mission school. While their friendship suggests parallels between the girls' experiences as shy outsiders, it primarily functions as a commentary on antagonistic race relations characterized by profound socioeconomic disparities and the exploitation of black Ugandans' labor and sexuality. This, then, is the historical legacy of an unwanted child who is not even graced with an individual name but labeled in the generic terms of racial hybridity: "Her real name was not Jungu, but she was called that because she had mixed blood. She was half Indian and half black" (19). A visible reminder of the victimization of natives by strangers, Jungu, short for *mujungu* or "white person," remains an unsettling figure of racialized difference, comprehensible only in the language of prejudice: "Mother told me that people of mixed blood were short-tempered and could easily commit suicide. She said I should be careful with my friend" (20).[90] If racial difference signifies biological destiny and genetic imbalance indeed invites destructive tendencies, then the self-preservation of the native conveniently justifies the logic of the stranger's social, or even physical, eviction. While supportive and loyal to the other villagers, Jungu's best hope for a lasting union seems to lie with the displaced Tanzanian soldier Bahati, with whom she shares the experience of domestic abuse. Their mutual displacement in the present is exacerbated by the lack of parental protection they have suffered in the past. As either orphans or semiorphans, they quite literally have only a tenuous grasp on the discourses of ancestral descent qualifying for full citizenship in the countries of their birth. But the romance is short-lived and with it withers the utopian hope of a new home for resident aliens. Betrayed by a forgetful messenger, the lovers are separated, Jungu following the Liberators into danger, Bahati staying behind in the now-calm village. In spite of all evidence to the contrary, Alinda falls back on the stereotypical belief that "people with mixed blood [are] suicidal" (98) when she contemplates the fate of her lost friend. Permanently evicted from the narrative, Jungu's quest for belonging certainly appears futile if she cannot even tolerate her own life.

As a state-sponsored policy designed to purge racial others from the national landscape, Amin's expulsion of the Asian population successfully propagated economic redistribution based on citizenship under the guise of revolutionary justice. But the narrative also engages with the community's diffuse anxieties of the ethnic other. The negative sentiments directed against the Lendu woman illustrate

that, under conditions of insecurity, heterophobia is likely to operate within "a still wider phenomenon of anxiety aroused by the feeling that one has no control over the situation, and that thus one can neither influence its development, nor foresee the consequences of one's action."[91] Undoubtedly, war has a profound impact on social and political relations, on "the foundations on which authority is exercised, and the relationship of the individual and community to time, space, profit and the occult."[92] New forms of spatial and social belonging also require the negotiation of normative systems and of a moral economy involving enemies and strangers. In *Waiting*, the mistrust of the Lendu woman soon evolves into the fear that her alleged occult powers might harm the community, and thus it is *her* unsociability that will justify the community's social distance and the threat of physical eviction. In the rhetorical construction of strangers, witchcraft proves irresistibly malleable and surprisingly modern. Though colonial discourse insisted on understanding witchcraft as an "irrational" antidote to modernity, recent scholarly discussions reclaim the occult as a culture-specific system of meaning operating "in relation to socio-economic transformation, growing inequalities and the perception of modernity and globalization by local actors."[93] Using its ambiguous potential either to oppose new inequalities or to further enable the accumulation of wealth and power, the occult can be mobilized to subvert or reinforce dominant authority. In the novel, witchcraft functions as a trope of unsociability through which the stranger who is also a foreigner can be held responsible for a climate of pervasive fear. And thus, Bauman's assessment proves persuasive that "the choice of the semantic field in which 'harmfulness' of the resented Other is theorized is presumably dictated by the current focus of social relevance, conflicts and divisions."[94]

From the beginning, the community is suspicious of the Lendu couple, and even Alinda's mother "[does] not want to have foreigners, whose ways she did not know, as neighbours" (25). The seemingly insurmountable difference between "their ways" and "our ways" (32) is visibly manifested in the lack of individual names. *The* Lendu couple and *the* Lendu woman provide generic signifiers for a displaced ethnicity and foreign nationality whose presence disturbs through its unknowable qualities. Such latent antipathy intensifies when the couple's purchase of land indicates their interest in a permanent home and lays claim to a commodity usually allocated on the basis of citizenship (25). Decisive, however, for the accusations of witchcraft against the Lendu woman is the persistent experience of crisis for a family like Alinda's, trying to cope with the sudden death of their loved ones,

with the threat of war and political instability, with dwindling food resources, and a lack of medical services. Interestingly, it is a dispute between brothers, between Alinda's father and Uncle Kembo, which leads to the claim that the Lendu woman is responsible for the mysterious sickness of the newborn. Such familial tensions explain the often-close link between witchcraft and kinship resulting from "the frightening realization that there is jealously and therefore aggression within the family, where there should be trust and solidarity."[95] In its emphasis on Uncle Kembo's former alliance with the Amin regime, and his accumulation of wealth through either repressive state power or the illegality of the black market, the altercation exploits the fear that the uncle's privileged access to commodities has involved illicit forms of exchange and hence of the occult.[96] Yet the tension caused by illicit accumulation *within* the family is diverted onto the question of whether illicit power has been exercised by the stranger *against* the family. What might have further eroded the fragile fabric of domestic relations finds a convenient scapegoat in those "whose ways" cannot be trusted. Are, then, the oral sores troubling Alinda's baby brother caused by decaying tooth roots, by the so-called *ebino* or killer teeth, which, as some in the community believe, are "a result of witchcraft" (53)? Is *ebino* an actual medical condition or an occult intervention for which foreigners are to blame? As the father's hope for modern medical treatment diminishes, fear and uncertainty are projected onto the disorderly figure of the refugee. Thus he proclaims: "'How come before she came to our village, babies never used to suffer from *ebino*? We should expel her!'" (50). Suspicion escalates into the threat of forceful eviction to restore the balance ostensibly derailed by the presence of the ethnic stranger.

Instead of impotence and paralysis, the accusation of witchcraft allows for the reassertion of masculine agency; instead of testing the loyalty of family, the charges mobilize familial solidarity against outsiders. Perhaps best understood as a sophisticated diagnostic tool, the occult offers an order saturating several cultural domains. In the case of the *ebino* teeth, medical and magical domains, evil people and infections, and ritualistic extractions and herbal remedies compete and overlap in their explanatory power.[97] The Lendu woman herself aptly summarizes the complicated language of the *ebino* teeth: "'But as I have explained before, these are not really milk teeth . . . some evil people bewitch babies, which causes the teeth buds to rot. If you don't extract the infected tooth bud, the child will die. After the operation, you have to apply strong herbs to the wounds, otherwise, the baby can contract an infection and still die'" (55; ellipsis in original). Ironically, the woman

blamed for the illicit use of the occult will possess the restorative skills needed for curing the child. As she carefully explains why compensation for her services is required—"'If you don't attach a monetary value to the treatment, it ceases to be effective'" (56)—she deliberately disassociates her rewards from the illegitimate accumulation of wealth through the use of occult powers.[98] She credits another civil war for her extensive medical knowledge when, in Mobutu's violent Zaire, she helped those harmed in the hostilities following Lumumba's murder "by the Americans" (55). The discourse of the occult here indeed evolves within a moral and monetary economy that features local understandings of historical change and socioeconomic exchange.

Once the Lendu woman's knowledge is repeatedly mobilized for the benefit of the community, she transforms from an unsettling presence into an indispensable one. Since the occult can be employed to subvert or to reinforce dominant power, the specialized knowledge of the Lendu woman at first "levels" the unequal power relations in the village before her extraordinary skills are marshaled in the defense of the villagers. In marked contrast to Jungu's flight from the narrative, the Lendu woman will undergo a progressive process of "naturalization." Her relationship with Uncle Kembo and subsequent pregnancy demonstrate how an expendable existence turns into a productive commodity and contributes toward the healthy reproduction of the community. Eventually, the ethnic stranger will transform into a gendered stranger who—just like any local woman—has to contend with the displacement of patrilocal residence.

Through the representation of Kaaka and the Lendu woman, the narrative writes gender into the subversive practices of the occult and the grotesque. But if Kaaka's spirit child speaks to the transgressive potential of the politics of the belly, the characters of Uncle Kembo and the old man relate the emphasis on orifices and protuberances to what is perceived to be the greedy exercise of patriarchal power. Their excessive taste for food meets Kaaka's foul-mouthed defiance; the mouth of extreme production cannot but engage with the one of extreme consumption. How, then, does the novel employ the language of the grotesque to ratify or deconstruct particular forms of violence and domination? How is power ridiculed and hence forced to confront its own vulgarity? How does an authoritarian government seek to legitimize itself through the power invested in the fetish to which its subjects owe absolute allegiance?[99] In Amin's Uganda, Islam operated as the fetish of absolute truth and power, and both Uncle Kembo and the old man opportunistically participate in an act of elaborate cultural reinvention to please the dictator.[100] Especially Uncle

Kembo's short-lived conversion to Islam is intended to profit from Amin's policies that claimed Islam as the sign of cultural authenticity and Pan-African alliance. Religious conversion rewards him with "a shop in town, full of free merchandise that had once belonged to an Indian businessman who had been chased away" (58). Stripped of faith and devotion, religion offers a political identity enjoyed for its sexual and economic privileges, for the excessive consumption of food and wives, and for the phallic and oral gratification it affords. Only when he squanders his possessions does he return to family and Christianity, to the leveling force of communal poverty, which exists in stark contrast to (and as a result of) the accumulative greed of Amin's state.

Excessive consumption also explains the old man's conversion to Islam. In his case, conversion wins him a presidential pardon from the prison sentence he had served for murdering his wife. Angry that his wife had shared with her family the meat he had bought for himself, he kills her and returns her butchered body to the parents. To the physical violence of the act is added the rhetorical violence of brutalized hospitality, for he surrenders the mutilated body with the words: "'I have brought you more meat. I understand you love it very much'" (76). While the community punishes his ruthless act with the forced removal of his teeth, rendering the mouth impotent that has threatened to consume human flesh, the character's behavior also serves to allegorize gender relations in a patriarchal society where women are considered commodities, to be consumed when desired and discarded when useless. Throughout the novel, meat serves as an ambivalent metaphor for either productive or destructive social relations, for a commodity festively shared or greedily monopolized. At worst, cannibalized wives and mutilated bodies illustrate the exploitation of the weak, and hence "[t]he threat to personal and social integrity is that people may turn into uncontrollable consumers, or worse still, consumable commodities. The rumors of cannibalism are thus a moral mediation on the effects of global markets on local economies."[101] The intervention of an angry community and Kaaka's defiant curse punish both Uncle Kembo and the old man for their illicit accumulation of wealth and power. Kaaka, on the other hand, is killed by the agents of a dictatorial regime unable to tolerate the challenge to its authority. Only the Lendu woman appears to fare better. Progressively integrated into the village community, her specialized knowledge helps to expand local authority in the encounter with an abusive state. As the power of the occult traverses multiple epistemological and aesthetic vocabularies, it offers an eloquent critique of the production and consumption of resources, identities, and morality in the context of war

and displacement. Kaaka's defiant mouth taunts the greedy exploits of state and patriarchal power, while the unsettling presence of ethnic and racial strangers questions the official imagination of "natives" and "aliens." Even if the local community reenacts the politics of indigeneity to carefully guard its resources, the novel leaves little doubt that such hostile gestures are also intended to curb the insatiable appetite of a violent regime.

Waiting concludes with the father's departure to the city following "the return of people and calm" (109). He is seen off by a small group that, in its inclusion of Bahati and the now-pregnant Lendu woman, seems to extend beyond the narrow borders of ethnicity and nationality. The protection of these new fathers and mothers will allow the next generation to return to school and, quite literally, unearth the buried books that the civil war turned into a treasured but unaffordable opportunity. Kyomuhendo's narrative, however, does not simply slide into the utopia of the inclusive nation-state and bourgeois success but instead remains acutely aware of its compromised aspirations. Through the disjuncture between narrative present and historical past, between the last image of hope and the reader's knowledge of a Ugandan future that has already passed, the utopian vision of an alternative community is riddled with the dystopian awareness of hopes betrayed. Obote followed Amin; Museveni followed Obote. Only those ignorant of history will be deceived by the image of peaceful calm on which the novel concludes. Waiting for the bus to the city, Alinda and her family find themselves positioned at the crossroads of diverse social, economic, and military routes, of a border-crossing modernity rooted in institutionalized violence and racial hostility: "We had to remain standing near the junction of the three roads. One led to Zaire, via Lake Albert, the same road Amin's soldiers had used as their exit route. The second led to the city, while the third led to the big tea plantation, which used to be owned by the Indians" (110). At the intersection of transnational migrations, it is impossible to return to the promises of the past or to move forward into a glorious future. What remains is the knowledge that such conflicting trajectories are preferable to the confinement of space and the collapse of time when waiting for the threat to materialize becomes the dominant routine for civilians hiding from the state's bloated belly.

Citizens, Strangers, and the Production of Moral Indifference

The utopia of peace and prosperity remains enticing; and the power of the modern nation-state to engineer a desirable social landscape

continues to seduce. But even *Kishinev* cannot deny the many dystopian moments troubling the search for a national home in its presentation of competing narratives, its fear of the nation as a space of enclosure, and its exposure of patriarchal domination. Easily manipulated, the call to order tends to reflect the interests of the powerful and can target unwanted strangers marked by their religious and ethnic difference, their lack of health, or their excess of occult powers. Indeed, the claim to sovereignty proves rewarding for the nation-state and, at times, also its citizens. But the monopoly on violence, as the narratives astutely observe, can be used against those it vowed to protect, while an efficiently operating institutional landscape assists in the formation of divisive political identities. Even as the texts criticize the state's power to commit systematic murder, they do not overlook the disastrous effects new forms of privatized government and violence have on unsuspecting civilians. Bureaucratic efficiency appears as morally indifferent to the plight of others as bureaucratic corruption ("Whispers"), and whether they are exploited by state armies or marauding militias will not matter much to those suffering from militarized aggression (*Waiting*). Contrary to common assumptions, the dissolution of national borders does not necessarily lead to the expansion of space but rather results in the proliferation of ghettos and internal restrictions. Mass displacements, economic destitution, and intense struggles for power reinforce the politics of indigeneity, which conceives of citizenship in primarily ethnic and territorial terms.

Shaped by fictions of race and ethnicity, identities are subjected to constant and extensive political manipulation, so that even settlers can turn into natives (*Kishinev*), while Tutsi citizens are reduced to foreign intruders ("Whispers"). As political identities are constructed within and across East African nations, the claims of political citizenship and of ethnic belonging, the dream of national expansion and the need for exclusive membership, are in constant competition. Colonial discourses of race and their emphasis on immutable difference prove a powerful rhetorical vehicle for the logic of eviction. Visibly inscribed onto the body, the vision of whiter skin (Jungu), curlier hair (Benjamin), and taller height (Kuseremane) often has little physical evidence other than the blinding color of prejudice. Together with accusations of (neo)colonial aggression, the racialization of religious and ethnic groups delivers an opportune strategy for the exclusion of unwelcome strangers. Effectively produced by colonial and nationalist policies, such racial and ethnic strangers find themselves trapped by the tropes of unsociability—by accusations of witchcraft and of mental instability—as the failure of the state is projected onto socially

marked individuals and groups. Yet while the struggle for power in "Whispers" and *Waiting* insists on the exploitation of strangers, Owuor's and Macgoye's narratives also explore the political capital of racialized difference.

The vulnerable group of Jewish settlers in *Kishinev* initially agrees to blend into "the framework of British society" and willingly complies with political pressure to maintain hope in a national home. But once they boldly take charge of the wilderness, driven by divine will and faith in the ancestor, the same settlers reinvent themselves as natives, as citizens of a nation that will soon claim the right to assimilate Nandi wives. And, thus, the disenfranchised native created by colonial intervention is trumped by the privileged native with rights to citizenship. Not even romance will upend the racial dynamics between servant and master. By contrast, the Tutsi prince and his female entourage eagerly associate with "the brother sovereigns in Europe" rather than the Rwandan natives on whose loyal services they depend. But when political power slips away, Tutsi "settlers" find themselves abruptly stripped of citizenship and targeted as foreign invaders. "Resident aliens" accused of colonial complicity, the Asian community in Amin's violent Uganda does not fare much better than their Tutsi neighbors. Even without the organized interference of the state, the political identities dividing the nation are faithfully reenacted in the confined space of *Waiting*'s terrified community.

Remarkably, in all of these narratives, revolutionary justice disguises the struggle for economic and political resources under the malleable sign of autochthony. But the "justice" of former victims shows a surprising resemblance to acts of political revenge and, at worst, demonstrates the logic with which victims become killers. As different types of strangers proliferate, those estranged from others and themselves find their situation most precarious. Enticed by the prospect of power or the rights of citizenship, or perhaps just fighting for survival, their willingness "to turn [themselves] into a log" diminishes, rather than expands, their individual potential. For Nandi wives adapting to Jewish culture and religion, and for a prince embracing the fiction of race before accepting the facelessness of the refugee, camouflage is the shortest route to an obliterated existence. Only the Lendu woman's social integration seems to proceed peacefully once her skills and fertility have been surrendered to the community. But, then, *Waiting* deceives with its fiction of peace.

Signifiers for the dystopia of the nation and its patriarchal epistemology, the bodies of women are visibly marked not only by war and displacement but also by the unrelenting violence of human

reproduction. Childbirth no longer affirms national and familial continuity, and instead transforms into a site of death, blood, and carnage. The aesthetics of the obscene dominate scenes of childbirth in "Whispers" and *Waiting*, where the stillborn child of Tutsi and Ethiopian refugees exposes ideologies of race and nation, while a womb hemorrhaging to death evokes new life in the image of violent loss. As miscarriage and stillbirth—processes of incomplete (Chi Chi) or violent separation (Alinda's mother)—endanger the lives of mother and child, their grotesque portrayal deconstructs established epistemologies. Personal tragedy comments on the violence of national reproduction and relates to the literal death of unprotected citizens, as well as to the figurative death of strangers who assimilate to the nation's hegemonic demands.

Political conflicts and economic deprivation add to the epistemic and physical violence that, even in times of peace, conceives of women as gendered strangers who have to contend with the demands of the patrilineage and the vulnerability of patrilocal residence. Often pawns in a male-dominated game of power and politics, their survival might depend on their forced consent to sexual violence ("Whispers"). The best they can hope for is the emotional comfort and social protection afforded by "pragmatic romances." Gone is the language of marital bliss celebrated in the narratives discussed in the previous chapter. Under conditions of war, husbands and brothers are likely to fail in the protection of female dependents. Emasculated by the superior power of the army and the state, by marauding militias and United Nations' officials, they even turn their frustration against those they profess to love. For men, the violent postcolony still offers more possibilities than for women, so that Benjamin Wilder welcomes racial difference as a loophole from restraining classifications, while characters like Jungu and Sophie struggle with the dual stigma of racial hybridity and social illegitimacy. In this depressing landscape, the authority of the occult offers a rare opportunity for the exercise of power.

Extending beyond the legitimate realm of gendered authority, the specialized knowledge of Kaaka and the Lendu woman confronts patriarchal authority and exposes its desire for illicit consumption and accumulation. Carefully dissecting the politics of the belly, *Waiting* not only criticizes the cannibalistic greed with which the state devours its own citizens but also challenges the mouth of excessive consumption with Kaaka's foul-mouthed production of defiant resistance. The power of the occult proves astute in its understanding of new moral and monetary economies. In postcolonial societies, where shifting normative systems have to account for the presence of strangers, the

scarcity of resources, and the differences in access to power, witchcraft offers an amazingly modern medium for diagnosing social grievances. When the power of the occult pairs with the language of the grotesque, is Mbembe's skepticism still justified that even such representational registers will ultimately fail to deconstruct authoritarian regimes?[102] Even if the grotesque descriptions of childbirth in "Whispers" and *Waiting* can only expose but not displace the violent practices of national reproduction, the willingness of the novels to dissolve the semiotic texture of the nation refuses to be subsumed under the figure of conviviality.

Proliferating narratives and unreliable narrators constantly reflect on the ambiguities of narrating the nation. Traumatized by war and violence, willingly deceived by colonial fictions, and given to poetic excesses in their dream of a national home, the accounts of homodiegetic narrators are shaped by the subjectivity of desire and despair. Waiting for the escape to Europe, the return to normalcy, or the materialization of the national home, these texts suggest a "responsible indeterminacy" that challenges the reader to participate in the construction of meaning.[103] Instead of conclusive readings and ordered knowledge, the narratives boldly accept conditions of transit in their persistent search for another way to live. Though *Kishinev* will eventually surrender its competing narratives to the hope of a national home, "Whispers" proves unrelenting in its attack on identity discourses enabling genocidal violence. Rather than compromise, the short story emphasizes the unreliability of a narrator "whose voice dissolves into the text much as his fictional body dissolves into the squalor of Nairobi."[104] After skillfully dissecting the ramifications of privatized sovereignty and violence, Kyomuhendo's novel *Waiting* remains indebted to the longing for an inclusive and ethnically diverse community. But its clever manipulation of time, of a future that has already passed, transforms the hope of social renewal into the illusion of peace.

What these texts share is an interest in the ethics of being human beyond the call for normative compliance and sacrifice. Here the narratives join Mbembe's and Bauman's search for alternatives to the violent modernities they so eloquently deconstruct. Writing across different cultural and disciplinary locations, both scholars turn to the Jewish philosopher Levinas for an understanding of intersubjective encounters not framed by the Hegelian master-slave allegory and the assertion of unilateral sovereignty over the other. For Bauman, Levinas offers a viable model for reclaiming moral commitment as the fundamental paradigm of human relations. Being with the other is

not premised on contractual obligations or the expectation of benefit but on the notion of mutual responsibility. Morally responsible conduct might thus, on occasion, require resistance to official norms and powers, as "[i]t has to count on its pristine source: the essential human responsibility for the Other."[105] If the essence of freedom is being-for-the-other, if it is my duty to account for the life and death of the other as my own, wonders Mbembe, then how does this ethical practice of freedom relate to the stranger and the enemy, especially in situations where political freedom appears to be premised on the killing of one's adversary? With reference to South Africa's transition to democracy and efforts at racial reconciliation, he argues that "it is possible to re-imagine a political community, the legitimacy of which does not need to reside in the right to demand from its members the readiness to die, or unhesitatingly to kill one's enemies either in the name of freedom or of survival."[106]

In Kuseremane's violence against the women he loves, in the national home's segregation of its diseased citizens, and in Alinda's inability to consume the meat reminding her of her mother's blood, the different mutations of violence against the other seem indeed a sign of violence against the self. In their concern with the failure of states, communities, and individuals to care for other human beings, the narratives struggle, not always successfully, for a different moral framework. By foregrounding the fictionality of "national home," of "Tutsi," or even of "peace," they are able to acknowledge dystopian violence without losing hope for utopian communities, where the face of the other inspires concern, not indifference or violence. The round table envisioned in the "Indépendence Cha Cha Cha"—"L'indépendance, ils l'ont obtenue/La table ronde, ils l'ont gagnée"—as the call for all citizens to gather and negotiate their differences, has not entirely lost its relevance. It would certainly provide a welcome reprieve from the fratricidal wars in the Great Lakes region that are sending ever-increasing populations across state lines into the enclosed camps of the displaced. And, if one were to believe Benjamin Wilder's appeal to national health, those suffering from a global epidemic could be the next group of strangers deprived of their right to citizenship.

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Chapter 4

Mapping Global Modernities

Property and Propriety in the Time of AIDS

> *For the time being, much in the way of individual experience and social policy depends on the struggle for rhetorical ownership of the illness: how it is possessed, assimilated in argument and in cliché. The age-old, seemingly inexorable process whereby diseases acquire meanings (by coming to stand for the deepest fears) and inflict stigma is always worth challenging, and it does seem to have more limited credibility in the modern world, among people willing to be modern—the process is under surveillance now.*
>
> —*Susan Sontag,* Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors *182*

Susan Sontag's warning not to appropriate illness as metaphor assumes that to be modern is to interrogate the stigma associated with a terminal disease. She acknowledges, however, that metaphorical representations of illness—of cancer, tuberculosis, syphilis, and AIDS—operate according to their own logic, especially when they attempt to explain what appears to resist reasonable explanation. They aim to protect against a death, slow and painful, ill-mannered and repugnant, which negates the equally modern desire for a productive life and peaceful death. If the death from AIDS is obscene in its defiance of control and reason, metaphorical explanations offer strategies for managing the inexplicable.[1] But when the pandemic is perceived in cultural metaphors explaining AIDS as moral transgression (*Chira*), as neocolonial intervention (*Confessions*), or as excessive sexual appetite (*To a Young Woman*), the tropes allowing local actors to better understand an incomprehensible catastrophe also invite the narratives of stigma and

shame through which contact with the disease(d) becomes a form of trespassing.[2]

For a communicable disease, aided and prevented by the mobility of human bodies, the circulation of commodities and the exchange of knowledge, the notion of trespassing, of transgressing the standards of acceptable behavior, is especially problematic, for it easily generates defensive responses to what appears as a disquieting proliferation of cultural scripts. As a medical condition rhetorically expands into the persistent figure of postcolonial crisis, it produces "an epidemic of signification" that testifies not only to the role of the imagination in managing personal and social anxieties but also, more importantly, to the politics underwriting such imaginative explorations.[3] *The River and the Source* punishes with AIDS those characters associated with a self-interested and, therefore, undesirable modernity, while *The Invisible Weevil* perceives the illness as one of the many individual and systemic failures that betrayed the promise of democracy. Malcontent flight attendants (Becky) and wayward husbands (Genesis) portray AIDS, literally and figuratively, as "a disease of people who move around, who travel and cannot keep still."[4]

In East Africa, the mobility of workers, of military personnel, and of those displaced by political conflicts accelerated the spread of a disease that reached epidemic proportions by the mid-1980s. In particular locations along the shores of Lake Victoria and the Trans-African Highway were affected by their prominent position in regional networks of transportation and exchange. Kagera, for example, the disputed border territory in northwestern Tanzania, became a battleground not only for the military encounters of Tanzanian forces with Amin's army but also for a subsequent health crisis, since populations uprooted by war and labor migration, as well as the general social vulnerability of women, contributed to a rapid increase in infection rates.[5] Once the infected began to die, some of Kagera's villages and towns witnessed a drastic demographic shift, with households primarily composed of old people and orphaned children that are impoverished from the loss of its most productive members and the expense of frequent funerals.[6] Instead of the scientific and economic progress political leaders had promised, military conflict, economic decline, and a persistent health emergency signaled "a crisis combining destabilization of indigenous cultures with failure of the modernization expected at independence."[7]

Even as HIV/AIDS came to symbolize the failure of nationalist modernity, literary and sociological interpretations of the disease continued to implicate the stereotypical features of Western modernity

and its competing narratives of increased opportunity and social disintegration. In his historical study of *The African AIDS Epidemic*, Iliffe, for example, explains the reasons why Abidjan turned into "an epicentre of HIV infection. One was an aspiration to modernity that bred individualistic choice, extreme differences of wealth, sexual adventurism—the median age of sexual debut was fifteen—and complex, disassortative networks through which HIV could pass . . . The other circumstance favouring an epidemic was the economic crisis that struck Cote d'Ivoire during the 1980s as the world economy faltered and the easy growth opportunities of the 1970s were exhausted. This bred unemployment, sexual commercialization, weakened health services . . ." (53). His reading of AIDS in terms of the "modern" desire for unrestrained sexual and economic consumption resonates with the novels discussed in this chapter, while his concern with the economic decline of the 1980s signals the changes in sovereign power and authority that define the narratives discussed in the preceding chapter. Iliffe, however, reclaims the promises of modernity with relative ease when he reflects on the future of science and democracy, on medical advances that might convert AIDS from a terminal into a chronic disease, and on local activism that is expected to result in "the repoliticization of Africa after the long stagnation of one-party rule" (156). His optimistic conclusion that "[i]f these conditions could be met, the HIV/Aids epidemic, so often seen as a metaphor for Africa's failure to achieve modernity, might instead be the vehicle by which medical modernity became predominant within the continent" (157), demonstrates the persistence of familiar narratives for a global disease that simultaneously generates new discourses on property and propriety, on collective obligations and individual responsibilities.[8] To explain my interest in narrative tropes that, even when situated at the intersection of multiple cultural influences, often voice an understated desire for the return to normative order, requires a short detour so as to locate a global epidemic in the theoretical maze of modernity and globalization.

In its emphasis on the diversity of global modernities and on the interrogation of an episteme that often conceals its Western bias behind the claim to universality, the study of the alternatively modern already insists on the confluence of the local and the global *in* modernity.[9] As Mudimbe observed so astutely in *The Idea of Africa*, attempts to understand contemporary society have turned toward "the institutionalization of pluralism" and the corresponding paradigms of globalization and postmodernity.[10] Though diverse theoretical positions find themselves grouped under the steadily expanding label of globalization, they overlap in their interest to explain "forms of

social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state, and they seek to provide new vistas for understanding cultural flows that can no longer be explained by homogenous Eurocentric narrative of development and social change."[11] In the 1980s, the general dissatisfaction with disciplinary discourses indebted to the classical narrative of modernity contributed to a growing concern with the production and reception of literary and artistic images. "The key assumption in what one may call the cultural version of globalization is that in the old global order, the nation was the reality and category that enabled the socialization of subjects, and hence the structuralization of cultures; now, in transnationality, the nation has become an absent structure," retaining an influence only as a symbolic power.[12] In the absence of a clear correlation between social practices and locations, the emphasis shifted to cultural representations, thus challenging the temporality and symbolic economies of colonial and national modernity, while insisting on the pivotal role of the imagination in negotiating agency and opportunity.[13] But even as the transnational focus of postcolonial theories of globalization undermines the national character of culture, the nation continues to have an impact on generating and displacing cultures and identities.[14] For Gikandi, it is the lingering presence of the nation as a force of signification and socialization that explains "the disjuncture between the performance of a global culture and the persistence of this other, darker, older narrative of poverty, of failed nationalism, of death."[15]

Featherstone and Hall agree that cultural exchanges between nation-states and regional blocs, which interact in increasingly complex networks of interdependence and power, produce greater tolerance for difference and diversity, at best, but are just as likely to further the retreat into the deceptive security of ethnicity, fundamentalism, or traditionalism.[16] If older forms of globalization operated within an imperial context that solidified a culture of Englishness at home and in the occupied territories, then Hall explains how "the global postmodern" appropriates local differences as potential sources for pleasure and entertainment. This domestication of difference for Western consumption interacts with older forms of globalization that gravitate toward the aggressive assertion of national culture to compensate for the loss of political authority and economic power on a national and international stage.[17] How, then, does globalization negotiate the conflicting narratives of celebration and crisis, when postcolonial hybridity meets defensive intolerance and thus reflects the contradictory notions of promise and fraud that frame the experience of modernity? If the historian Iliffe comprehends a global health

epidemic in familiar epistemological paradigms, and if interpretations of HIV/AIDS reconcile the experience of crisis with hope in social change and medical progress, then the utopian and dystopian narratives of globalization suggest less a break with the conceptual landscape of the past than its reemergence in contemporary contexts. Gikandi's concern as to whether the cultural theory of globalization still has to consider the keywords of modernity is shared by Appadurai, who includes the conceptual paradigms of the Enlightenment (freedom, rights, sovereignty, democracy) among the circulating ideoscapes of a global economy (36).

This chapter will therefore examine how a global epidemic engages with the celebratory and dystopian narratives of globalization and of modernity; how it responds to older and newer forms of global exchange; and how it challenges and reclaims the symbolic and material economies of colonial and national modernity.[18] How do cultural metaphors relate to AIDS and demonstrate the pivotal role of the imagination in social life and the shifts in agency enabling such expressions? How does a global disease develop into a general metaphor for postcolonial anxieties and thus challenge the authority of the nation-state, which failed in its duty to provide citizens with opportunities for democratic participation and economic prosperity?[19] As cultural actors confront national and ethnic practices of gender and sexuality, what are the new rites of passage for the production of local subjects and neighborhoods? And how are these local bodies and spaces implicated in the global circulation of commodities and identities as well as in the standards of propriety and social mobility still shaped by the culture of Englishness? Situated at the intersection of multiple social and spatial networks, narrative representations of AIDS demand an understanding of culture as neither exclusively national (as in the old narratives of colonial and nationalist modernity) nor primarily global (as in the new narratives of postcolonial globality) but as a creative dialogue of historically situated actors. Simultaneously enticing and threatening, "the pleasures of Babel" (Clayton) are likely to generate diverse narrative scripts in search for a suitable response to a terminal disease. What unites the novels of Macgoye, Adalla, and Keshubi is their strategic employment of narrative conventions and genres to render audible what a community might prefer to silence.[20]

The Ethics of Prosperity: Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Chira*

Set in the 1980s in Kenya's capital of Nairobi and the rural Luo communities of the Nyanza province, *Chira*, by Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, recounts the life of Gabriel Otieno, a young man whose moderate level of education secured him a position as office messenger in the city. As Gabriel's economic options gradually improve, the narrative follows him from the abject poverty of the Dandora slums to the modest working class environment of Huruma, and from the meager salary of a messenger to the more respectable income of a driver. Economic prosperity and social disintegration, the ubiquitous twin phantoms of modernity, resurface yet again as the reader witnesses Gabriel's progress in a postcolonial landscape shaped by the circulation of commodities and the mobility of human bodies. Throughout the novel, Gabriel is engaged in a process of mapping identity vis-à-vis cultural norms and values. He tries to determine his individual position in a complex, yet disintegrating, network of kinship ties; he ponders questions of marriage and sexuality against the continually intervening presence of the AIDS pandemic; and he grapples with moral commitments in a corrupt and power-hungry society. One of the most unsettling challenges Gabriel has to respond to is the threat of *chira*. A prominent concept in Luo culture, *chira* relates the medical condition of HIV/AIDS to the highly problematic status of breaking social taboos. Taboos, however, are elusive in the context of persistent social change, for normative scripts have become "an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation."[21] The imagination of individual cultural actors assumes a crucial role in redefining social life, and cultural metaphors such as *chira* are especially mobilized to articulate new understandings of duties and opportunities. Gabriel's active participation in the negotiation of cultural scripts and individual agency is poignantly demonstrated once his self-identification changes from the relative security of being "the son of so-and-so" to the more challenging question of "how does he see himself" (38). As the cultural codes and the spatial settings multiply, Gabriel's introspective reflections often express feelings of bewilderment and anxiety over the disappearance of behavioral guidelines.[22]

At school, Gabriel had already been perplexed by the notion of individual opportunity and accountability. Offering a rare digression from an otherwise linear narrative, the analeptic account of his experiences at secondary school historicizes Gabriel's progressive movement toward self-knowledge in the context of formal education.

School initiated him into an "elevating," even if "unhealthy," life, premised on personal success and hence substantially different from the "corporate rhythm of the homestead" (26). Reminiscing about the past, Gabriel accepts the scholastic experience as a motivation to reinvent himself in the, perhaps, more distinguished social role of the loner (27). Inevitably, the new knowledge affects his beliefs and assumptions, and "the things he held to be self-evident" (28) suddenly require extensive contemplation. Focalized through Gabriel's perspective, the loss of self-evident truths explicitly engages his cursory familiarity with the constitution of the United States, and thus the process of social change is framed not only in the rhetoric of a foreign culture but, more specifically, in the legal context of rights and responsibilities.[23] As Gabriel negotiates his obligations to friends and kin, the text never loses sight of the larger national context of good governance in its contemplation of the moral accountability of individual and political bodies.

Throughout the novel, AIDS is portrayed as a pervasive, daily threat that affects the lives of villagers and urbanites in similar ways. Many of Gabriel's casual acquaintances and relatives are associated with *chira*, an obscure, socially stigmatized "wasting disease." Julia, the young orphaned maid of his neighbors, is reputed to come from a family dying of *chira* (18). Several of his cousins and, later, even Gabriel's mother are troubled by mysterious ailments from which they never fully recover (140). A constant rhythm of people falling sick, drifting to the periphery of social life and dying, emerges as the background to Gabriel's story. Like Okurut's invisible weevil, *chira* has visibly marked the human body with the sign of postcolonial crisis (Chapter 2). A society deprived of its most productive citizens, who perform poorly at work and in school, seems to have lost its claim to posterity and prosperity when it failed to articulate a moral code of rights and responsibilities. The persistent presence of AIDS is reflected in the many public and private discussions of the disease and its potential antidotes. Competing opinions render it increasingly difficult to refute the existence of AIDS, and yet, for a long time, Gabriel insists that "[t]he best defence against the unthinkable was to deny it" (45).

"[The] new culture of silence, evasion, forgetfulness" (51) is partially eroded once AIDS translates into the local condition of *chira*. In its association with culturally unacceptable behavior, *chira* signifies a normative transgression believed to trigger a process of physical decline. Gabriel's friend Obura explains that "[o]f course we know better nowadays, but the old people were very anxious about this

chira, that if you did something forbidden, the evil would be seen in the wasting away of your body" (46). The novel here echoes the "belief among the Luo people that misfortune can befall a person and his/her family for acting contrary to the wishes of the ancestors or against the prescribed rules that govern particular social behaviours."[24] In general, *chira* articulates a moral code by which the members of the Luo community are expected to live, and operates as a control mechanism designed to protect the rights of seniority and regulate sexual and social relations. Through the supervision of sexual behavior, *chira* attempts to safeguard the exogamous boundaries of Luo kinship and prevent incestuous and adulterous liaisons assumed to threaten individual paternity as well as genealogical continuity.[25] Given the affiliation of younger characters like Obura with Christian and urban communities, it is not surprising that he expresses doubt whether *chira* can be considered a suitable framework for explaining the consequences of transgressive behavior. In its disregard for the authority of the elders, such doubt—ironically—already performs an act of *chira* through the distance it articulates to the social interpretations of older community members.

For many Christianized Luo, however, this violation of cultural norms is reflected in the religious notion of committing sin, and the cultural syncretism enabling such comparisons is visibly demonstrated in the text through the juxtaposition of diverse linguistic idioms: "*Richo e makelo chira*—it is sin that causes the wasting disease" (49). In both epistemologies, the transgressive act has acquired strong sexual connotations.[26] And thus, when Gabriel's cousin Samuel is said to be suffering from *chira*, he readily admits that he has broken a cultural taboo by engaging in an incestuous relationship with a close relative. The young woman, who later dies from the same wasting disease, is accused of similar moral impropriety. In its association with (sexual) deviance, *chira* provides an epistemological frame for a global disease and works toward a reconciliation of Luo and Christian moral economies. The ambivalent semantics of "sin" invite a reassessment of moral obligations within the context of personal faith and religious practice. Occasional references to the Book of Job, the model narrative of an individual's struggle with religious authority, emphasize "wasting" as a process of literal and metaphorical attrition—as a simultaneous erosion of body and mind, resulting not only from the deliberate transgression of social expectations but also from doubt in the validity of any moral authority (46). Though the explanations being offered for a sexually transmitted disease revolve around multiple cultural scripts, they strongly suggest personal culpability for deviant acts and

evoke the diseased body within the potentially stigmatizing narratives of shame and failure.

In their discussions of *chira*, characters not only alternate between discourses on cultural conformity and transgression but also rely on their knowledge of modern medical explanations and terminologies. AIDS might spread because of "unprotected sex" and "contaminated syringes" (48), or because of young girls who refuse to wait for the "opening ceremony" legitimizing sexual activity (56). In the juxtaposition of scientific and occult discourses, HIV/AIDS can just as easily be attributed to unprotected sex than to the threatening presence of "evil in the grass" (45). Invested in Luo, Christian, and secular idioms, the novel's competing moral and discursive economies oscillate between conjunctive and disjunctive explanations. Characters (Gabriel) who compare HIV with *chira* encounter those (Mama Samuel) who equate the disease with *chira*.[27] The associative similarities of AIDS and *chira* that claim the visibly marked body as a site of sexual transgression proliferate into antagonistic healing practices and profound familial tensions, since Mama Samuel's herbal remedies are found to be incompatible with prayer services and biomedical interventions (74). Unable to unite diverse believers, funerals fail in their function to express communal grief, even as different communities eventually have to agree that the body afflicted by a sexually transmitted disease can be cleansed neither through Luo rituals nor through the Christian gesture of forgiveness.[28]

In his assessment of the diverse cultural explanations for HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, Iliffe notes the tension between medical accounts promoted by African governments and indigenous notions of causation that gravitate toward "moralistic" concern. While he acknowledges the cultural hybridity of such local epistemologies, he insists on the difference between the interest of global science in the *how* of the epidemic and of local explanations in the *why* of the disease. The binary of how and why, of global and local, of medical rationalization versus "the weight of tradition and culture" (90), inevitably returns to the dichotomous understandings of modernity versus tradition through which the promise of scientific rationality encounters, yet again, "traditional moralists for whom the disease was primarily an evil consequence of Western innovations, of towns, prostitution, promiscuity, youthful disobedience, and the abandonment of inherited morality" (91). Though AIDS in Macgoye's novel is symptomatic of a larger social disorder, the narrative proliferation of medical and magical, scientific and religious, Luo and Christian discourses is shaped as much by intersecting as by oppositional cultural

rationalities. The exchange between medical and metaphysical explanations not only modifies existing cultural scripts to suit new social contexts but also reclaims *chira* as a strategy for managing confusing experiences. The logic with which these proliferating epistemologies are constantly reconfigured blends the how and the why of a terminal disease and thus provides "reasonable" explanations also interested in preserving human dignity and providing emotional support. The character Samuel, for example, though aware of the ramifications of sexually transmitted diseases, references *chira* to express, in a culturally intelligible idiom, the anxiety and guilt resulting from improper sexual relations and a shameful disease (49). His extended family, on the other hand, ignores their knowledge of premarital sex and instead relies on *chira* to fill in the gaps between the unspeakable ramifications of Samuel's behavior and the demands of social etiquette (54). Given the rapid expansion of globally migrating archives of information, *chira* with its emphasis on the confusion of relationship boundaries and the inappropriate mixing of categories, might offer a particularly suitable metaphor.[29] How, indeed, is one to define transgression in the absence of clearly demarcated borders and identifiable relationships? As a global disease transcends cultural and spatial boundaries, the confusion of "improper mixing" provokes new and potentially defensive responses, which explains why the novel will eventually argue for a renewed sense of moral accountability as a "protective border" against a steadily advancing disease.

Beyond the physical disease that maps decay onto the human body, the text portrays AIDS-cum-*chira* as testimony to a devastating moral corruption that spreads from top to bottom, from the political leaders to the ordinary people. The individual body is only as healthy as the body politic, and a medical syndrome that includes opportunistic infections and malignancies provides a suitable rhetorical vehicle for a social condition defined by the self-interested appropriation of resources.[30] The story of the rise and fall of Assistant Minister MakOwuor poignantly demonstrates this analogy:

> So when an Assistant Minister is declared bankrupt—the declaration itself being more potent than the amount of money in play—his immune system becomes deficient, he is unable to retain the wealth that he still eats: it dribbles away obscenely, his intimate touch becomes infectious and his substance dwindles. The *chira* is not because of his eating or his hubris. It is the dark thread that runs through the system, just as certain wartime Resistance networks were said to have been traced by a syphilitic infection passed along the line. Its inevitability is not due to

> a taboo or a curse by the Fates, but a process of moral breakup. Sterilising or cauterising will not halt it. Repentance can change things for an individual but not avert the creeping corruption. It passes from the great man to ordinary folk. (84)

Only exposed when he fails at the game of corruption and deceit, it is less the assistant minister's moral bankruptcy than his inability to perform according to established political imperatives that is perceived as an obscene spectacle. Infections, even the most contagious ones, can be concealed for as long as the carriers show no symptoms to the ignorant bystander. Those in positions of political power spread corruption and greed throughout the country, and their exploitations are visualized in organic metaphors signifying decay and waste (153). The analogy to the spread of the AIDS virus is obvious, even as the roles of carrier and victim acquire oppositional meaning. While the carriers of the virus can hide their agency, and live in anonymity and relative prosperity, those whose bodies suffer under "the disease" of political and economic exploitation are stigmatized. The heterodiegetic narrator elaborates on the dichotomous metaphor through ironic comments, criticizing the responsibility of the carriers while empathizing with the plight of the victims and hence, for the first time, disassociating the question of culpability from the sight of visibly marked bodies. In a national environment shaped by privatized wealth, knowledge, and violence, the victims of a global disease bear a strong resemblance to the victims of global capitalism, for both are rendered vulnerable by the commodification and trafficking of bodies for the pleasure of unrestrained consumption. The pervasive sense of personal crisis prominent throughout the novel is here enacted on a larger canvas of postcolonial rights and obligations. Nationalist rhetoric has failed to deliver on its promise of democracy and of providing the "good life" for its citizens.[31] Instead, "society," as the narrator dryly remarks, leaving the spatial ramifications of the social body deliberately vague, "continues to smile upon the carrier" as it arbitrarily exercises its power to inflict death:

> Society continues to smile upon the carrier. He has, after all, the golden touch. The community is less conscious of its debt to the awkward squad who, for all their virtues, tend to leave grubby finger-marks on freshly white-washed walls. These are the ones who, scouring the gutters for saleable items, leave them at least a little cleaner than before. They keep their rolls of polythene, their tins of kindling, discreetly concealed behind news stands or in parking bays. They count coins amid

> rows of post office boxes, encourage their babies to crawl after spilled chips and icecream papers, pluck pigeons, accumulate fag-ends. We owe them a lot. (153–54)

At best, the "awkward squad" of victims remains invisible to an uncaring community; at worst, they find themselves mistreated and neglected. They offer their lives for a society that privileges dazzling performance over ethical substance. Reduced to collecting discarded commodities, their sacrificial gestures are lost on their environment. To make sure that they are not lost on the reader, the narrator intervenes, "We owe them a lot." The change from hetero- to homodiegetic narration, together with the direct emotional appeal to the reader, establishes an intrusive and evaluating textual presence engaged in a deliberate process of moral mapping.[32] These interventions position the characters in relation to the larger, "diseased" social context and the narrative vision of a desirable ethical alternative. Though not an entirely unsympathetic character, the politician MakOwuor, for example, refuses to care for his HIV-positive mistress and buys off, with money, any claim she might have on him (99). Situated on the other end of the character spectrum, the priest Theodore cares for those suffering from AIDS, and his passionate devotion reminds the older generation of a "Mau Mau" forest fighter (150). For the spiritual leaders of the postcolony, the struggle against a global disease appears as the new battleground in the war of liberation. When Julia reappears toward the end of the novel, dying from AIDS, outcast and unattended, who would dare to touch her filthy body but Theodore (162)?

The deficiencies of the body politic are, initially, also symptomatic of the unrestrained sexual appetites of the novel's main protagonist. Gabriel's sexual attraction to Julia, the young maid employed by his neighbors, is shaped by a perverted version of previously learned gender scripts. As part of a ritualized performance of masculinity, he either buys her sexual favors with trinkets or intimidates her into a position of inferiority. In the absence of more acceptable narratives like marriage and parenthood, Gabriel opts for an exercise of power that promises at least temporary victory. The young and naive Julia, who has neither the confidence nor the social support to question male authority, proves an ideal victim for a short-lived encounter in which sex functions as conquest (for him) and as economic opportunity (for her).[33] Gabriel's affair with Julia remains transgressive in its deliberate deception of her employers, and yet, without the interventions of elders and guardians, Gabriel cannot be held accountable even if Julia were to become pregnant (20). Later, however, he will complain

that unprotected sex implies more dangers than "just" unwanted pregnancy, for the threat of sexually transmitted diseases mandates that even men have "to keep themselves healthy" as "though [they] were a girl, in whom every sexual experience showed" (52). Only through his relationship with Helen, a Luo woman his age, does Gabriel mature from a man entertaining "chauvinistic assumptions" (143) to someone aware of his partner's needs. The change is motivated by his respect for Helen and the wish to be accepted into her religious community.

Helen, of Luo heritage but born and raised in Tanzania, and later an immigrant in her mother's native country, occupies a vulnerable social position in a capital not always welcoming to foreigners. Her assertive personality is demonstrated early on when she criticizes the political banners at a pro-life rally—including the memorable "Condomania Kills" (32)—as mere polemic sloganeering. Though a member of a revivalist church, she insists on a pragmatic approach to reproductive and sexual health. Aware that sexuality connotes power, she publicly objects to the social taboos preventing frank discussion of such issues: "'Stupid,' announced Helen to the world in general, apparently unaware how obscene the word sounded to the Kenyan Luo ear" (33). Her violation of the acceptable cultural grammar might be as unintentional as the assistant minister's earlier transgression of conventional political behavior; but when the text explicitly references both acts as obscene, it renders visible the self-interested exercise of sexual and political power that ethnic and national cultures would prefer to silence.[34] Her transgressive linguistic gesture amazes Gabriel, who has learned to admire the courage with which she ventures into unsafe spaces (64). Helen's defiance of domesticity, her need to see him "in a wider context" (64), testifies to her level-headed approach to gender relations. Instead of romance and passion, she looks for companionship: "She took to Gabriel. She would not exactly say she was in love with him. That would be raising it to a fairytale pitch and anticipating a lot of grief. But they suited one another" (65). Her simultaneous familiarity with Luo cultures in Kenya and Tanzania has enabled her to contemplate "alternative futures," and thus contrasts remarkably with the conservative attitude of older Luo women (66). If they suppress "any flutters of the imagination" (101), then Helen takes an active part in the negotiation of cultural influences and sites of agency. Repeated passages of internal focalization allow detailed insight into her efforts to reconcile the possibilities afforded to the cultural migrant with the social conduct required of the faithful Christian.[35] Increasingly, though, Helen's grounding in an assertive and

dynamic gender and cultural identity is framed, if not disciplined, by her acceptance of revivalist Christian beliefs.

Christianity provides a structured narrative for the different cultural allegiances she has to negotiate and offers an alternative home in the congregational community mentored by the priest Theodore. Faith provides her with meaning for the daily hardship of urban life and guides her (and also, increasingly, Gabriel) through unstable and profit-oriented gender and cultural relations. While this ethical commitment to a Christian humanism remains vague throughout the novel, it steers clear of celebrating gendered ideals of domesticity and self-renunciation. Instead, Theodore advocates a pragmatic Christianity that "made his hearers feel that Christian living was something within their grasp, marriage something worth waiting for" (17), and that mobilizes local concepts such as *chira* if they provide a suitable metaphorical context for the framing of socially acceptable behavior. Gabriel's own care for the dying Julia illustrates a maturing sense of social responsibility, markedly different from his previous willingness to exploit her for a fleeting sense of self-gratification. His reflections on Julia's death return to the same existential questions he has been grappling with all along: how does Julia's wasted body relate to the body politic in its juxtaposition of secret infections and apparent health, in the silent decline of its defenses until too late (167–71)?

The representation of Julia's death, paired with Gabriel's steadily expanding economic opportunities, requires a closer look at the social imaginary of life and death within the discourses of modernity. How do different versions of modernity envision life and regulate the politics of death?[36] What defines a desirable or undesirable existence in *Chira's* postcolonial Kenya, where the hope for mobility and prosperity is still within reach, even as the very same desires render characters vulnerable to a terminal disease? Indeed, throughout the novel looms large the shame of a premature death "before the house had been built" (23) and before the desired goods qualifying for the status of husband have been accumulated and visibly displayed. Unplanned and unpredictable, the death of the young generation appears obscene in its defiance of the expected social trajectory. In an effort to discipline such unreasonable interventions, Western modernity controls the sites of life and death, both at the level of the individual body and in respect to larger populations, by carefully modulating the modern sexual subject and by restricting death to the demarcated space of the modern clinic.[37] Despite its interest in the progressive teleology of human life, *Chira*, however does not allow for the technologization of death in its bleak portrayal of the smelly bodies of the infected (or

those left behind by an unbridled capitalist enterprise). Even as society attempts to confine these bodies to ditches and gutters, their filthy presence intrudes into the imagination and space of the living (164). The obscene sight of Julia's filthy body jolts Gabriel and Helen into the awareness that, in an exploitative global economy, the "undignified death" is a direct consequence of the "undignified life." The politicization of death extends to the novel's representation of health care. "Super health clinics" operate primarily as monetary investment and public relations vehicle for politicians (82), dispensing dignified care only to those protected by wealth and kinship (115) and deliberately excluding the dying for fear of their negative impact on the statistics of biomedical success (167). With the advance of a global disease, human sexuality has turned from a site of reproduction into a spectacle of death. Envisioned in military and organic metaphors, in terms of zealous freedom fighters and infectious decay, AIDS constitutes an external as well as an internal threat to survival, and thus collapses the careful separation Western modernity establishes between the politicized death on the battlefield and the sanitized death inside the nation's borders.[38]

In the context of pervasive death and disease, the novel employs the trope of AIDS to critique the teleology of progress, especially when leading to unrestrained sexual and economic consumption. But it does not forsake the promise of the modern altogether. Following the success of its central protagonist, the text insists on the "disciplined consumption" of commodities and bodies. Education might have exacerbated Gabriel's cultural confusion, but it also has provided him with the resources through which unfamiliar space can be domesticated and can allow for the production of local subjects in new institutional contexts. As Gabriel's socioeconomic achievements are projected onto the urban landscape of Nairobi, we witness his movement from "the routine of the abjectly poor" to a "new consciousness of prosperity" (134). With the expansion of his physical and social space, "his mental map [is] being rearranged" (134), a map defined as much by increased acquisition as by sustained introspection. Initially, he can only dream of success when contemplating the material possessions defining the "good life": "He made mental lists of what he would buy when he came into his own, with a proper salary and a whole house . . . He would buy Colgate and Dettol and Cusson's Imperial Leather to keep himself smart. He would always have some Panadol on the shelf, and sticking plaster and Sloan's liniment and malaria tablets" (5). Soon, however, he graduates to a new job, new skills, and a new residence in the moderately prosperous environment

of Huruma: "In Huruma you might not actually have arrived but you were on the way somewhere" (111). No longer known simply by his first names as either Otish or Gabriel, he is now respectfully addressed as "Mr. Otieno." In the social hierarchy of urban locations, Huruma symbolizes a liminal, and still precarious, position between the enclosed spaces of the poor and the expanding opportunities of the lower middle classes. But the linear rationality of progress is here paired with "the consciousness of prosperity," with a mental agility sustained by the repeated return to the same existential questions. If the acquisition of knowledge and skills promises material benefits, then the revision of knowledge requires an ethical repositioning that signals the protagonist's maturity. Restrained by the circularity of doubt, the linearity of progress acquires a more acceptable face. Property and propriety are of equal concern to the modern protagonist, who is beginning to find his place in competing secular and religious economies.

Eventually, however, the discursive authority with which Gabriel contemplates the ramifications of cultural change will be undermined by the benevolent interference of a vocal narrator, and the shift from internal to external focalization implicates the reader in the search for an alternative speech community. Toward the conclusion of the novel, the narrator repeatedly intervenes to locate Gabriel's personal story on a larger social canvas that traces the organic growth of an ever-expanding city and the syncretistic spirituality of its residents. The expanded social panorama is accompanied by metanarrative comments reflecting on the hubris of assessing spiritual change: "And the spiritual map? That also seemed to be changing, though it is dangerous to assert it if one has not a God's eye view of what was there before" (135). And yet, the narrator proceeds to claim this superior vantage point when describing cultural change in the imagery of a dry and depleted wasteland. The wasteland breeds multiple denominations and religious practices that seep into every aspect of life, thus explaining why "[p]erhaps in no other city of the world does so much religious consciousness coexist with such vulnerability" (138). How to choose a religious script from this confusing variety is a question essential to Gabriel and Helen and many other characters in *Chira*, even including the priest Theodore. The overt evaluations of a heterodiegetic narrator positively sanction the characters' spiritual quests, their search for a safe (or safer) place of belonging, while simultaneously reestablishing the borders between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

These narratorial interventions are even more pronounced in a novel that had embraced normative plurality, and that allowed its

main protagonists to negotiate the changes affecting major cultural sites, such as sexuality, marriage, and kinship. Helen's and Gabriel's affiliation with Theodore's congregation signals an acceptance of Christian authority and works toward the consolidation of cultural change. More than simply providing individual characters with spiritual values and emotional security, this moral authority facilitates the establishment of new types of kinship believed to protect against a terminal disease. Religious community here allows for a strategic essentialism that promises an alternative to the perpetual demands of cultural change without, however, escaping into a "culture of silence and evasion" that deliberately masks knowledge to avoid agency. Purposely chosen social affiliations have replaced assigned criteria in the building of community. But even as the focus shifts to privatized rites of passage, the material effects of such imagined communities prove surprisingly familiar, then and now. Invested in the emotional needs and cultural ideologies of the congregation, the ritual structure of community meetings and prayer services turns new space into the local space of an urban neighborhood where meaningful social action is again possible.[39]

Though concerned with the pragmatics of urban sexuality, the novel's vision of Christianity remains problematic not only in its advocacy for disciplined bodies but also in its gradual shift from character focalization to the discursive authority of the narrator.[40] Unable to resolve (or tolerate) the contradictions of cultural dissonance, the text switches to the monologic mapping of an interfering narrator who will eventually reestablish the responsibility and, hence, the culpability of individual bodies. The believer's newly found faith thus resembles the biblical story of Job and its reaffirmation of a higher power, here replaced by and disguised as the interfering authority of a compassionate narrator. As the heterodiegetic narration of *Chira* mimics the superior stance of a religious authority, whose insight exists far beyond the intellectual capabilities of the struggling individual, the narrative suggests that, with the advance of an apocalyptic disease, ordinary cultural actors like Gabriel and Helen are well advised to relinquish some of their discursive and cultural agency (135). In its final turn toward faith and discipline, this fictitious identity made possible by an interfering narrator questions the agenda of the fictitious authority that helped to create it. Even as the ambivalent notion of moral transgression translates into a more coherent Christian script, an uneasy tension persists between the cultural plurality prominent throughout the novel and the moral purity suggested at its conclusion. The cultural migrant seems to have been assimilated by a newly found

transcendental subject who offers the disciplined body as moral antidote to the polluted body ravaged by a sexually transmitted disease.

Once Helen and Gabriel commit themselves to each other, to a marital bond sanctioned in church, and to an AIDS test that will decide their responsibilities to each other and their unborn child, their bodies and minds have been reclaimed within a Christian economy of rights and duties, which already resonates in local metaphors of propriety such as *chira* (174). Operating within a global ideoscape still deeply invested in the narratives of modernity, the Christian community in *Chira* is also profoundly local, spatialized in the urban neighborhood of Huruma, where transethnic alliances and economic prosperity are carefully protected from the potentially hostile interferences of a sprawling metropole. Initiation into this community produces reliable local subjects who embody a cultural knowledge shaped by the demands of global religion and disease, and who appear convinced that a healthy defense has to be based on the restrained consumption of disciplined minds. After all, it is Theodore's marriage to Elizabeth that serves as "a focus of health for all around them" (142). The social imaginary of life and death inevitably responds as much to local needs as to the larger contexts in which such localities participate. In its distaste for unbridled materialism, the narrative challenges not only the exploitative trafficking of global bodies and commodities but also the authority of the nation-state, which has failed to protect the rights of its citizens and deliver on the promise of democracy. Though the faith of productive citizens might potentially reclaim what the greedy exploits of the modern state have so carelessly wasted, the narrator's earlier assertion that "[r]epentance can change things for an individual but not avert the creeping corruption" (84) casts doubt on the wider implications of Helen's and Gabriel's religious faith. When attention shifts back from systemic corruption to the moral accountability of individual actors, the novel returns to the narratives of shame and guilt in which visibly marked and culpable bodies circulate. But if personal redemption has little effect on the larger institutional context that decides over the distribution of resources and the arbitrary execution of death, dying bodies will continue to be found by the wayside. In its critique of "the legitimacy of the [postcolonial] state and the terms of its modernity," *chira*-cum-AIDS remains a problematic metaphor, inclined to prioritize individual responsibility without questioning the social contexts in which the standards for acceptable behavior are produced and performed.[41] In spite of its critical assessment of ideologies of property, the novel never doubts the need for the ideological scripting of propriety.

The Cultural Production of Propriety: Carolyne Adalla's *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*

The title of Carolyne Adalla's epistolary novel, *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, suggests that those who have contracted HIV have to be considered victims with limited social and narrative agency. But while confessing to a sexually transmitted disease implies the presence of an addressee to whom an act of impropriety can be disclosed, and invites the epistolary format with its call for interpersonal communication, victimhood inserts a contradictory moment into the confessional narrative: the confessant usually perpetrates a socially unacceptable act whereas the victim is subjected to discriminatory behavior. Both social roles attest to an individual's ambiguous relationship with dominant cultural scripts, and the tension between claiming responsibility for one's actions and surrendering to the authority of others remains central to the fashioning of identity in the narrative of Catherine Njeri, the young Kenyan woman who is both the novel's protagonist and homodiegetic narrator.[42]

Chira articulates the notion of social transgression through a cultural metaphor sufficiently mobile to migrate through diverse religious idioms. Adalla's novel, on the other hand, employs the narrative template of the confessional to associate the HIV-positive status of its protagonist with moral failure and the attendant narratives of shame and remorse. And just as *chira* proves a surprisingly flexible, even if ultimately limited, metaphor, so does the confessional lend itself to multiple transformations. Playing off the generic conventions of the confessional and the popular romance, the text operates through what Chambers has poignantly called the rhetoric of haunting, when unexpected digressions from established narrative scripts solicit the reader's attention and thus translate individual trauma into the ghostly figure troubling larger social networks.

As a religious sacrament in Christian theology and practiced faith, the confessional intends to disclose individual failure while providing testimony to God's forgiving grace. Its simultaneous performance of culpability and indebtedness distinguishes the religious ritual from the confessional as a vehicle for judicial inquiry and from its various manifestations in literature. In literary texts, the focus of the confessional genre shifts to the culpable self and her efforts to reenter a sympathetic community. In her examination of South African fiction, Gallagher qualifies confessional writing as a first-person chronological narrative, concerned as much with establishing an identity as with

"uncovering the hidden," constative and performative in its offer of factual information and its call to action, for "[t]o bear witness is to take responsibility for truth . . . To testify is thus not merely to narrate but to commit to oneself, and to commit the narrative to others" (17).[43] Yet the ethical responsibility involved in giving testimony is as much shaped by relations of power than by the search for truth. The confessional ritual involves the presence not only of a partner and judge but also of the confessant, who might be motivated by the desire to excuse herself, to privilege her voice, rather than to participate in a community of equally entitled actors.

In the case of Catherine's testimonial, configurations of power and the act of "passing on responsibility" acquire even greater poignancy, since the text is the only form of survival she can hope for in a time when the availability of antiretroviral drugs defies the imagination.[44] But how is one to achieve such ethical commitment when the audience is unable or unwilling to imagine the reported calamity, when the confessional account testifies to promiscuity and disease, to the obscenity of sex and of discrimination, that Kenyan society would prefer to silence? Her manipulations of the confessional mode provide an opportune strategy for recounting objectionable social behavior and eliciting a sympathetic response from the confessor (and, ultimately, the reader). Presenting the protagonist as a perpetrator guilty of sexual misconduct and as a victim of patriarchal abuse, the novel allows Catherine to simultaneously admit and disavow culpability. Though she acknowledges her HIV-positive status and promiscuity, such "excesses" occur in the larger context of restrictive social codes and culminate in "a catalogue of victimization caused by lack of sex education; absence of parental guidance; excessive parental (and hence gerontocratic) control; and masculinist conceptions of romance and intimacy."[45] To confess is also to accuse and to pass judgment on a society that, in its relentless desire to control women, renders them vulnerable to abuse and disease. It is an act of imagination defined as much by Catherine's familial and national networks as by her affiliation with the transnational diaspora of educated Kenyan women who, through the medium of writing, are able to reconcile the confined space of the AIDS victim with the global location of the cultural migrant.[46]

For a self in danger of being erased, writing offers the hope for a lasting legacy. The sickness, which does not yet materialize on the physical body, has to materialize in writing and be embodied in a medium as concrete and tangible as the human form to be lived, articulated and, perhaps, understood: "Indeed, writing proves to be the only way I can emotionally vent my feelings and probably the feelings

of many others in a similarly awkward position, for mine is a human tragedy" (1). As Catherine contemplates the disjuncture between the purposeful life she had hoped for and the meaningless death from AIDS, the diagnosis of her infection appears synonymous with the onset of a debilitating illness. Her HIV-positive status signifies the imminence of physical and social death, and combines the fear of suffering with the fear of *degrading* suffering and abandonment.[47] Her testimonial bears witness to "the body in pain" (Scarry), to a self tortured not only by the prospect of physical pain but also by the threat of social stigma. Yet contrary to the confession coerced under torture, which forces the confessant to lose her body and voice to the authority of those in power, Catherine's meditations require her to deconstruct the social imaginary of gender and disease—to unmake herself in the language of official power—in order to reinvent herself as part of an alternative normative and narrative community.

Remembering her adolescence and adulthood through a series of asynchronous flashbacks, the story of Catherine's HIV-infected status progressively resembles and eventually collapses into the story of her gendered self. In both narratives, the struggle for control over the female body is essentially a struggle for power, agency, and knowledge. Beginning with puberty, Catherine's need for emotional and sexual guidance is overshadowed by moral imperatives of abstinence and decency. Mothers deliberately withhold information even on the most fundamental biological changes a young girl experiences (17). This lack of knowledge results in a girl's progressive alienation from her own body and its physical desires. A social identity of restraint and obedience is inscribed onto the female body, encouraging either fearful denial or aggressive defiance. For girls, the growth into adulthood is inevitably a confrontation between individual needs and social obligations. As a consequence, Catherine's "narrations of adolescence" are littered with the signs of violence and repression: sexual harassment, unwanted pregnancies, dangerous abortions, and a deadly disease (18).

Such a heteropolar gender narrative, "which locates chaos, entropy, sex, disease and death in the female body and constructs a (somewhat disembodied) masculinity out of order, activity, health and life," is metaphorically extended to allow for the marginalization of the HIV-positive body.[48] The discourses on race, gender, and modernity resurface, yet again, in the context of a terminal disease. If the Western male subject requires "the chaos of the other" to showcase his superior discipline and knowledge, then these cultural binaries are conveniently rehearsed in domestic space, where women enter into

an ambiguous relationship with modernity, offering a moral antidote to the excesses of the modern world while representing an irrational element in need of male guardianship. Such ambiguities reassert themselves in Catherine's confessions and reveal how dominant social discourses control women through their bodies: the sign of gender and the mark of AIDS map social, moral, and physical inferiority onto the female body, an inferiority that precludes social agency and requires male control. Uncontrolled female sexuality, eluding the influence of parents and spouses, church and state institutions, threatens to subvert patriarchal power. Only if women's hedonistic and irrational impulses are contained by the rhetoric of the diseased female body can the danger of "contamination" be avoided. In its close association with inferior desires, women's physical presence translates into social absence until the female body, domesticated by the twin imperatives of moral honor and cultural integrity, has been effectively neutralized as a destabilizing threat to a "healthy" patriarchal organism. *Chira* might fear the corruption of the social body through self-interested greed; *Confessions*, however, exposes the moral bankruptcy of a social order that insists on the pathologization of the female body in order to maintain the status quo. Unlike Macgoye's novel, *Confessions* questions not only ideologies of property but also the cultural production of ideologies of propriety, even if such a discussion is ultimately framed by the dichotomous opposition of "Western indecency" and "African patriarchy."

Though portraying ideals of femininity that reward the good girl, the compliant daughter, and the acquiescent victim, the novel acknowledges the surprising variety of social performances enabled by these normative standards. Catherine can be the "good girl," whose tactical exercise of power in her relations with parents and partners allows for independent decision making (20), and she can be the successful student, who nevertheless engages in promiscuous relationships with sugar daddies (69). Her position in a changing cultural system is far more complicated than the binary of victim-versus-victimizer suggests, and her decision to actively pursue "winning a boyfriend" since "a little aggressiveness here and there was desirable" (20) poignantly demonstrates the manipulation of social expectations. These flexible social roles are further complicated by the often stereotypical narratives of the (popular) romance genre that the novel simultaneously imitates and mocks. Westernized idioms reassert themselves in the gender relations of the young, the affluent, and the educated. More than just offering an aesthetic tableau of desirable commodities and mannerisms, they furnish the psychologies with which Catherine

approaches her romantic liaisons. A seemingly disillusioned Catherine resolves to stay away from men only to have a handsome stranger appear in her life and recycle the conventional clichés of the romance plot. Brian, the university-educated engineer, impersonates the perfect image of beauty, intelligence, and honesty, and Catherine herself has to admit to his well-rehearsed qualities: "I know a handsome man when I see one, and the figure standing in front of me was a stereotype" (36). An advocate for gender and class equality, Brian also introduces her to AIDS, "a newly discovered" Western disease that, in 1984, appears a "far-fetched" idea to a young Catherine duly impressed by his willingness to discuss sexual behavior (48–50). Framed by Western paraphernalia and aesthetic preferences, Brian embodies the enlightened masculinity the romantic heroine desires. But the idealized scripts of romance that harbor "feeling[s of] pure ecstasy" (50) soon encounter one of the genre's formulaic dilemmas, for her parents categorically refuse to consent to an interethnic marriage.[49]

The failure of her marriage plans provides Catherine with a convenient excuse to privilege social profit over emotional commitment, to lose "control of a strictly moral life because it seemed of no use" (69). In its simultaneous critique of patriarchal authority and of deceptive romance, the novel exposes how such cultural scripts discipline female bodies and minds and encourage women to privilege performance over substance. "[T]he walk down the aisle in a white flowing gown, the vows, the children . . ." (44; ellipsis in original) are ultimately just as deceptive as the attractive appearance of HIV-positive bodies, who hide a deadly disease as effectively as a despairing female character "pretends innocence" in the performance of acceptable social roles (52). Unlike *Chira's* monetary economy that, at least temporarily, disassociates the helpless victim from the exploitative carrier, Catherine's testimonial illustrates that the disjuncture between performance and self in a sexual economy premised on the honor of women is likely to turn the attractive carrier into a source of deadly infection. Romance in the time of AIDS, the novel suggests, requires a revision of established cultural scripts as well as of the narratives mediating such expectations. If the story of interethnic marriage remains elusive, the vision of interethnic friendship materializes in the letter exchange between Catherine and Marilyn, thus challenging standards of heterosexual and ethnic identity. As representations of love evolve into a trope for the redefinition of power relations, Catherine mocks her earlier infatuation with Western commodities and aesthetics, only to embrace the didactic voice and moral authority of the educated protagonist. Romance might be dead, but didacticism and moralism, the

chief rhetorical strategies of popular literature, manage to live on in a genre open to frequent permutations.[50]

The struggle to rewrite gendered subjectivity acquires even greater urgency because Catherine rejects as inadequate the existing AIDS narratives and identities. Previously, she had accepted cultural opinions that consider AIDS a disease only for society's dispossessed, for "those people" too poor, too ignorant, too sick, or even too immoral to protect themselves, and for those "far removed from healthy, intelligent and beautiful persons [like herself]" (2). Now the boundaries between her and "those people" seem to have collapsed. Inventing herself as an ordinary, and yet not quite so ordinary, victim entitled to speak for anybody in a similar predicament, Catherine claims her story as one of personal *and* of collective suffering. As she reviews her past trials and tribulations, she insists that her testimonial has the educational quality that will prepare for much-needed social change. Her pain seems to authenticate her words, and the experiential authority of the diseased self is effectively used to support the discursive authority of the confessant. But her speech remains problematic in its attempt to dismantle the cultural inequity inherent in the diseased female body, while privileging the epistemological insights of the ostracized body:

> I have mentioned that mine is a human tragedy. Let me also add that it is in particular, the tragedy of youth and women in Africa who risk being exposed to the virus daily. Mine is not a selfish lament or cry for my shortened life and obliterated future. It is a cry for the masses who fall victims yearly (sic), and a decry for those among us who stick to high risk behaviour. It is like a cry of a nation which has been defeated at war. I write so that from my experiences, you—and hopefully through you many others—may benefit and learn to avoid the mistakes I have made. And the first lesson is that AIDS is a reality, a terrible disease whose wages are death. (4)

Identified through a string of singular pronouns—"I have mentioned," "I write," "I have made"—the boundaries between the narrating self and the larger collective remain clearly visible. As a victim of physical pain and social stigma, she is part of "those people"; as an educated, morally superior speaker, she is separated from them. Her exemplary story is not a metonymic extension but rather a metaphoric substitution for the larger collective; it implies "speaking for" and thus invites the contradiction of representing the collective and, at the moment of speaking, being no longer part of the anonymous collective. Once Catherine reclaims writing as a site of survival that

preserves her memory and prevents her social, if not her physical, death, her narrative delivers a powerful "farewell symphony" that, inevitably, distinguishes "the writer from those with whom [she] shares the ordeal of the epidemic and bestows a certain privilege on the act of writing itself."[51] Such AIDS testimonials "make the author a privileged survivor-witness of collective disaster" who, while forcing the community to confront a stigmatized disease, claims the rhetorical and aesthetic distinction of being "the last in a series."[52] *Confessions*, however, further privileges the exemplary position of the speaker when presenting Catherine's narrative not only under the trope of survival but also as the bold effort to break through the wall of silence surrounding the pandemic in Kenya. The last solo of the survivor combines with the first appeal of the activist to render Catherine's voice all the more memorable and unique. To what extent, then, is Catherine's vision limited by the restrictions inherent in writing and, in particular, the epistolary format? Although "farewell symphonies challenge the primacy and autonomy of individual subjectivity in a genre—the autobiography—that assumes and privileges the personal subject,"[53] the epistolary format offers a space of personal expression encouraging individual authorship of cultural narratives. For the stigmatized individual, the simulated privacy of the letter provides an intimate mode of disclosure and, hence, an opportune vehicle for articulating what is considered unspeakable in official discourse. Somewhat paradoxically, the epistolary format successfully rehearses the intimacy of the confessional, while being less than inviting to the presence of similarly haunted subjects. Certainly, the educational status implied in a letter exchange suggests a middle-class identity comfortably removed from a majority with fewer and less prestigious speaking options.

If Catherine's relationship with the collective of AIDS victims remains ambiguous, what is her understanding of Marilyn, her friend, confessor, and ideal reader? How does she construct the relationship of the marginalized collective she aims to represent "to an audience assumed to be oblivious to the disaster it is undergoing"?[54] Catherine's letter to Marilyn continues the tradition of letter writing that, in the past, has testified to an intimacy born out of shared experiences and hopes for a similar future. Their history together has culminated in an ideological consensus best illustrated in "long letters [that] could easily pass for pamphlets" (4). They "formed opinions together" (41) and committed themselves to the liberation of Kenyan women from a cultural environment where the "majority of women still have their rights downtrodden and denied" (39). Now with the social stigma of AIDS, their interwoven narratives have reached a precarious moment

of potential separation. To reestablish their union, Catherine frequently pauses her narrative and appeals directly to her friend: "You [Marilyn] must know of many other incidences where girls suffer in the process of growing up" (18).[55] Marilyn's responses, either visibly present in the narrative through quotes from letters and conversations or eagerly anticipated by an agitated Catherine, project a polyphonous quality into a predominately monologic story. Such rhetorical strategies, while intended to transcend the inherent limitations of letters, indicate Catherine's awareness of the confessor's power not only to judge and to punish but also to forgive and to reconcile.[56] They allow for a fiction of autonomy on the part of the interlocutor, even as they attempt to manipulate her responses in the hope of soliciting compassion. Catherine's testimonial here functions as "the deliberate, self-conscious attempt of an individual to explain [herself] to the audience who represents the kind of community [she] needs to exist in."[57] But in contrast to other confessional narratives, Catherine envisions an ideal community that does not yet exist and only materializes in the act of writing. Calling on her friend's sense of moral duty, she laments the stigma of a disease that deprives individuals of recognition and respect, and hence of the "idea of life embodied in the constitutional right to life."[58] Though Marilyn serves as the primary addressee of her questions, her previous references to the nation defeated at war (4) and the failure of independence (74) evoke the larger context of a democratic polity. The text here rehearses the pivotal question Posel asks of the South African government and civil society and their response toward HIV-positive populations: in a postcolonial democracy, what are the obligations of fellow citizens and the state to promote the right to life and to dignity, including the right to speak and to be heard within a moral community of compassionate and respectful speakers (314)?

While Catherine is still composing her long narrative, Marilyn's letters from abroad keep arriving, recounting her studies in Amsterdam and inviting Catherine to continue their history of conversational exchange. And it is Marilyn's last letter, verbatim inserted into her friend's story, which will supply the central metaphor for Catherine's imaginative encounter with HIV/AIDS:

> Amsterdam has a good communication network. There are many electric trains which link it with all the towns in the Netherlands. Virtually every minute, there is a train moving in or out of the central station. And within the city there are numerous buses, trams and underground trains. The underground trains are so swift, they could take you

> anywhere in the vast city within split seconds. On many occasions, nobody bothers to find out whether you have the ticket or not, so I prefer this means because I travel relatively free. This is risky though. Lots of people board the underground . . . (73; ellipsis in original)

The underground train Marilyn observes in Amsterdam, not only a symbol of Western technological achievement, but also a sign of an alienated and anonymous society that is as careless about sexual behavior as it is about mass transportation, delivers the trope for Catherine's further reflections: "As I write, I can't help likening the AIDS infection to the underground trains. I can envisage many people boarding the trains daily from various stations all over the world. Their destinations? These underground trains will take those aboard to their graves, swiftly if I may add" (73). Indeed, AIDS is the disease of people who move around, who travel, and who cannot keep still.[59] Seemingly requiring neither financial nor moral commitment, the train seduces with the illusion of a free ride. In a society where "nobody bothers to find out," individual choice reigns supreme. Though Marilyn is enticed by the prospect of easy movement, Catherine's metaphoric appropriation of the underground train maps the road to progress as the site of death so that unsuspecting passengers are swiftly taken to their graves.

AIDS emerges as a Western modernity, a hidden and contaminating network that swiftly exports a terminal disease across the globe. Earlier, Catherine's partner Brian had anticipated these sentiments when identifying AIDS as an American illness reportedly spreading through "a free-sex lifestyle" (48). Western promiscuity spawns a disease of global proportions, eventually infecting local spaces, where it primarily targets those most vulnerable to established authorities and imported deceptions. Though Catherine acknowledges the responsibility of local actors and practices, foreign agents deserve the ultimate blame for the advance of a deadly syndrome. Like historically earlier diseases such as syphilis, tuberculosis, and cholera, AIDS is imagined as a "disease from somewhere else."[60] And thus Catherine continues to blame dangerous others outside the nation for contaminating the body politic. Her conflation of culture and disease contradicts her earlier critique of the rhetorical construction of female bodies as potentially hazardous to a healthy society. But it allows for an ironic reversal of contemporary media stereotypes, which often associate the African continent with AIDS and which themselves respond to colonial myths equating African sexuality and promiscuity.[61] Underground trains and secretive passengers symbolize a slow-moving, mysteriously

operating, and frequently mutating virus that invites conspiracy theories with their propensity for accusing suspicious others, especially if these "dangerous others" are known for their history of imperial aggression.[62]

Once the work of cultural reproduction shifts from families to friends, a new social imaginary emerges, as much invested in the culture of Englishness as in the transnational diasporas of gender activism. Based on shared experiences and beliefs, Marilyn and Catherine represent an articulate community of women, trained in elite educational institutions and prepared to interrogate discriminatory social practices and their underlying power differentials (39). It is a union that, while critical of technological achievements privileging careless individualism, embraces writing, the technology on which its existence is predicated, as a sign of linguistic, cultural, and moral mastery. Admittedly, such an ideal speech community has not yet fully materialized, though it graduated from the national spaces of boarding schools and universities so prominently featured in the novels discussed in Chapter 2. Instead, the transnational community of writers is shaped by the aspirations of an educated elite eager to reclaim its role in the country's future. As Marilyn and Catherine situate themselves in opposition to the social production of female bodies, print culture serves a pivotal function in challenging not only the ethnic and national imaginary of gender but also the deceptive dreams of bourgeois romance. Although these ideological narratives originate in different cultural locales, they nonetheless collude in their desire to inscribe an ideology of blind obedience onto the female body. The challenge to the symbolic registers of colonial and national modernity, however, is mounted from inside its institutional apparatus. While such a challenge successfully translates the power of the church into the secular arena of the psychoanalyzed self, who is willing to discuss sexuality outside the moral economy of Christianity, it remains beholden to the vision of mutually obligated and productive citizens.

After her marriage plans prove unsuccessful, Catherine forsakes propriety for promiscuity, and her choice of unrestrained sexual consumption presents a fundamental challenge to the legitimacy of parental and governmental power, which opted for autocratic rule even after the liberation from colonial occupation, therefore failing in its responsibility to ensure the political participation and economic well-being of the nation's citizens. "[T]hreatening to contaminate the national bloodline with the twin evils of STDs and uncertain paternity,"[63] uncontrolled female sexuality thus offers a politicized field of assertion, turning the life-giving mother into the life-denying whore whose decidedly "unpatriotic activities" embody the danger the male

order has always needed to contain to preserve its privileges. But the rejection of all authority and the surrender to unlimited consumption does not represent a viable alternative, either. Too committed is the narrative to a culture of Englishness that equates good writing with moral writing and that desires to reclaim a nation seemingly "defeated at war" (4). With repulsion, Catherine recalls the chaos of university life, when students' freedom from "the strict surveillance of parents and high school teachers" (63) escalated into collective orgies of drunkenness. She might have temporarily participated in an irresponsible lifestyle, but, having paid a high price, her whole narrative is designed to reject "social and sexual behaviour that is a mockery to morality" (2). Eventually, she will have to conclude that neither the standardized gender narratives nor the conventional AIDS stories suit her, and that victimhood indeed includes the contradictory moments of simultaneous agency and passivity. Having boarded "the train knowingly by sticking to high risk behaviour" (74), she has to acknowledge her own agency in contracting the virus. Hers is a "normal Kenyan story" demonstrating the "moral weakness [of a society] caught at the crossroad of Western behaviour and African morals" (74). If this Western behavior is troped in terms of promiscuity and deceptive romance, "African morals" with their emphasis on the honor of women result in an equally problematic commodification of gendered subjects. If the West lacks moral restraint, Kenyan society employs its disciplinary voice to rein in unruly women. Though not without rhetorical force, Catherine's dichotomous representation is troubled by the return to polarized and disjunctive cultural flows. Not unlike *Chira's* attempt to consolidate social change in a localized Christianity and its attendant narratives of shame and guilt, Catherine conveniently forgets her own casual migrations through a shifting cultural landscape. Her interest in higher education and in writing as a desirable medium of communication (1), her determination to be economically independent and to modify discriminatory cultural customs (39), and her desire for global travel and frank sexual discussions (48) all testify to a multitude of interacting modernities. The exchange between the local and the global eludes identifiable points of departure, but the simple polarity Catherine envisions allows for at least one identifiable culprit in a story that otherwise maps the slippery terrain of social agency and cultural change.

Catherine's imagination of a new self and community remains indebted to the promises of scientific progress and democratic governance. Instead of unlimited power and consumption, she advocates for informed and dutiful citizenship. For the new self, sexual respectability

is just as important as medical knowledge, and, hence, the narrative frequently pauses when Catherine's visits to her physician furnish new information on HIV tests, processes of seroconversion, and the asymptomatic and symptomatic phases of the disease.[64] Since her experiences in adolescence have poignantly demonstrated the dangers of a woman's limited knowledge, the "new self" derives its agency from a sound epistemological base. Her steadily increasing medical knowledge further solidifies her role as educator and implies an awareness of the secular power of the biosciences in managing disease and regulating death. Insisting, however, that to place the subject of HIV/AIDS "entirely in the hands of the medical authorities is the simplest way of asking the world to commit genocide" (79), she cannot allow for the professionalization and segregation of disease. Her equal concern with physical and social death demands that scientific rationality be paired with moral responsibility. Concluding her story, Catherine will have to admit that "[w]riting has been relaxing in a way; it has transformed my way of thinking such that I have almost come to terms with the fact that I am an AIDS victim" (82). The letter has been an extensive effort to rebuild the narrative and normative community between the two women, and, fittingly, Catherine's last words imply a hidden mission for the confidante who is also the confessor: "I have good reason to think that if this letter were to be made public after you have gone through it, it would help transform the sexual behaviour of a section of our Kenyan society" (83). It is "their Kenyan society" that her testimony is trying to address, not just the secluded space of victims. She promises Marilyn another letter, soon, in which she will continue with the reexamination of her identity and relationships. Communication is the one lasting legacy for a subjectivity in danger of being erased; in the act of "passing on responsibility" lies the possibility of catharsis for both the writing and the reading self.

Confessions of an AIDS Victim fictionalizes an identity still fragmentary, an identity gradually inscribed onto the female body struggling to release its individual secrets in the name of a larger collective. Some of the novel's inconsistencies attest to the fact that the new narrative is still elliptical and incoherent, unsure of how to situate its protagonist between conformity and rebellion, and between globally competing cultural scripts and influences. In their intentional flaunting of narrative conventions, however, other gaps and glitches serve to foreground what Kenyan society would prefer to silence: the unspeakable obscenity of diseased and sexually active bodies. Such rhetorical maneuvers mainly operate through changes in narrative grammar, turning the confessional into a simultaneous performance of culpability and

judgment, offering the community autobiography as a challenge to individual subjectivity, even when privileging the speaker's survival in the body of the text, and translating the love for romance into a site of death and deception. More than just an attempt to solicit the reader's attention, these generic transgressions transfer the hauntedness of the protagonist to an audience thus encouraged to recognize their own vulnerability and denial. Such untimely interventions into narrative and cultural scripts render visible the mutual relevance of civilization and disaster and potentially contribute to the ethical reimagination of the community: "What is traumatic to the individual witness comes to haunt the social, as an anxiety of which witnessing is the vehicle."[65]

The Pleasure of Disciplined Sex: Hope Keshubi's *To a Young Woman*

While *Confessions* addresses the plight of those infected with HIV/AIDS and *Chira* harbors hope for the moral salvation of an urban, sexually active population, Hope Keshubi's *To a Young Woman* privileges early educational intervention to protect vulnerable adolescents from a deadly disease. In its advocacy for a morally guided, community-based reform program, the novel insists on the educational responsibility of parents and reclaims individual health as a public resource essential to the country's survival. Parental duties are communal duties, and *To a Young Woman* thus chooses to mediate AIDS education primarily through the cultural institution of the *s(s)enga* or paternal aunt. Among the Baganda of central Uganda, the *Senga* has traditionally been responsible for instructing young girls in acceptable feminine behavior.[66] While the historical origin of the institution is unclear, there is reason to believe that it developed in response to the vulnerable position of young wives in the highly stratified, patrilineal Baganda society. Tamale suggests that "paternal aunts were enlisted to tutor young girls in behavioural tactics that would save them from the wrath of their future husbands" (15). Though they assisted prospective brides in courtship and marriage negotiations and taught them appropriate gendered behavior, their influence was not limited to the support of patriarchal culture. Even if mobilized to discipline the female body, the *Senga*'s education also encouraged future wives to exploit their entrepreneurial and erotic skills in order to improve their socioeconomic status. To the imperative of subservience is thus added the knowledge of manipulative performance. The instruction in "wifely duties" is complemented by the *Senga*'s insistence on a woman's rights—in particular, the right to divorce (*kunoba*) if the

husband fails in his social and sexual responsibilities. In the continued evolution of the role of the *Senga*, the realm of the erotic is carefully cultivated: wives are encouraged to skillfully seduce; husbands are expected to convincingly perform. Her educational obligations render the *Senga* exempt from the taboo of vulgar speech; nonetheless, her advice is often coded in metaphors and symbols, in a figurative language that skillfully avoids offending cultural sensibilities (16).

In recent times, "modernisation and urbanisation, as well as capitalist economic practices within the liberalised market economy of Uganda" have dramatically impacted the transformation of the institution, especially in the urban areas where potential *Sengas* are now hired by young women or their parents to perform the traditional role (10). From an unpaid institution premised on kinship, the *Senga* has evolved into an income-generating opportunity that adeptly exploits the country's print and electronic media: "The numerous call-in *Ssenga* programmes that have emerged on various vibrant FM radio stations, as well as the various *Ssenga* newspaper columns, have not only expanded employment opportunities in this area, but have also transferred Kiganda sexuality from the private realm of the home to everyday public discourse" (19). As propriety transforms into an enticing property for sale, its content traverses the spectrum from conservative to progressive advice. Even the FEMRITE publication *New Era* featured articles specifically devoted to the development of the *Senga* institution. In the September 2000 issue, Mercy Nalubega argues against the "untenable revival" of the *Senga*, whose advice adds to "confusion and insecurity" and is underwritten by the political interests of traditionalists (25). Philo Nabweru, however, insists that "boys also need a '*ssenga*,' an 'uncle' to break them into manhood, gradually helping them to grow up."[67]

Tamale emphasizes that "[e]ven in the context of modernity," under the diverse influences of religion and feminism, education and AIDS, interethnic marriage and information technology, the instruction of individual *Sengas* is still informed by entrenched expectations of feminine domesticity (19). This ambiguity is captured in *To a Young Woman*, where the discussion of women's sexuality is equally invested in the "honorable" domain of reproductive sexuality and the subversive playfield of erotic sensuality. Continually adapting to new cultural environments and audiences, the role of the *Senga* effectively combines local authority with global biomedical knowledge to suggest a type of AIDS activism perhaps best described as "globalization from below."[68] Informed by multiple culturally and spatially situated knowledges, such activism prioritizes local concerns and institutions to

effectively communicate the dynamics of a global health epidemic to diverse and overlapping communities. No longer exclusively invested in Baganda culture, the *Senga* has developed into a nationally recognized resource.

The interaction of the local and the global is poignantly demonstrated in the novel's repeated use of ogre tales to express "modern" sexual violence in established narrative templates, and its frequent recourse to letters to privilege the sensibilities of a literate middle class. If the fascination with ogres as signifiers of the obscene relates Keshubi's novel to *The Invisible Weevil*, the seductive power of the bourgeoisie suggests a connection with Kaberuka's *Silent Patience*. Both narratives visibly position the author in their respective prefaces: Kaberuka patiently explains to the reader the benevolence of divine guidance; Keshubi offers a programmatic reading of Uganda's contemporary problems. Authorial intentions soon transition into narrative preoccupations: the stepmother featured in the prologue echoes the author's voice, followed by the homodiegetic narrator of the main narrative, herself a mother, who relies on the loyal services of her friend Margaret to operate as the *Senga* for her daughter Rose. As a host of narrative agencies embark on the consensual project of protecting the next generation, their interchangeable vocabularies underwrite the urgency of the educational mission.

The author's preface leaves little doubt that the country is faced with a crisis of epic proportions, for teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases are ubiquitous, and sexual violence against women, especially in the time of AIDS, amounts to "crimes of murder" (iii). Like Adalla's *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, the novel portrays a society "caught at the crossroads" of competing cultural influences that have left girls and women disproportionately vulnerable to death and disease. While the author acknowledges that, today, some of the country's "traditional education systems [are no longer] useful or even true" (ii), the cultural institution of the *Senga* is perceived to be of continued relevance. Without the disciplinary intervention of an education both scientific and moral, since girls "need to know scientific facts as well as the personal and social implications of their behaviour" (iii), she fears for a country overwhelmed by competing social and sexual attitudes. The novel's emancipatory potential, however, is limited by the cautionary disclaimer that the text will only be concerned with sexual violence as a result of men's "need to satisfy [their] sexual urges" and will not address those transgressions based on "men's hatred and anger at women" (iii). Disqualifying these "other" links between AIDS, sexual violence, and social vulnerability

as "moral and legal problems" impossible to solve through education, the novel restricts its purview to the moral production of sexual restraint and often obscures the ambiguous cultural context of power and politics in which human sexuality is articulated. Aware that AIDS is a "matter of life and death" (iii), the author insists on the violation of social taboos, even on the moral duty to offend, but her vision of social change is restricted by the narrative's dominant metaphor of "appetite and greed" that claims the legitimacy of sexual desires even as it sanctions their excessive performance.

A group of educated Ugandans, close friends and spirited conversationalists, introduce the culinary metaphor when they criticize excessive food consumption as a sign of greed inevitably leading to the transgressive desire for the property of others (3–11). Soon the debate on physical sustenance evolves into the question of how to satisfy one's sexual appetites. The rhetorical link between food and sex claims both as fundamental human needs and skillfully exploits the cultural currency of metaphors familiar to Ugandan readers.[69] The socially acceptable topic (food) effectively opens a new discursive space for the controversial discussion of sexual violence and disease. "Appetite" suggests the legitimacy of sexual desires and envisions sex as a human need sustaining individual and community; "greed," however, disgraces the self and violates the rights of others in its propensity toward hedonistic consumption. The dichotomous metaphor informs the novel's reading of modern sexuality, which is applauded for its healthy and rationally exercised appetites yet discouraged from indulging in the excesses that invite violence and disease (15). While women are believed to be in need of asserting their sexual appetites and individual agency (134), the narrative advocates that men learn to control their excessive desires, for they are "essentially very sexual animals and . . . although they are supposed to be rational, some of them find it difficult to control sexual urges" (135). Once appetite and greed acquire gendered connotations and are strategically employed to support the novel's ideological preferences, rationality transforms into a highly desirable quality for undersexed women and oversexed men. In contrast to *Confessions*, which deconstructs the cultural production of irrational and hedonistic female bodies, *To a Young Woman* deliberately mystifies the self-interested and uncontrolled desires of male bodies.

In between the author's preface and the main narrative can be heard the voice of an unnamed stepmother whose concerns are prominently positioned in the novel's prologue and further reiterate the central narrative dilemma already outlined in the preface. Offending

cultural sensibilities, she insists, will be inevitable in order to fulfill her parental responsibilities. If "the informal talk about sex is considered taboo among certain groups and impolite or in bad taste by others," the technical jargon of the biomedical sciences is equally inappropriate (2). To verbalize the obscene is thus both a violation of cultural expectations and a plea for social change. These "untimely interventions" into normative and narrative scripts transfer the dilemma of the author-cum-narrator to an audience encouraged to realize their own vulnerability to a deadly disease.[70] Not unlike *Confessions*, the narrative achieves this rhetoric of haunting through a hybridity of genres and media: biomedical discourses are juxtaposed with romance and oral stories, and ogre tales are translated into the lurid language of newspaper tabloids. Articulating what a culture might prefer to silence is hence perceived as avoiding the other obscenity, the meaningless death from AIDS, the knowledge of which inevitably impacts social efforts to renegotiate the boundaries between culture and disaster.[71] Repeatedly, the novel reminds the reader that public health—as the resource deciding over the country's future prosperity, potentially alleviating even "long-term global problems such as famine, war and poverty" (1)—can only be restored through honest communication.

Since the stepmother voices her concerns in the form of a letter to which, at the conclusion of the novel, her adopted daughter will reply with profound gratitude, the act of writing itself reflects on the delicate nature of interpersonal communication. The letter offers a legitimate space for those topics too embarrassing to articulate in face-to-face encounters. And yet the main narrative proceeds through a heteroglossic exchange between the homodiegetic narrator and her daughter Rose, who serve as textual equivalents of the mother and daughter whose monologic expressions frame the novel.[72] While they are still separated by geographical and social distance, the narrator and Rose already perform the desired behavior and extend the duty of responsible parenting to "all parents, the community and religious institutions" (2). Ultimately, it is the text itself that fulfills the role of *Senga* for readers in need of medically sound and culturally sensitive information. Through its complex rhetorical positioning, the novel allows the reader to simultaneously acknowledge *and* delegate their potentially uncomfortable educational duties, just like the stepmother of the prologue will pass on her responsibility to the mother of the main narrative, who gladly entrusts her friend Margaret with the role of parental advisor.

As the narrator chronicles the shift from ritually scripted gender relations to romantic partnerships and nuclear families, she applauds

these social changes for legitimizing individual desires, provided, however, that such personal preferences do not diminish "one's ability to relate to other members of society" (97). In her optimistic assessment, medical knowledge need only be combined with "maturity, emotional control and experience" to ensure that "the human race [will make] progress from one generation to the next" (38). As the narrator recycles the keywords of colonial modernity—individuality and science, reason and progress—and fashions them into a suitable response to the failure of individuals and institutions to protect the young generation from sexual disease, the text attempts to reclaim the promise of "reasonable" gender relations. In contrast to the novels discussed in Chapter 2, here, education and literacy are not invested in the hope for social mobility and affluence but in the more fundamental purpose of survival and the responsible management of life and death. Keshubi's novel utilizes the authority of the biomedical sciences to rationalize its own project of social transformation but, unlike *Chira* and *Confessions*, it does not reflect on the political interests informing these discourses.[73] The ideological grounding of the mutually constitutive registers of medical and moral "progress" is deliberately obscured in a narrative that claims the obedience of the modern sexual body as a sign of superior rationality. Ironically, the novel has to partially reenact the legal and rhetorical interventions of colonial authorities that constructed the hypersexual African body, only to offer medical and moral hygiene as opportune strategies for its "purification."[74]

In an attempt to manage the uncertainties of a deadly disease, the text produces its own epidemic of signification, for it offers several, at times competing, AIDS narratives, including "the biomedical chronicle of the virus and its behavior; the statistical chronicle of incidence, prevalence, and geographic spread; the public health chronicle of education and prevention; the social science chronicle of socioeconomic variables, attitudes and behavioral change; and the discursive chronicle of language, meaning, and representation."[75] To authenticate her fictional work, Keshubi's preface provides the reader with an extensive catalogue of "reliable" sources: government-issued textbooks designed to educate the country's citizens on reproductive health and moral behavior; her unpublished work on "The Drama in Education Approach to the AIDS Plague," the title of which transitions effortlessly from didactic performance to the figurative language of disaster; the trustworthy voices of local informers (Florence Kasule) and global entertainers (Oprah Winfrey); and, finally, a rich repertoire of Acoli and Ganda oral tales that combines with popular romance writing into a continuum of oral-popular expressions (i). Educational campaigns

sanctioned by official political authorities here interact with the didactic potential of oral literature to fashion a national approach to a global crisis visibly present on local television screens. In its employment of local and global codes to write a culturally sensitive textbook, the novel has to negotiate diverse narrative conventions to establish what the reader perceives to be acceptable social truths.[76] This discursive hybridity presents a further challenge to a text already attempting to balance its reading of AIDS as a sexually transmitted disease with a moralistic narrative of disease prevention. The novel's simultaneous interest in popular romance and oral literature demonstrates the continuum of an oral-popular discourse that "collects its divergent patterns and human-flavor from [popular literature], and its modality from the 'storylines,' the indeterminacy and contextuality of the oral traditions."[77]

Given the prominent position of educated Ugandans in this hybrid universe, it is not surprising that the narrator's friend Margaret, affectionately known as Aunt Margaret, will operate as *Senga* to her friend's confused daughter for a significant portion of the narrative (62–138). In the process of enlightening the bewildered child, she reinvents the culturally validated institution in the language of modern bioscience and reclaims its significance at a moment of profound cultural crisis. Supported by statistical evidence and explicit illustrations, her lengthy explanation of reproductive sexuality and health—of ovulation and menstruation, of sexual intercourse and pregnancy—eventually transitions into an elaborate epidemiology of HIV/AIDS, its global occurrence and symptoms, its opportunistic infections and modes of transmission, which are carefully tabulated to emphasize the risk of "contracting the virus through . . . blood, semen and cervical vaginal fluid contact" (131). Even prior to the emergence of a terminal disease, female sexuality is closely associated with life and death, for menstruation might be accompanied by depression and anxiety (95), and sexual activity invites the "serious consequences" of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (96). Though each phase of a woman's life cycle harbors its own dangers, the cautious Margaret highlights the vulnerability of adolescents whose spatial and social mobility exposes them "to injury and death from war and from traffic-related accidents" (96). If biology *per se* is considered a site of procreation and death, then cultural change further exacerbates the sense of immanent crisis. After all, adolescence is perceived as "a period of great mental stress as the young adult tries to deal with the conflicting values of the traditional family and religion, and the new value being inflicted by mass media from outside culture, as well as from the great increase in knowledge that was never before available.

The AIDS epidemic, which leaves many children dependent on fewer and fewer adults, puts great stress on families and on individuals" (97). Conflicting values and "outside influences" provide fertile ground for the confusion that threatens with death the country's most productive citizens. In its advocacy of abstinence, faithfulness, and safe sex, the novel gradually translates into the fictional equivalent of an ABC program.[78] But rather than privileging the individual voice of the educator, the narrative proceeds through dialogic exchanges between a knowledgeable aunt, a confused daughter, and a mother still struggling with social taboos. The *Senga* transforms into a "talking textbook," simultaneously invested in the authority of biomedical science and in the numerous oral tales that perform global knowledge in the rhetorical terms a local audience is likely to enjoy. At times, though, these diverse discourses challenge the characters to reconcile competing truth claims into a coherent cultural agenda. Indebted to epidemiological knowledge, Aunt Margaret dutifully reviews the "green monkey theory" that suggests the disease originated on the African continent; yet she remains ill at ease with its cultural and psychological ramifications, with the metaphors of darkness and disease that have haunted the African continent in the Western imagination. Her unease results in an abrupt dismissal of any attempt to explain "the supposed origins of AIDS." Instead, her renewed emphasis on prevention visualizes the disease as "the snake in our midst, threatening our lives" (130). The "real monkeys" find themselves sidelined for a trope of disaster, which articulates the urgent need to prevent the wilderness from further spreading into the space of civilization. And while the metaphorical snake renders visible the haunting presence of catastrophe, it resurfaces unexpectedly in the reflections of Rose's mother, where it turns into a signifier for patriarchal authority.

The mother and homodiegetic narrator is critical of biblical representations of sexuality as both sacred *and* secret since they limit women's access to knowledge and allow for the construction of antagonistic models of femininity. The always immaculate Virgin Mother encounters the temptress Eve, whose moral transgression is visibly marked on the bodies of all women suffering from the monthly "curse" of menstruation and the pain of childbirth. As she questions Eve's disproportionate punishment for falling victim to the temptations of the snake, the narrator concludes that female culpability serves the interests of patriarchal supremacy: "I guess [Eve's punishment] marked the beginnings of men's supremacy over women. Men using women as scapegoats to cover up their weaknesses and failures" (55). To further deconstruct the snake as a metaphor of phallic domination,

she supplements her meditations on religious authority with the tale of the father emasculated by a son who, in his baffling naiveté, mistakes the father's erect penis for a dangerous snake. For Rose's mother, "the story always brings the garden of Eden to my mind . . . Is that snake Eve's evil thought or is it Adam's inner feelings visible in the rising of his manhood? I am never allowed to imagine this because it is blasphemy" (56). While the snake-cum-phallus projects its culpability onto a weak and irresponsible femininity, the narrator strategically employs the tale's metaphor to deconstruct the authority of a religious narrative that carefully controls its representational vocabulary and systematically silences disquieting questions. The widely circulating oral tale thus emerges as an alternative locus of knowledge that unmasks the rhetoric of power. Though Rose's mother foregrounds the unholy alliance of patriarchy and religion, she continues to reach out to Christian constituencies and legitimizes the sexually explicit language of the novel by claiming procreation as God's will (62). When she agrees to educate her daughter on "the sacredness of sex" (61), thus inviting new myths on sexual behavior, the novel is precariously suspended between the competing truth claims of institutionalized religion and its feminist critique. Hijacked by its need to address diverse constituencies in the least offensive language, *To a Young Woman* still continues undeterred in its own elaborate exercise at mythmaking. In its effort to refashion the modern self in the name of moral and physical health, the narrative is as interested in deconstructing social myths as it is in privileging its own biases as reasonable interventions, which, sanctioned by the logic of science, are supposedly free of "[the] taboos, fears, threats or emotions" (42) responsible for the current crisis. Since the rhetoric of modern sexuality needs narrative as a disciplinary regime, it has to carefully obscure its ideological grounding behind the language of science and progress, while maligning as "tools of deception" those dissident voices who contradict the desired normative framework (16).

It appears, however, that the stories of romance and ogres—even if mobilized in the service of the novel's dominant metaphor, appetite and greed—have a tendency to defy such desire for normative orthodoxy. The elaborate story of Joanitta and Jackson, for example, rehearses the novel's pivotal concerns in a stereotypical romance plot, allowing for the tearful reunion of the star-crossed lovers only after they have successfully progressed beyond personal weakness and social obstacles. True love finds itself challenged by a shameful pregnancy and hostile parents whose lack of compassion drives the young couple into poverty and despair, undermining the social and personal health

the narrative persistently promotes. That the romantic formula here operates as a trope for the desire for change is best illustrated in the antithetical behavior of an understanding teacher, saddened by the moral failure of schools and parents, and the unsympathetic response of parents motivated by anger and shame (21).[79] In their frequently exchanged letters, the young lovers lament that "love is never based entirely on reason and logic" (18), and the unreasonable interventions of their guardians, who force Jackson into a frustrating marriage and condemn Joanitta to a rural exile, unable to provide intellectual or even physical sustenance, visibly demonstrate the novel's own taste for the marriage of romance and reason. Once Joanitta has served her didactic usefulness as "a living example of how teenage pregnancy causes interruption in education, puts the health of both the mother and the baby at risk, and adds to the economic burden of the extended family" (28), Jackson is allowed to embark on a quest to find mother and child. It is a quest that appears, to the desperate man, "like searching for food during the great famine" (37) and that leads to the physically malnourished child and the woman, who "looked like somebody suffering from full-blown AIDS" (37). The reunion both remedies his emotional (and sexual) starvation and provides, literally and figuratively, sustenance to the emaciated mother and child. Miraculously, AIDS only makes a brief and deceptive appearance, for Joanitta's continued devotion to her lost lover has prevented her from engaging in other sexual relations. In its opportune association with promiscuity, the risk of infection can thus be mythologized as the result of repeated exposure to the virus, while moral hygiene, here disguised as true love, develops into an effective barrier against sexually transmitted diseases.

As the young couple celebrates the power of forgiveness and reconciliation, and advances "the progress of the human race" through the responsible care of their child (38), there remains, however, the disturbing presence of "the other woman." Though supportive of progressive gender relations, the story (and the novel) is uncertain of how to treat Jackson's wife Adele, declaring her "a victim of circumstances" (39) rather than the victim of a physically abusive husband and of an unforgiving society that publicly shames her for an unconsummated marriage. Conveniently, Adele acquiesces to stigma and abuse, "never [revealing] to anybody the suffering she was going through" (34), and willingly surrenders her marital rights to Jackson's true love. Simultaneously overdetermined and undetermined, romance here refuses to be domesticated on the novel's desired terms. Jackson and Joanitta's tale recycles formulaic expectations, from affection and hardship to

despair and triumph, yet it cannot erase the image of an arrogant and abusive protagonist; it applauds the virtue of true love, only to deny the rights and dignity of the lawfully wedded wife; it considers AIDS prevention but has to truncate the novel's otherwise complex discourse until faithfulness become the only viable option. Though appetite and greed provide the metaphorical terms in which sexual desire can be rendered "natural" and, hence, legitimate, this figurative language fails to obscure the social interventions needed to establish standards of reasonable consumption.

To demonstrate these standards of acceptable behavior, the novel exploits the didactic potential of oral tales and translates the trope of the ogre into the contemporary experience of sexual violence. These modernized ogre tales are already featured in the novel's opening chapter, where they frequently interrupt the conversation between the homodiegetic narrator and her friends who contemplate the semantics of appetite and greed in their metaphorical relevance for Ugandan society. Disturbing cases of sexual violence, horrifying scenes of child and marital rape, parade a phalanx of perpetrators who change from trusted friend or loving father into the archetypical beast, stripped of all humanity and insensitive even to the cries of their victims (9). In their desire to satisfy their "voracious sexual appetite" (7), they transform from complete gentleman into sexual predator, thus reenacting one of the pivotal conventions of the ogre tale where the façade of respectability barely manages to mask the deprivation that lies beneath. The trope of the ogre not only renders audible the systematic abuse of society's most vulnerable citizens but also voices the fundamental fear that even intimate relations of trust are susceptible to exploitation. When one of the predators taunts his victim for her "backward ideas of romantic love, marriage and faithfulness" (6), the rhetorical violation of the novel's central concerns is added to the physical and emotional violence perpetrated against the child.

As popular discourse is mobilized to ridicule the perpetrator's excessive taste for patriarchal power, the ogre tales offer a critique of "the individual male's ability to demonstrate virility at the expense of women and to obtain its validation from the subjugated woman herself."[80] But once the ogre turns into "the other of culture," his animality does not just contribute to the visibility of the larger social crisis; instead, it reestablishes the very boundaries between culture and disaster through the metaphorical opposition of appetite and greed. The ogre's potential as "an untimely intervention" into that which a society prefers to silence is limited by its co-option into a landscape of horror that both fascinates and repulses.[81] It is, of course, another

story—the love triangle of Kezia, Juliana, and Petero—that, in its conflation of individual and institutional violence, illustrates how easily the aesthetics of vulgarity become complicit with the practices of power. Deserted by her husband, poor Kezia is considered "a curse to the community" (50). Yet when she attempts to satisfy "her womanly sexual needs" (47) with Juliana's husband Petero, a narrative of disaster and graphic violence ensues. Though the affair becomes "public knowledge" (47), Juliana receives little sympathy from a community that interprets his infidelity as her failure to satisfy him. While she remains trapped "in [a] rocky marriage" (50), since her parents can ill afford to return the inflated bride-price they demanded for their daughter, Petero's behavior is publicly sanctioned in terms of rights and prosperity (48). Juliana, now reduced to an undesired and underused commodity, plots her revenge against the rival. Soon, the brutal acts of rape and mutilation she perpetrates against Kezia will be reenacted by state authorities eager to punish "unruly" women who express their social and emotional discontent in the language of violence. The adulterer does not escape unharmed, either. Emasculated by his jealous lover, he is publicly shamed when his severed private parts are paraded around town before falling victim to the greedy mouth of a straying dog. But while the loss of his manhood is marked in the deft strokes of caricature, the steady repetition of women's bodies brutalized and penetrated, beaten and humiliated, and subjected to all kinds of sadistic torture, is trapped in a landscape of horror from which the text finds it impossible to escape.[82]

As the aggression of jealous women is conflated with the brutality against assertive women, the narrative fails to distinguish between Juliana's violence against her rival and state-sponsored and community-based violence against both women, between the disenfranchisement of the abandoned wife and the culturally sanctioned opportunities of the husband. In the end, all players find themselves morally punished for their excessive, and now permanently denied, desires; hence, for Kezia and Julia, there is little left to do than jointly "nurse their no-man" (54). Conveniently forgetting women's marginalized social position (and its mission of female empowerment), the novel instead links emancipation to the performance of a desirable normativity, thus extending its protective reach only toward characters like Joanitta, whose vulnerability is graced with the desired nobility. The logic of conviviality indeed asserts itself when the patriarchal ideology that sanctions masculinity as excessive consumption is replaced by the normativity of moderate consumption. The aesthetics of vulgarity here confront obscene displays of power only to consolidate

their own regime of domination.[83] Apparently, not all victims are created equal as the borders between culture and disaster are once again policed by the expectation of reasonable appetite.

At a time of crisis and uncertainty, when the circulation of knowledge and bodies challenges the imagination of individual cultural actors, a sexually transmitted, and still terminal, disease projects the metaphors of vulnerability and fear that poignantly demonstrate the precarious situation of the postcolonial nation. Where parents, school, and nation fail, the *Senga* cautiously advances to break the consensual silence on social taboos and protect the country's most vulnerable (and most productive) citizens. In the past, she provided intimate council in the culture-specific context of initiation rites. Now she has transformed into the public advisor who expertly combines moral, social, and medical discourses with the cultural currency of oral tales. Through the technology of writing, a local (and gendered) institution develops into a national and mobile presence, allowing concerned parents to simultaneously acknowledge and delegate their responsibilities as educators. The many examples of oral tales, the frequent references to letters, and the typographical inclusion of newspaper articles prominently position writing and reading throughout the novel. These activities anticipate the formation of an ideal speech community that extends beyond the family while adopting its role of mentor and guardian. Education now facilitates the relations of trust and mutual support that were previously the domain of kinship. The text itself turns into a manual for the transition into adulthood and into an ideologically cohesive community committed to reasonable expressions of sexuality. The novel thus plays an instrumental role in the production of local subjects and bodies, even if "the work of the imagination through which local subjectivity is produced and nurtured is a bewildering palimpsest of highly local and highly translocal considerations."[84] The intervention of the *Senga* provides a map in a time of profound social crisis when cultural practices develop into an arena for conscious choice. In Keshubi's novel, however, the choices are limited by a metaphorical template that enables the moral production of sexual restraint.

Indeed, propriety advances into the single most important property ensuring future survival. Yet even as the novel supplements the culture of Englishness with the memorable appeal to women's sexual rights, it allows for only a passing glance at the patriarchal practices commodifying women's bodies and labor; instead, it prefers to limit itself to the author's explicitly stated concern with men's "need to satisfy [their] sexual urges" (iii). The politics of such a project are barely hidden

behind the proliferating imagination of a text equally invested in the authority of science and the Bible, in the comforts of romance, and the cautionary tales of ogres. The pleasures of narrative prove to be the novel's greatest asset while also providing a considerable liability. The stories of romance and ogres express the obscenity of sexual violence, even as they are co-opted into its representational vocabulary; they contribute to the visibility of cultural taboos while reestablishing new normative expectations; and they continue to insist on the viability of these standards, even when new interpretative meanings defy the possibility of ideological consensus. Where *Silent Patience* succeeds in constructing a closely sealed world of self-renunciation, *To a Young Woman* fails to restrain its unruly ogres. It is this very failure, however, that accounts for the reader's pleasurable consumption of a novel unable to domesticate its narrative hybridity.

Property and Propriety in the Time of AIDS

The educated voice of the *Senga* and the explanatory power of *chira* demonstrate the extent to which culture-specific institutions and metaphors have acquired the national currency to address a global disease. Though critical of ethnic prejudice and its exclusionary politics, the novels do not deny the continued validity of local cultural practices for as long as these scripts are part of a larger social landscape.[85] Such hybridity inevitably challenges the social imagination with its offer of new interpretative frameworks and alternative social networks. But once local subjectivity is sustained through a complex arrangement of local and translocal influences, the pleasure of choice also harbors the fear of "improper mixing." Best exemplified in the disquieting notion of *chira*, the danger of uncontrollable (and undesirable) social change is also apparent in the self-interested greed and swiftly moving underground trains, in the illicit appropriations and movements, that trouble the fiction of Hope Keshubi and Carolyne Adalla.

Cultural heteroglossia certainly invites social transgression. At times, these transgressive acts deliberately violate behavioral taboos to render audible the presence of disaster and thus contribute toward the reimagination of life and death, of property and propriety, and of collective obligations and individual responsibilities. As the novels advertise new disciplinary regimes in order to limit the unrestrained consumption of bodies and commodities, they intend to nurse back to health a steadily deteriorating social body. In their emphasis on moral and medical hygiene, these disciplinary interventions appear to reflect the all-too-familiar production of modern sexuality. But the presence

of local institutions and metaphors, the concern with deceptive narratives of romance and religion, and the advocacy for women's authority and sexual pleasure locate the fictional visions of moral restraint at often surprising cultural intersections.

While AIDS delivers a powerful trope for postcolonial crisis, the moment of catastrophe testifies not only to the social and sexual vulnerability of women but also to their potential empowerment. Representations of a global pandemic here are visibly engaged with the celebratory and dystopian narratives of globalization and modernity. Though the texts lament the unwillingness of local and national communities to provide political agency and economic affluence to all of its citizens, they have not abandoned hope in the possibility of scientific and democratic progress or of reasonable gender relations and enlightened knowledge. The nation might have failed in its ability to responsibly manage life and death, but literate communities promise a different path to emancipation. More than just a recycled version of the culture of Englishness, knowledge and literacy acquire distinctly gendered connotations. Catherine struggles to reclaim the disenfranchised female body from the patriarchal mapping of pathological difference. *To a Young Woman* shares this vision of knowledge as a girl's road to empowerment, while *Chira* cautions that only the constant revision of knowledge will allow for the protagonist's ethical integrity. No longer tied to familiar configurations of kinship, these literate communities migrate between urban Christian congregations and transnational gender networks whose memories are profoundly local even as they advocate for national transformation. Although this constantly moving landscape still relies on the representation of knowledge in letters only an articulate subject is able to employ, it does not ignore the rich diversity and democratic accessibility of oral-popular expressions that steadily increase the opportunities for communication.

Celebration and crisis, postcolonial hybridity and the return to moral mastery and economic progress, suggest the narrative of globalization as "simultaneously modern (reasonable, universal, totalized) and differentiated (driven by its own set of rationalities)."[86] Shaped by the culture of Englishness and the global postmodern, by the cultural exchanges of the past and of the present, and articulated through local institutions and metaphors, the novels envision an alternative modernity whose unpredictable rites of passage and diverse social networks have resulted in significant shifts in subjectivity and culture.[87] *Chira* moderates economic success with the Christian commitment to a higher religious and moral authority, while *Confessions* translates

the power of the church into the secular arena of the psychoanalyzed self, unmaking and remaking itself in the context of social systems and beliefs. The construction of subjectivity in *To a Young Woman*, however, is phrased in more ambiguous terms that attempt to reconcile psychological introspection with God's plan for human procreation (62).

When faced with a global health crisis, ideologies of property and propriety are likely to change. Like historically earlier diseases such as tuberculosis and cancer, the persistent presence of AIDS evolves into a poignant commentary on capitalist production and consumption.[88] If the novels in Chapter 2 appreciate the economic opportunities afforded to the educated protagonist, then the scenario changes in the age of advanced capitalism. Undisciplined consumption now leads to abnormal and uncontrolled growth, and ultimately violates the rights of vulnerable populations (women, children, the poor) since it invites the transgressive desire for the property and bodies of others. As the country's most productive citizens begin to die, AIDS signals yet another future catastrophe in the form of social and economic entropy. In its diverse metaphorical manifestations, illness operates within a complex logic that explains what seems to defy reason and thus protects against the obscenity of a sudden and painful death. But the moment of explanation also allows for the intrusion of myth and the assignment of blame, so that the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behavior are once again successfully policed. Those who are perceived as engaging in questionable conduct—Gabriel and Catherine, Kezia and Julia—will be threatened with death, disease, and mutilation. Their bodies bear the visible signs of moral transgression, and their compromised health and integrity can no longer compete with the flawless honor of past heroines like Akoko, Nkwanzi, and Stella (Chapter 2). Only in the case of parents who fail in their role as responsible educators does the narrative of personal culpability and moral weakness acquire more complex nuances. The failure of irresponsible parents, like the failure of self-interested political leaders, denies the right to life to unsuspecting children and unprotected citizens.

To restore the healthy equilibrium of individual and social bodies, the novels argue for a renewed emphasis on proper standards of consumption. More than just an appeal for discipline, such propriety desires the ethical reimagination of community. When the transgression of cultural and narrative scripts articulates a society's most profound fears of death and disease, these "untimely interventions" into the existing social fabric also advocate for a community of honest speakers and empathetic listeners. As that which "is traumatic to

the individual witness comes to haunt the social,"[89] the passing on of responsibility between Gabriel and Helen, between Catherine and Marilyn, and between the concerned mothers in *To a Young Woman* ideally establishes a community of compassionate speakers. Citizenship in this democratic community is both profoundly local and decidedly global, shaped by the local spaces of a Nairobi neighborhood (*Chira*), a Buganda institution (*Woman*), and shared memories of adolescence (*Confessions*), as well as the globally circulating knowledges of biomedicine and Christianity, transnational feminism and migratory labor. Though the production of local subjects in the context of global disease and capitalism undoubtedly challenges the authority of the nation-state, its ability to educate or abuse vulnerable citizens demonstrates the nation's continued relevance as a symbolic power *and* as a political structure. "Defeated at war" (*Confessions*), troubled by poverty and civil unrest (*Woman*), and in desperate need of new freedom fighters (*Chira*), the nation is part of a larger project that desires to transform the space of death into the site of radical renewal and reproduction. As responsible cultural actors are mobilized to assist in the restoration of public health, the search for an ideal speech community continues.

Although the narratives envision the empowerment of vulnerable social groups, in their struggle for rhetorical ownership of the disease, they are often tempted to reestablish the boundaries of culture and disaster. Their limited compassion for hedonistic consumers demonstrates the politics of imagined communities whose desire for change is carefully paired with the production of moral restraint. *Chira* and *To a Young Woman* partly obscure the narrative interventions needed to support each novel's ideological preferences; *Confessions*, on the other hand, is more transparent in its exposure of the cultural production of female bodies and its deliberate manipulation of an ideal addressee. Ultimately, none of the novels is completely successful in consolidating a more orthodox normative framework. The tension between cultural migrants and transcendental subjects (*Chira*), and the generic hybridity of confessionals and "talking textbooks" contribute toward a narrative heteroglossia that not only speaks to the presence of catastrophe but also reveals the ideological interventions through which a society intends to limit the greedy consumption of unprotected bodies.

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In Lieu of a Conclusion

"The State of Tides" and the Ethics of Responsibility

The search for a supportive social community and for the normative content of modernity emerge as central concerns in the narratives of Kenyan and Ugandan women writers discussed in this study. These literary interests displace the privileged role of the Western individual in the discourses of modernity and foreground the ethical questions often excluded from the purview of the modern. In their effort to sustain a cohesive and productive community, the novels of Ogola, Kaberuka, and Okurut celebrate the figure of the widow as an agent for social change *and* for continuity. Her clear conscience maps the path to individual and national redemption, and compels female characters to shoulder the burden of communal obligations. The imperative of normative compliance tends to be paired with a largely uncritical reading of modern institutions, the integrity of which is never in doubt. Once the institutions of church and school are disassociated from their immediate colonial past, the values of modernity (discipline, propriety, and productivity) are successfully traced throughout East African history. When these epic modernities engage in their own acts of historical amnesia, it becomes obvious that even the alternatively modern will, at times, rehearse the failures of colonial modernity.

By contrast, the narratives of Owuor, Kyomuhendo, and Macgoye advance a more explicit critique of modern institutions and ideologies. In their examination of the failure of nationalist modernities, they prove especially critical of colonial fictions of race and ethnicity and the postcolonial privilege accorded to "indigenous" populations. When resources become scarce and political relations shift toward new forms of privatized sovereignty and violence, these texts wonder

about responsible ways of living with the other. Their quest for "other ways to live" suggests relationships with ethnic and racial "strangers" different from those defined by the privileges of autochthony, and thus implies resistance to the manipulative interventions of local and national authorities. Yet such civil disobedience is easily curtailed by the need to protect one's own life and the desire for a national home. The question of how to supplement the privilege of citizenship with the politics of hospitality translates the search for alternative modernities into wider social and geographical arenas.[1]

The novels of Macgoye, Adalla, and Keshubi expand this concern even further when they examine the responsible management of life and death in the context of a global economy and a deadly pandemic. As they reflect on the production of modern sexual bodies through local metaphors (*chira*) and institutions (*senga*), they struggle with the ideological framing of property and propriety. Their advocacy for the "respectful" consumption of sexual bodies (and material commodities) proposes an appealing vision of social change, especially in its support for a woman's sexual desire and access to knowledge. But these visions of progress often remain precariously suspended between greater tolerance for marginalized populations and the defensive retreat into moral discipline.

Yvonne Owuor's short story "The State of Tides" further broadens the scope of these discussions when involving the postimperial subject in the negotiation of cross-cultural encounters. Unlike other studies of the alternatively modern, the text chooses not to dwell on the fraudulent promises of the Enlightenment by reclaiming the humanity of the black subject from the orthodoxy of colonial modernity or by challenging its hegemonic cultural and epistemological practices through localized, critical modernities. Instead, the short story revisits imperial legacies (and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) through the encounter of one of Marlow's itinerant descendants with a nameless black woman determined to escape the civil war in her African home country.[2] In their search for an alternative to the violence of colonial modernity and the failure of postcolonial nationalism, both the postcolonial and the postimperial subject have to traverse familiar historical (and narrative) ground to find a responsible way of being with the other.

The physical location for their encounter is just as crucial in the postcolonial present as it was in the colonial past. In the case of Owuor's short story, the particulars of space acquire further significance since the narrative originated with the Coast Project (2002–5), a visual arts initiative commissioned by the Essex County Council to promote installation and performance art on the Essex coast.[3] Not

until the end of the narrative do the two protagonists meet in this low-lying delta area between the River Crouch and the mouth of the Thames estuary, which once served as the locale for Marlow's tale of colonial greed. The setting of their encounter by the name of "Foulness Island" is tightly woven into a history of violence. In part open for residential settlement, the island has been owned by the British Ministry of Defence since the early 1900s; to this day, Foulness Island continues to be used as a nuclear and ballistics testing site. Dressed in the semantics of "foulness," the strictly guarded island evokes the rotten foundations of a civilization that can only sustain its appealing facade by concealing the violence that secures its privilege:

> Foulness Island nestles in the sleight-of-hand myths adorning its fringes and bowels; playful in its dark-lightnesses. As subtle as the devil, Foulness Island broods. Its shape-changing ability convinces that it does not exist and if it did exist, it would be benign. Created in the image and likeness of water, the island is hollow in time. A red pillar box once stood half a mile from where the Essex estuary's marshes ended. A notice on the box announced that arrangements for His Majesty's mail were governed by the state of the tides. (1)

The subject of contradictory myths and stories, Foulness Island evokes imperial relations (his majesty's mail), narratives, and tropes. "Hollow in time," "arcane," and "inscrutable," the landscape transforms into a being of undefined shape and intentions, not unlike Conrad's far-less-ambiguous troping of the Congo as a prehistoric and impenetrable locale for European travelers. By contrast, Foulness Island is a site not only of potential madness and displacement but also of shelter and belonging for travelers from different destinations. It is here that Marlow—now more suitably known by his wandering profession and restless mind as Marlow Seaman—has found a final burial place, while offshore, the famous *Nellie* lies half-submerged with countless other shipwrecks. But the island is not only littered with the remnants of past colonial aggression. A constant rhythm of minor explosions draws the reader's attention to its current use as a weapons' testing facility; and even if the Ministry of Defence is only flying "a limp red flag" (2) over the site these days, the island remains profoundly marked by military interests. The commanding presence of the Ministry of Defence on Foulness Island, its surveillance of the local population and hostility toward undesirable intruders, consolidates the institutions of modernity in a single geographical site: as a representative of the state, the Ministry controls the means of

violence. Such a monopoly facilitates the industrialization of war and the profitable export of weapons, and therefore unites the defining features of the modern nation-state—capitalism and industrialism, military power and surveillance—in the shapeshifting marshes of the Thames estuary. Something, however, seems to be leaking through these tightly sealed borders and perfectly operating institutions; we are, after all, in "The State of Tides." Shrouded in fog and secret activities, the island and its surrounding waterways defy conclusive attempts at cartographic mapping through the "daily buried" traces of the coming and going tides. For a local population engaged in illegal smuggling, such an amorphous space provides welcome shelter from the prying eyes of the law and from a codified normativity allowing for state-sponsored technologies of death while policing individual transgressions. The institutional landscape of modernity here not only undermines social relations of trust, but, in its support for militarized aggression, has an even more sinister impact on individual biographies and bodies.

Brooding yet benign, Foulness Island is still capable of extending a surprisingly tender welcome to the protagonist. From his place of birth in Australia, Joseph journeys across the oceans and wanders throughout the British Isles until, "[m]any kilometers to nowhere, Foulness Island found him" (8). Here the graves of his ancestors and, in particular, the one of the man called Marlow Seaman suggest a sense of belonging that repeatedly materializes in the memory of jangling metal, a sound that harbors "a knowing; not a voice" (8), but a knowing of what and of whom? In search of this elusive memory, Joseph Matthews Brown is surrounded by an atmosphere of not always unpleasant uncertainty: the shapeshifting island, the unpredictable pattern of the changing tides, the vaguely defined locations that enable his trade in "undeclared cargo" offer a fragmented landscape that resonates with his disjointed memories. An elliptical phrase—"Eaten by longing that is without name . . ." (3; ellipsis in original)—repeatedly punctuates the narrative, thus extending Joseph's disorientation to the reader, who is displaced along with the protagonist. With its repeated analeptic refractions and spatial detours, "The State of Tides" employs representational strategies similar to the modernist quest narratives of writers like Conrad and Greene. And thus, beneath the surface layer of a text built around Joseph's encounter with the black woman, Marlow's voice remains always audible, occasionally punctuated by Kurtz's most infamous words.

Joseph's quest for meaning inevitably involves a journey back in time to his and his family's beginnings. His single mother "had poured

defiant and refined dreams into her baby, dreams she could not dream for herself" (6). Praying for a boy, listening to classical music, she—the destitute war orphan—can envision social mobility only in terms of maleness and musical talent. But Joseph's early success as a musical prodigy is derailed by the discovery of Marlow's notes in an old oilskin bag his mother had brought from England. "Joseph's music [is] stilled, but not silenced" (6) once he begins to immerse himself in the incoherent memories of another man that speak of the legacy of fascism and colonialism, of the horror of organized, technologically sophisticated mass murder. The projected narrative of bourgeois progress turns into the disjointed experience of time and space, and, eventually, he will "slip into rootlessness" (6), displaced by a past he cannot decipher and might not want to remember. As the road to success is disrupted by his repeated return to Marlow's notes, the past can no longer operate as a site for a desirable genealogical and normative continuity. While the texts of Kaberuka, Okurut, and Ogola celebrate the historical modernity of successive generations, Joseph is absorbed into a history of violence that turns him into a fugitive from the very humanity whose premises he believed securely defined in his favor.

Yet music remains his constant companion: the classical music of Mozart and Mahler; the religious hymn of the Stabat Mother, the sorrowful mother; the rowdy ballads of the fishermen; and the popular tunes of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young. These sounds provide welcome comfort from the "mental knots" cluttering his head. His expertise even qualifies him for a 15-year career as sound producer for sophisticated concert shows on the Hebrides. Located in the Celtic fringe of a once mighty empire, one day, he draws the bitter conclusion that the spectacles he helps to stage are nothing but illusions designed to turn human longings into marketable commodities. Once he realizes that he is less a technical producer than a "spectacle-sorcerer, creator out of nothing" (7), he turns away from manufactured desires that mask commercial exploitation as the triumph of technological know-how. In a superbly ironic gesture, this insight comes to Joseph at the conclusion of the Global Soul and Memory Fest. As in the case of Conrad's faithless pilgrims, the pretense of philanthropic benevolence cannot hide the self-interested exploitation of other human beings for personal profit. The mythical words of the civilizing mission—cultural advancement through scientific rationality, superior technology, and sublime religiosity—resonate in the theater of deception staged for a domestic audience. As Horkheimer and Adorno predicted in their criticism of the Enlightenment, for as long as mastery over the unknown requires continual acts of self-sacrifice,

the offer of commercialized fun is intended to reconcile individuals to a society ruled by the dual imperatives of profit and conformity. A manipulative cultural industry encourages individuals to internalize dominant patterns of behavior until self-censorship guarantees the existence of a society in which human beings themselves have become expandable commodities. "Conspicuous consumption" is here no longer associated with the greedy appropriation of limited resources (Chapter 4) but with surrender to a political system that seduces a willing audience with the promise of instant gratification.

The music and the enchantment with sound provide a powerful rhythm for Joseph's story, but even more prominent are the words Marlow Seaman left behind in an oilskin bag. The bag—"his talisman bag" (3)—becomes Joseph's constant companion, holding a narrative he longs to decipher. "Maddeningly inscrutable" (4), the notes speak of longing, of horror, of her, of the woman who knows that to accept "a little evil and then a little more" can only lead to death and despair. At times, Marlow's italicized narrative visibly erupts through Joseph's reflections:

> [Joseph] had read the notes and though he had not understood them, he was beguiled. In his dreams, these words became high tunes of desiring that infused his sleep with the scent of flowers.
>
> He followed the words with his fingers; phrases strung, maddeningly inscrutable:
>
> —*Eaten by longing that is without name . . . living poured into profound trails of becoming nothing. She knows . . . Horror . . . we put up with a little evil and then a little more. She laughs.*
>
> Who was "She"?
>
> There were questions on water-streaked paper;
>
> —*What are values? Bound we are by shared sins; conspiracy of badness.* And a note; "*They hold onto a code by a string that breaks as quickly as it is woven.*" Followed by fifteen pages of frantic notes about a woman whose ornaments jingled: *Unbeknown to them, her gaze, raw and vicious is a curse. The jingle of metal on her feet, every step accuses. A beckoning. Doomed to meet in depths of our living. Beautiful. Beautiful this ugly truth. Evil truth beautiful. She's beautiful. She laughs. At me? . . . At all of us . . .* (4; ellipses in original)

Periodically resurfacing throughout Marlow's notes and Joseph's memories before finally materializing as an actual presence in the short story, the figure of the black woman is still associated with the metallic sound of jingling ornaments, calling to mind Conrad's "savage and superb," silent and defiant warrior woman troped in the racist

imagery of the imperial narrative. In this scene, though, the metal mutates from deliberately chosen ornament into forcefully imposed shackles. The memory of slavery is inscribed into an intertextual palimpsest that extends from Conrad's novel through Marlow Seaman's recollections into Joseph's contemporary journeys across the sea and his occupation as smuggler of "human cargo." This, then, is Marlow's haunting memory of the colonial encounter: the image of a black woman whose every step accuses, whose gaze is a curse because she knows—she knows not only of what has been done to her but of what the repeated participation in "a little evil and then a little more" will mean for the perpetrator. Elusive and defiant, her presence troubles the formation of the imperial subject, undermining the desire for autonomy and power without which the colonial project becomes impossible to sustain. Instead, for Marlow, and through him also for Joseph, a different knowledge emerges, the knowledge of one's responsibility toward other human beings and toward a past that spells "horror" in capital letters. Can the acknowledgment of such an ugly truth also be beautiful, liberating the perpetrators from the lies which, even as they render evil acceptable, drive them "mad from their own untruths"?[4]

Suddenly, another memory intrudes into Marlow Seaman's notes, another time and place, and still another memory of "the changing same," of organized, systematic violence against those marked as "racially different" and thus exempted from the moral obligations of the perpetrators.[5] The time is November 9, 1938, *Kristallnacht*, the night of broken glass when Nazi racism unleashed its controlled fury on Jewish synagogues and businesses, on a population rendered vulnerable by its loss of German citizenship and the effectiveness of anti-Semitic propaganda. In his disjointed notes, Marlow's travels in the Congo and in Nazi Germany result in the jarring juxtaposition of colonialism and fascism. While colonial ideology proclaimed cultural authority in the language of pseudoscience and emphasized the moral duty "to one's own," Nazi propaganda insisted on the biological superiority of the *volk*, whose "evolutionary achievements" demanded racial purity.[6] For Horkheimer and Adorno, violence and force result from a capitalist "system of order" that is premised on the exploitative binary of oppressor and oppressed. Anti-Semitism here not only functions as a state-approved outlet for the expression of racial superiority and the collective anger of a frustrated population but also pursues "a specific economic reason: the concealment of domination in production" (173). The responsibility for social inequities is displaced onto a Jewish population that, as a result of state-mandated

professional restrictions, often operated as highly visible intermediaries for capitalist economies. Imperial and fascist manipulations of "racial difference" thus not only facilitated the control of unruly subjects abroad but also served to channel the anxieties of domestic populations. As in the case of the Asian population in Amin's violent Uganda or the Tutsi in Rwanda, the rhetoric of race and indigeneity provides an opportune tool for transforming citizens into strangers (Chapter 2). The epistemological preferences and bureaucratic capabilities of the modern "gardening state" thus serve to eliminate "undesirable others" while exploiting the moral indifference and hidden fears of the majority.[7]

Fascism relocates the horror of darkness into the heart of Europe, and the simultaneous presence of the black woman in Marlow's African and European memories provides a disturbing illustration of the relationship between exported and domestic violence. For Marlow, the intimate encounter with organized, technologically sophisticated mass murder leads to increasing despair and the desperate plea for absolution. "This is not of me" (4)—the single phrase is obsessively repeated in Marlow's autobiographical account and bears witness to his desire to exorcise the memory of death and the knowledge of his own culpability. Marlow's notes leave Joseph with the disquieting legacy of imperial conquest and state-sponsored genocide, and betray the etiological myths equating Western modernity with the social production of moral responsibility. The short story suggests that the space of death, so prominently featured in postcolonial and diaspora discourses, also unsettles those designing and manipulating the machinery of death. Time stops and restarts with each renewed practice of racially motivated violence, so that the memory of colonial modernity produces only "broken histories that trouble the linear, progressivist narratives of nation-states and global modernization."[8] If the postcolonial location in the beyond introduces other cultural temporalities and identities into the imperial narrative of self and other, displacing such epistemological formations by repeating them in the present, then Joseph's iterative performance of colonial violence through his engagement with Marlow's notes and his own practice of human trafficking also gestures toward a possible disjuncture. When the return of the postimperial subject to the past neither denies nor glorifies the imperial project, can these discrepancies result in a conscious intervention so that "[t]he 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living"?[9] Quite literally written into the syncopated temporality of Western modernity, Joseph's biographical trajectory culminates in profound temporal and spatial displacement. Following

the discovery of Marlow's notes and the death of his mother, he slips into "rootlessness." His voluntary migrations from Australia to Britain and throughout the British Isles retrace the involuntary movements of his mother, who had been shipped to Australia as a suitable war orphan, presumably part of the country's immigration policy "to keep Australia white." He finds himself in a state of permanent transit, not unlike the "Tutsi prince" who, distraught by the rumors of his responsibility for genocidal violence, tries to seek refuge with his brothers-sovereign in Europe. This time, however, Europe cannot even provide shelter to her own transient people who carry the roots of displacement in the narratives of their ancestors.

These, then, are the narrative and historical templates through which Joseph encounters the black woman. Her continued namelessness and her introduction as "registered cargo" evoke a genealogy of black women bound together, literally and figuratively, by the practices and rhetoric of imperialism. And yet *this* black woman refuses to be absorbed into the imperial master narrative:

> This woman had one day walked away from death caused-death given. She had walked to the edge of the Atlantic. There, she had listened to the ocean's murmurings. Voices of endlessness and boundary-less-ness.
>
> She stood at the shore and saw what she had left behind.
>
> Shells, like those of snails. Once they had names, and they had walked. The bizarre thing had been a silence which had joined her when she had swung the AK 47 and shot the three men who had killed her father; the Captain. Her step-mother. Her sisters. The dog. The big brother who had returned from France only two weeks ago. That was before the coup d'état her father had helped plan had down-spiralled into national bedlam. (4–5)

Still standing near the water's edge, this black woman recycles the gestures and movements of Conrad's "superb and savage woman." Her introduction recalls the short story's epigraph, taken from one of the better known passages of *Heart of Darkness*: "She walked with measured steps . . . treading the earth . . . Her long shadow fell to the water's edge" (1; ellipses in original). Working through a series of deliberate omissions, the selective quote reduces Conrad's narrative to three fragments, silencing, but not erasing, imperial tropes for an emphasis on the woman's determined and purposeful walk, her shadow transported across the water to the imperial center. If Conrad's black woman had to retreat into the dehumanizing landscape of the imperial imagination, her postcolonial sister continues to walk

toward an open horizon, away from a culture of violence, which resonates in her father's words that weapons are legitimate tools "to eradicate vermin." These infamous words intended to justify the elimination of political opponents, together with her father's title (the captain) and his prominence among the postcolonial elite, translate biological fatherhood into metaphorical ancestry. Neocolonial dependencies materialize not only in the fact that "the big brother had just returned from France" (5) but also in the successful export and endless repetition of authoritarian forms of government. This is the legacy that the woman contemplates on her walk to the ocean: "Before she left the villa she wondered what to do next with her existence. She had thought of asking the question aloud but silence stopped her. So she listened to the silence instead. Before she thought to walk, she saw a problem in life. It was that words generated worlds where 'vermin-to-be-eradicated' existed" (5).

Her deliberate migration to Europe—or, rather, her flight from the violent African postcolony, which, like the woman herself, will remain unnamed—is thus inevitably a journey toward the technologies and discourses that generate worlds of violence. As daughter of the leader who initiated the latest coup d'état, she willingly participates in acts of violence and possesses the financial resources to physically remove herself from a place descending into chaos. Though the actions of her father suggest new forms of privatized sovereignty and violence, the dissolution of existing territorial and institutional frameworks is accompanied by the emergence of new roadblocks. Thus, the black woman finds her movements restricted, not by the confines of the refugee camp but by the immigration policy of the former empire, which has sealed its borders against the postcolonial invasion and thus effectively shifted from imperial expansion to national exclusion. As a consequence, the practice of human cargo persists, and those fleeing from violence and poverty provide yet another business opportunity for human traffickers like Joseph.

Through the disruptive intrusions of Marlow's notes, their postcolonial echo in the words of the black woman's father, and the physical movements of its main characters, "The State of Tides" addresses the impact of imperial conquest and global capitalism on the pervasive experience of displacement in modernity. Here, however, the outbound journey proves far less significant than the internal journey, metaphorically translating the experience of physical exile into the alienating experience of a violent and inauthentic humanity. In contrast to imperial travel narratives, which locate the quest for knowledge and for comprehending the self in the space of the other,

Owuor's short story emphasizes that the physical journey does not necessarily yield enlightenment. And neither does the narrative allow the diasporic subject to claim her privileged belonging to multiple cultural locations, including her homeland "as a place of attachment in a contrapuntal modernity."[10] Instead, insight into the meaning of human existence requires introspective reflection. This willingness to confront one's own responsibility for a history of violence suggests the possibility of a new space marked by distance (from such practices) *and* by proximity (to others human beings), a space, therefore, which potentially transcends the internal exile suffered as a result of violent acts. If modernist exile and postmodern hybridity privilege self-awareness through geographical and cultural migration, the short story insists on the necessity of dwelling—on a self-knowledge that resides in language and in history and that recuperates the moral agency of the individual who comprehends herself in relation to others.

Once she embarks on her journey, the black woman in Owuor's narrative seems to be remarkably uninterested in her final, or even in her next, destination, as if the physical locale and the routes through such geographical sites matter less than the roots of displacement she carries with her. Closely associated with the various registers of silence, she appears grounded less in the specifics of a physical place than in a rhetorical site. In Conrad's novel "[a] formidable silence [hangs] over the scene" (56) that frames the appearance of the Congolese woman; threatening in her inaccessibility to the male Western subject, she blends into a sexualized landscape both seductive and treacherous.[11] The silence in "The States of Tides" still revolves around a precarious binary that associates the white male subject with the need for sound, while the black female character engages with the language of silence—a silence, however, revalorized as the ability to listen to the horror within and to accept one's responsibility for the past and the present without surrendering to denial or despair. Different from the enforced silence of the disenfranchised or of those who have accepted the logic of sacrifice (Chapter 2), *this* silence attempts to restore a quintessentially human integrity through which it finally becomes possible to say, "This, too, is of me." And thus, the black woman had confronted the silence following the act of violence that secured her survival, listened to its implications, and understood its origin in "words [that] generated worlds where 'vermin-to-be-eradicated' existed" (5).[12] For Joseph, the encounter with her is inevitably a confrontation with his own responsibility for creating such words and worlds of violence.

It is an encounter through the history of imperialism in search for a language and a gaze holding the possibility of reciprocity:

> He put his hand into the anorak, withdrew the money. He stretched out his hand to her, nodded his head, telling her to take back the money. She looked at his hand and then into his eyes. Her eyes read him; gazed into him. He dropped the money, holding her look. The money fluttered to the deck. Outside the wind screeched. The woman turned her face, shut her eyes listening to the wind. Joseph, following her look, listened as she listened and finally heard the silence in between the notes the wind played. (13)

Heart of Darkness emphasizes the unreliability of sight while privileging the male voice, even if its eloquent and mesmerizing testimonial is prone to lies and deception. The short story reevaluates these visual and auditory metaphors by reclaiming the depth of silence and restoring the possibility of sight that might lead to mutual recognition. Joseph's return of her money enables the return of the gaze and suggests the possibility of "something else" beyond voyeuristic commodification. It is this negative activity of desiring something else that, in Bhabha's reading of Fanon, establishes a boundary "where 'presencing' begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world—the unhomeliness—that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations. The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions."[13] In the public encounter between Joseph and the black woman, the unhomeliness of their respective domestic spaces and biographies is turned outward. The presence of the other translates the personal trauma into the wider (and intersubjective) context of historical existence and displaces the ideological imperatives on which such existence is predicated through their performative reenactment in everyday life.

The presence of the black woman forces the disembedded institutions of modernity to reconfigure in the specifics of local time and space, and thus requires a response, if not a commitment, from Joseph. While the imperial encounter only allowed for hostile gestures between colonizer and colonized, and the interaction between strangers in modern societies stops at the passing glance that ensures the other as an agent bearing no ill will, the black woman's gaze and Joseph's attempt to hold her look signal a transition to a more intimate interaction fraught with adverse possibilities for each participant.[14] Their moment of consensual silence signals a departure from

the conventional trajectory of social encounters, "a rhetoric of haunting" (Chambers) that opens new space in which the violent narratives of the past are still audible.[15] The acknowledgment of such unspeakable acts requires a gesture of mutual trust without which the desire for something else remains an appeal for blanket amnesty. Yet while this "something else" is still struggling with the history of hegemonic modernity, it is also inflected by the new practices of globalization.

These perhaps not-so-new practices of globalization are reflected in Joseph's infatuation with the texture and flavor of coffee, a further commodity extracted from the former colonies for the benefit of the West. En route to England, faced with the ship's captain and his pathological need for perfect coffee, Joseph had been forced "[to] rapidly decipher the language of coffee, first, to preserve his life. [But soon], the enigma of coffee saturated his desires" (6). He had longed for a precise language in which to describe the taste of coffee and the sensual experience of its consumption. On one occasion, he even celebrates the mystique of coffee with a song applauding the beauty of the Bahia girl, though such playful advertisement can only proceed through the commodification of black women.[16] The multisensory language of the short story—the scent of flowers, the taste of coffee, the sound of music and jangling ornaments—thus resonates with the global circulation of bodies and commodities and their racial and sexual coding throughout history. When Joseph offers a cup of coffee to the black woman, the reader has to wonder how this simple gesture implicates the global postmodern, the hierarchically organized landscape in which new forms of economic and cultural power interact.[17] To what extent does the language of coffee, especially when written on the bodies of black women, suggest the economic and political inequities of a new global order? Is difference, yet again, only permissible if commodified and made available as a source of pleasure and entertainment? Has capital successfully absorbed those differences that potentially undermine its hegemonic positioning? And how do these newer forms of global interaction relate to older models that have become increasingly defensive in their return to national identities? Silence resonates not only with the atrocities of the past but also with the inequities of the present. And, thus, Owuor's narrative extends the critique of postcolonial consumption (Chapter 4) to the global formation of capital and the commodification of labor. Since personal relations are intertwined with these abstract economic systems, "every cup of coffee contains within it the whole history of Western imperialism."[18] It is only appropriate that the protagonists of the short story return to the Thames estuary where the weapons

destined for global export are tested for maximum effectiveness. In a global economy, place still matters, even if its constitution in terms of distant social influences affirms its phantasmagoric quality.[19]

Through its close engagement with one of the most widely circulated texts of colonial modernity and modernist dystopia, Owuor's short story examines the possibility for human interaction beyond imperial exploitation and globalized commodification. In its examination of these historical legacies, the short story insists on the instrumental role of the other in the formation of Western subjectivity, nation, and history, and thus contradicts the Manichean maneuver that constituted the colonizer in paradigmatic opposition to the colonized by proclaiming, "I am NOT what you are!"[20] The alternative to an identity structured through acts of violent exclusion lies in the ethical repositioning toward the past, allowing for the acknowledgment of the other as part of the self, for a subjectivity whose moral agency is intersubjectively negotiated. It is an alternative that recalls Habermas's attempt to reclaim modernity by replacing the paradigm of the knowledge of objects with the paradigm of mutual understanding between subjects capable of speech and action.[21] If Habermas failed to consider the history of violence that renders the possibility of an ideal speech situation nearly impossible, then the consensual language of silence might open the space in which to articulate the normative content of modernity on the basis of mutual needs, a space in which the responsibility to act can be converted into practice. Though appealing, such a vision has to negotiate the rather treacherous grounds on which the authority of Western culture and subjectivity can be rejected, and still engage with a humanist ethos that reaffirms the historical and moral agency of the modern subject.[22] Owuor's notion of a utopian space rooted in a common humanity and routed through specific places and dates insists on the imperative of moral accountability and, in its understandable yearning for forgiveness and reconciliation, claims the possibility of "reasoned insight" into the consequences of colonial and postcolonial modernities.

As rationality pairs with humanist commitment, the short story hesitantly articulates an alternative *within* rather than *to* modernity. Its ethical obligation toward the other echoes Mbembe's and Posel's notion of a historically contingent and culturally sensitive humanism that transcends the politics of denial and essentialized difference for the negotiation of rights and responsibilities. In relation to post-apartheid South Africa, they argue that such a critical humanism has to address the obligations of the democratic state and its citizens to each other as well as to the strangers traversing its territory in order

to move beyond established patterns of denial, resentment, and victimhood (284). The discussion of rights and responsibilities, and the concern with human dignity and duties, is central to the narratives of East African women writers, even as the texts remain uncertain of what social interventions are necessary to achieve an opportune normative landscape, and even as they continue to struggle with the difference embodied in hedonistic consumers, in ethnic and racial strangers, and in the terminally ill. Promise remains closely associated with fraud, and thus the emancipation of female characters slides into the logic of sacrifice, the privilege of citizenship disenfranchises less fortunate populations, and the promise of consumption is disabled by the threat of a deadly pandemic. Always ambiguous, these literary scenarios encourage the reader to contemplate the extent to which the alternatively modern is also critical of modernity or whether, at times, alternative modernities are tempted to rehearse the epistemological and institutional pitfalls of colonial modernity. But the narratives prove especially challenging when they propose radical interventions into the discourses and practices of modernity, when they argue for the structural reform of modern institutions (*The Invisible Weevil*), when they revitalize local metaphors (*Chira*) and institutions (*To a Young Woman*), when they critique ideologies of race and ethnicity, and, quite simply, when they advocate for a moment of consensual silence.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Yvonne Owuor received the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2003; Monica Arac de Nyeko received the same prize in 2007. Margaret Ogola and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye were awarded the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature in 1995 and 2006, respectively. Other FEMRITE and Kwani Trust members have been shortlisted for the Caine Prize for African Writing. For a complete list of literary awards received by FEMRITE members, see the organization's website (<http://www.femriteug.org/?view=7/>).
2. The recent collaborations between Kenyan and Ugandan writers, and especially the contributions of Ugandan writers to the activities of Kwani Trust, revive historically earlier models, which, in the 1960s and 1970s, united East African universities, publishers, and literary magazines as part of the East African Community (Gikandi, "Introduction" 15). Of course, Gikandi and Mwangi's encyclopedic survey of East African literature in English also emphasizes the regional character of Kenyan, Tanzanian, Ugandan, and, in this case, Somalian and Ethiopian, literatures. Given the concern of Ugandan and Kenyan women writers with historical events in Rwanda and the Congo, and especially the displacement of local populations as a result of civil war and genocide, the geographical focus of my study further expands into the Great Lakes region of East-Central Africa. As I will explain in greater detail elsewhere in this introduction, the literary journals of Kwani Trust and FEMRITE devote sustained attention to events in the Great Lakes region. A conference in October 2009 at the University of Witwatersrand on "Eastern African Literary and Intellectual Landscapes" also employed a comprehensive definition of the region when including papers on Somalia and Rwanda. As general introductions to Kenyan and Ugandan literature, see also Breitinger, Bukenya, "Introduction to Ugandan Literature," and Kurtz, *Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears*.
3. See my discussion of language use in *Kwani?* as well as the FEMRITE publication *Today You will Understand*, which includes testimonials in English, Acholi, and Langi.
4. Beyond the scope of the current study are also the English-language publications of Tanzanian women writers as well as the fictional and

nonfictional accounts of events in the Great Lakes region by other African women writers. The work of Elieshi Lema from Tanzania and Veronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* especially warrant further attention.

5. See Rutagonya.
6. As Strauhs explains in her study of new literary networks in Kenya and Uganda, the Dutch nongovernmental organization Hivos (Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation) "strives for the long-term improvement of the circumstances of poor and marginalized peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America and for the empowerment of women in particular" (11). According to her research, Hivos provided FEMRITE with significant funding (34,800 to 52,700 U.S. dollars) between 1996 and April 2007. See also her forthcoming dissertation in 2011.
7. The FEMRITE executive committee consists of a chairperson, treasurer, general secretary, and two additional committee members. A coordinator and an accounts officer are responsible for the organization's daily operations. During my fieldwork in Kampala in 2002, it was apparent that FEMRITE offices served as a support network for aspiring young writers such as Monica Arac de Nyeko, Jackie Batanda, Beverley Nambozo, Beatrice Lamwaka, Mildred Kiconco Barya, and Glaydah Namukasa. In conversations, they frequently emphasized that their professional development had benefited from a physical space to meet and the mentorship of experienced writers.
8. Ebila 162.
9. See, for example, Bukenya's response to Taban lo Liyong in the report on FEMRITE's Week of Literary Activities in 2001 (Bukenya, "Bukenya's Response to Taban").
10. *FEMRITE*, 3 Dec. 2009. <http://www.femriteug.org/?view=3>.
11. See works cited for a complete list of FEMRITE publications as well as some of the major works of Kenyan and Ugandan women writers.
12. In addition to *In Their Own Words*, edited by Violet Barungi, see also the interviews with Monica Arac de Nyeko (31 Jul. 2007) and Hilda Rutagonya (6 Mar. 2009) available at <http://www.ug.pulse.com/>.
13. Keshubi, "*New Era* is One Year Old" 5.
14. See Ebila. Some FEMRITE members (Winnie Munyarugerero, Margaret Ntakalimaze) are also active members of the women's organization Acfode (Action for Development).
15. See, for example, Kabira and Wasamba, eds.
16. See, for example, Kabira; Muthoni; Masinjila; Waita; Somjee.
17. Kiguli, "Femrite and the Woman Writer's Position in Uganda" 174; Ebila 166. For a more critical reading of Museveni's reason for promoting gender parity, see Tripp, *The Women's Movement in Uganda*.

18. Kiguli, "Femrite and the Woman Writer's Position in Uganda" 179; Kyomuhendo, "To be an African Woman Writer" 192. See also Mugo on the silencing of the African woman writer.
19. In addition to Ebila and Kiguli, "Femrite and the Woman Writer's Position in Uganda," see the organization's website.
20. The most recent initiatives, known as "Reading Tents," took place at primary schools in Kabale, Isingiro, Busia, and Mawokota. Furthermore, FEMRITE members visited secondary schools in the Western Uganda districts of Mbarara and Bushenyi in 2002 (*FEMRITE*, 3 Dec. 2009, <http://www.femriteug.org/?view=12>).
21. In addition to Ebila, see also FEMRITE's strategic plan for 2009 through 2013, which emphasizes that "[a]ll programmes are especially designed to meet the needs of women writers in Uganda to enable them make a substantial contribution to national development through their writings" (*FEMRITE*, 3 Dec. 2009 <http://www.femriteug.org/?view=3>).
22. *FEMRITE*, 3 Dec. 2009 <http://www.femriteug.org/?view=22>.
23. Tindyebwa, "Is FEMRITE a Literary Activist Organisation?" 4–5. See also FEMRITE's website: "FEMRITE continues to live up to its name and like a wildfire, is starting up a literary revolution in the country. With the support of the National Book Trust of Uganda, FEMRITE is using the culture of Reading Tents to instill the value of literature and reading, amongst children and students in various parts of the country" (*FEMRITE*, 2 Jan. 2010 <http://www.femriteug.org/?view=12>).
24. Kwani Trust, 22 Dec. 2009. <www.kwani.org/>.
25. See Tujane.
26. Billy Kahora, editor of *Kwani?* in an interview with Kristin Palitza. Kwani Trust 22, Dec. 2009 <http://www.kwani.org/main/category/inside-kwani/kwani-in-the-media/>.
27. Quoted in Njogu, "Introduction," *Cultural Production and Social Change in Kenya* 4.
28. Kahora, interview.
29. For an analysis of some of these features in *Kwani?* 1, see Ligaga.
30. In addition to Kahora's and Wainaina's editorials in *Kwani?* 1, 3, and 4, see also Njogu, "Introduction," *Culture, Performance and Identity* ix.
31. On the literary models that have influenced *Kwani?* see Ligaga.
32. *24 Nairobi*, 22 Dec. 2009 <http://www.24nairobi.com/>.
33. W. Mwangi, "Speaking in Images."
34. *Kiongozi* is Kiswahili for "leader." On the other Kenyan linguistic varieties, see Abdulaziz and Osinde.
35. See Kahora, "Editorial," *Kwani?* 5.1 (2008): 10.
36. Njogu, "Introduction," *Culture, Performance and Identity* ix.
37. Kahora, "Editorial," *Kwani?* 5.1 (2008): 12.
38. See Kantai.

39. The Concerned Kenyan Writers Group was established in January 2008 in response to the postelection violence. Their reports intended to balance Western media coverage of the events and were made available to the Waki Commission, which is investigating the violence.
40. Kahora, "Editorial," *Kwani?* 5.2 (2008): 9–10.
41. Wainaina, "Middle Ground" 16.
42. See Tujane's interview with Garland ("Storymoja") and Palitza's interview with Kahora (*Kwani?*).
43. Barungi, *Cassandra*; Wangusa; Kaberuka, *Silent Patience*; Kyomuhendo, *The First Daughter*; Ogot, *The Other Women*, *The Islands of Tears*, and *The Graduate*; Odaga, *Between the Years*, *Riana*, and *Endless Road*; Ngurukie, *Businessman's Wife* and *Tough Choices*; Ogola, *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo*; Gitau, *Beyond the Cultural Barrier*, *Together We'll Start a New Life*, *Three Instead of One*, *My Mother's Confession*, and *Painful Tears*; Mbaya.
44. Kahora, "Editorial," *Kwani?* 5.1 (2008): 12.
45. "Dear Kwani" 20.
46. Likimani, *Passbook Number F.47927*; Owuor, "Weight of Whispers"; Odaga, *Secrets*; Macgoye, *Coming to Birth*, *The Present Moment*, *Street Life*, *Homing In*, and *A Farm Called Kishinev*; Adalla; Ngurukie, *I Will be Your Substitute* and *Soldier's Wife*.
47. Kyomuhendo, *Secrets No More* and *Waiting*; Kiguli, *The African Saga*; Oryema-Lalobo; Barungi, ed., *Words from a Granary*; *Gifts of Harvest*, and *Farming Ashes*; *Today You Will Understand*.
48. Genga-Idowu, *Lady in Chains* and *My Heart on Trial*; Patel; Macgoye, *Chira*; Njau, *Ripples in the Pool* and *The Sacred Seed*; Odaga and Shiloli, eds., *Moving to the Centre* and *The Survivors*; Kabira, Karega, and Nzioki, eds., *Our Secret Lives* and *They've Destroyed the Temple*; Tagoe and Muthoni.
49. Okurut, *The Invisible Weevil* and *The Official Wife*; Keshubi, *To a Young Woman*; Baingana; Tindyebwa, *Recipe for Disaster*; Namukasa, *Voice of A Dream*; Barungi, ed., *Words from a Granary*; Barungi and Kiguli, eds..
50. Wainaina, "Middle Ground" 17; Kahora, interview.
51. Ogude.
52. On the emergence of gendered modernities within and across national borders, see also Felski 9.
53. Appiah 107; Gikandi, "Reason, Modernity and the African Crisis."
54. Deutsch, Probst, and Schmidt, eds.; Knauft; Meyer and Olver; Shaka; Tomaselli; Attwell; Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels. In addition, see Bhabha, "'Race,' Time and the Revision of Modernity"; Gilroy; Appiah; Hountondji; Gyekye; Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* and *The Idea of Africa*; Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, "African Literature and Modernity," and "Reason, Modernity and the African Crisis"; Wiredu.
55. Trouillot, "The Otherwise Modern."
56. Felski; Marshall.

57. See Attwell 165.
58. See Mbembe, "At the Edge of the World" 280.
59. Felski 21.

Chapter 1

1. On Baudelaire and the term *modernité*, see Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*. See also the references to Baudelaire in the work of Berman; Swingewood; Knauft; and Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project."
2. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*; Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*.
3. See Marshall.
4. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*. In Chapter 3, I will further discuss some of the problematic connotations of Mbembe's understanding of "the African postcolony."
5. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* and *Modernity and Self-Identity*.
6. Knauft 16.
7. Swingewood 177.
8. Hegel had already foreshadowed the dilemma of modern life: specialized knowledge allows for the separation of social spheres, but this differentiated social life alienates human beings from the totality of their experiences and hence prompts the search for a viable synthesis to transcend the diremption of modern life (see Dallmayr, "The Discourse of Modernity").
9. Felski 5.
10. Felski 7.
11. Felski 18.
12. See Stratton's reading of the Mother Africa Trope, which I discuss elsewhere in this chapter.
13. McClintock 132–80.
14. Marshall 9.
15. See, especially, his work *Tradition and Modernity*, which I discuss further in Chapter 2.
16. On the reinvention of modern subjects as productive citizens, see also Knauft 7.
17. Knauft 10.
18. See especially Meyer and Olver; Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness* and "Reason, Modernity and the African Crisis"; Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels; Attwell; Knauft.
19. See also Featherstone, *Undoing Culture* 12.
20. In addition to Swingewood 173, see Berman and Felski.
21. Passerin d'Entrèves 32.
22. Passerin d'Entrèves 30.
23. In its erosion of generic boundaries, its rejection of realist representation in favor of fable, prophecy, and the picturesque, and its emphasis on the consumer-oriented hero, postmodernism is associated with the fragmentation of contemporary experiences. Thus, postmodernism is

less interested in "[the] ordering principles of experience and judgement [than in] immediacy, impact, sensation and simultaneity" (Swingewood 165).

24. If modernism intends to protect the integrity of art from commercial interests, postmodernism—or at least the postmodern version associated with Western mass culture—"seeks a rapprochement with contemporary capitalism, eroding the boundaries between culture and society" (Swingewood 166).
25. Felski 23. Fielder's argument that the postmodern shift toward a popular culture without prescriptive standards "is always subversive, 'a threat to all hierarchies in so far as it is hostile to order and ordering in its own realm'" (quoted in Swingewood 163), and thus allows for a democratic culture decidedly different from the elitist aspiration of modernism, privileges a particular version of Western modernism and neglects other, culture-specific modernisms.
26. See Hall 26.
27. See Kaplan 21.
28. See Landes.
29. See Featherstone, *Undoing Culture* 126–57. On the temporalization and spatialization of identity and difference in the context of colonialism, see Fabian; McClintock; Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels; Brantlinger; Pieterse, *White on Black*; King, "The Times and Spaces of Modernity"; Trouillot, "The Otherwise Modern."
30. *The Idea of Africa* 168.
31. See also Mbembe on colonial discourse as "a discourse of incantation" designed "to throw light on things that haunt and obsess it, but about which, in truth, it knows absolutely nothing" (*On the Postcolony* 178).
32. See Hallen 3–12.
33. Hountondji, quoted in Gikandi, "Reason" 151.
34. *The Invention of Africa* 185.
35. *Idea* xi.
36. *Invention* 5.
37. Trouillot, "Anthropology and the Savage Slot."
38. Mudimbe, *Invention* 19.
39. Curtin 364. See also Lash and Friedman: "Anthropology is situated at the interface of Western modernity and its peripheries and has traditionally participated in a significant way in the establishment of Western selfhood via its otherness" (27).
40. *Invention* 20.
41. Knauft 23.
42. Mudimbe, *Invention* 45.
43. Mudimbe, *Idea* 107.
44. *Évolué* (literally, evolved) referred to those Africans who, under French colonial rule, had acquired the skills that defined them as "successful"

products of the French policy of assimilation and, therefore, as a local elite supportive of the colonizer.

45. Mudimbe, *Idea* 124.
46. *Invention* 22.
47. Eboussi-Boulage, quoted in Mudimbe, *Invention* 51.
48. Mudimbe, *Idea* 133.
49. Gikandi, "Reason."
50. See, among others, Shaw; Kanogo.
51. Mudimbe, *Invention* 60.
52. Mudimbe, *Idea* 144.
53. Consider, for example, European and African readings of "African tradition" in Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Europeans lauded Tutuola's novel as a return to premodern life, its integrity miraculously reclaimed from Western colonialism, which they longed to disavow. African readers, however, resisted what they perceived to be the reaffirmation of the "irrational" against their own notion of tradition as safely relegated "to the prehistory of the national communities they were imagining" (Gikandi, "Reason" 141).
54. On modernity as a geography of imagination and a geography of management, see Trouillot, "Anthropology and the Savage Slot."
55. Quoted in Ranger 253.
56. Ranger 215.
57. See Ranger 252.
58. See McClintock 352–89. See also Shaw's critique of the construction of gender in Kenyatta and Leakey (60–148).
59. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*. For a critique of African nationalist movement and their exclusionary gender rhetoric, see Shaw; Santilli; Presley; Kabira and Ngurukie, eds.
60. Scholars like Kagame argue that every (Bantu) language is defined by explicit statements about the nature of human society and the meaning of life, death, and the afterlife. Once these philosophical statements have been systematically identified for a specific language, Kagame advocates a comparative analysis of philosophical statements in other Bantu languages (Mudimbe, *Invention* 146). Appiah and others have criticized ethnophilosophy for failing to clarify the difference between a collectively articulated *Weltanschauung* and philosophy as a self-reflexive discipline.
61. *Invention* 167.
62. Gikandi, "Reason" 142.
63. Mudimbe, *Invention* 133.
64. *Invention* 102.
65. Bâ, quoted in Nfah-Abbenyi 13.
66. Stratton 55.
67. *Invention* 193.
68. *Invention* 195.
69. See also S. Friedman, "Definitional Excursions."

70. Appiah 141.
71. For Harvey (*The Condition of Postmodernity)*, globalization is a postmodern phenomenon; for Wallerstein ("The National and the Universal"), globalization is associated with modernity; and J. Friedman ("Global System, Globalization and the Parameters of Modernity") and Robertson ("Glocalization") locate globalization in the cultural dynamics predating the modern.
72. See Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality."
73. See, for example, Davies*;* Brah*;* Anzaldua.
74. See also Featherstone and Lash; Pieterse, "Globalization as Hybridization."
75. See, for example, Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels on the emergence of protocapitalist economic exchanges in the seventeenth century in Western and Eastern Africa ("Introduction" 4). On Kiswahili culture, see Sheriff.
76. Among those most significant for my discussion of the alternatively modern are Attwell; Meyer and Olver; Pratt.
77. Attwell 17.
78. Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*; see also Featherstone, *Undoing Culture*; King, "The Times and Spaces of Modernity" and "Introduction"; Meyer and Olver; Attwell.
79. Meyer and Olver 8.
80. S. Friedman, "Periodizing Modernism." I specifically employ the term "modernism" to refer to a range of artistic movements that contribute in diverse and, at times, contradictory ways to "the conditions and consciousness of modernity" (S. Friedman, "Definitional Excursions" 501).
81. "Singular" here implies the interconnectedness of diverse cultural formations and locations and not the diffusion of modernity from an original centre.
82. Gikandi, *Maps* 32.
83. See also Ogude.
84. "Reason" 142.
85. "The Times and Spaces of Modernity" 119; see also Gikandi, "Reason" 136.
86. Meyer and Olver 12.
87. Gikandi, "Reason" 143.
88. Attwell emphasizes the commonalities between Bhabha's work and his interests in "the re-inscription of modernity, transculturation, modernity's multiple nature under postcolonial conditions, the possibility of a 'fugitive' relation to modernity" (24).
89. Gilroy 45.
90. See, for example, Shaw 28–59.
91. Marshall 1; Felski 14.
92. Felski 10.
93. Gikandi, "Reason" 141.
94. Moore-Gilbert 122. Of course, as Horkheimer and Adorno emphasize, women and minorities in Western societies did not fare much better than

non-Western populations in their rhetorical construction as intellectually and morally suspect communities.

95. Bhabha, "'Race,' Time and the Revision of Modernity" 207.
96. Moore-Gilbert 124.

Chapter 2

1. Margaret Ogola, *The River and the Source* (1994); Jane Kaberuka, *Silent Patience* (1999); Mary Okurut, *The Invisible Weevil* (1998).
2. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* and *Modernity and Self-Identity*; Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*. In their discussion of modernity, both scholars are concerned with ideal-type processes and structures.
3. *Modernity* 5.
4. See Okpewho; Scheub; Belcher.
5. Though Giddens is primarily interested in the characteristics of modernity and their impact on identity, he also devotes several sections in *The Consequences of Modernity* to the relationship of modernity and globalization. He argues that globalization, a process of uneven socioeconomic and sociopolitical developments, is a consequence of modernity that "introduces new forms of world interdependence, in which . . . there are no 'others'" (175).
6. See, for example, Hallen on the works of African philosophers and their concern with rationality; see also his comments on the conflict between African academic philosophy and religious and anthropological studies which, especially prior to the 1970s, relied on the assumption that "[i]f Africans are asked to explain *why* they hold a certain belief or practice a certain form of behavior, their response will essentially be an appeal to tradition" (17; emphasis in the original).
7. "Reason, Modernity and the African Crisis" 136.
8. *Consequences* 39.
9. *Consequences* 138.
10. Giddens, *Modernity* 3.
11. *Modernity* 37.
12. *Modernity* 48.
13. See my discussion of transculturation and alternative modernities in Chapter 1. Gyekye insists that only the selective appropriation of foreign cultural practices will yield sustainable results, while forced assimilation will either be ineffective or lead to the neglect of African values, which results in economic decline and the collapse of modern institutions (232).
14. See Gyekye 217–97.
15. See also Ogola's 2002 sequel to the novel, *I Swear By Apollo*.
16. Many thanks to Evan Mwangi ("Gendering Genre") for sharing his perceptive study of the novel.

17. The spelling Kisuma (for the present-day Kisumu) is used in the first part of the novel to indicate a historically earlier orthographic version of the same location.
18. An extradiegietic narrator is external to the represented world of the characters and not involved in the story; by contrast, an intradiegetic narrator is a character in the story who tells an embedded narrative (see Rimmon-Kenan).
19. Okpehwo 131.
20. In the novel, *Chik* is translated as "the way of our people" (11), that is, the sum total of Luo cultural values.
21. Giddens, *Consequences* 114.
22. *Modernity* 81.
23. Okpewho 123.
24. See, for example, Shaw; Kanogo.
25. Attwell 33.
26. Mudimbe, *Invention* 60.
27. See also Simatei's discussion of the novel (157–59).
28. See also McClintock's discussion of Afrikaner nationalism and the importance of the family trope in imagining and performing the nation (358–79).
29. Giddens, *Consequences* 80.
30. *Consequences* 105.
31. See Okpewho; Scheub; Belcher.
32. Gyekye 77–114.
33. Dholuo: *mikai*, "first wife"; *moro*, "mother-in-law." Kiswahili: *mwalimu*, "teacher"; *daktari*, "medical doctor"; *uhuru*, "Independence"; *Turudi mashambani*, "Let's return to the rural areas" (reclaim our cultural heritage).
34. Gyekye 280.
35. Attwell 167.
36. Gyekye 289.
37. I will discuss the genre of the popular romance in Chapter 4. See also Bryce.
38. While a heterodiegetic narrator does not participate in the story, a homodiegetic narrator shares the spatio-temporal world of the characters. In this case, Stella is the homodiegetic narrator (first person narrator) and the central protagonist of the novel (see Rimmon-Kenan).
39. Since the literary sources for these quotes are not identified, the reader has to assume that this is either an editorial oversight or a comment on the citational authority of Shakespeare, whose works presumably do not require precise bibliographic references.
40. "If we all knew what the future held for us and yet had no power to change it, I have no doubt that we would be a miserable lot. Either we would become impatient for the future to dawn because of the good things promised, or we would be so worried and discouraged by what awaited us that the misery would be fatal. In either case, knowing is more

disadvantageous than not knowing. I personally thank our Creator that this power has eluded us. I have no regrets whatsoever of this inability, and after you've read this book, you'll understand why" (n. pag.).

41. "'More than the infant that is born tonight, I thank God for my humility'" (67); "The robbed that smiles steals something from the thief: He robs himself that spends a bootless grief" (53).
42. Gikandi, *Maps* 132; see also his reading of Mary Seacole's autobiography (119–43).
43. See Giddens, *Consequences* 112–150.
44. See Giddens's discussion of pure relationships (*Modernity* 6).
45. Kaberuka 181, 183, 202.
46. *Modernity* 35.
47. *Consequences* 114.
48. See Giddens, *Modernity* 15.
49. In the novel, a modernized version of the levirate is represented as a desirable (and pragmatic) basis for romantic relationships.
50. See Gikandi's summary of Hountondji's critique of traditionalism: If tradition derived its authority from transforming practices into norms, then "in trying to show the 'internal rationality of one's own traditions' wasn't one reproducing mythologies that concealed their irrationality behind the mask of norms and rules?" ("Reason" 152).
51. Note, for example, the livestock experiments with hybrid embryos on Stella's farm that require the "patient" application of scientific methods (119), or the science lessons at Agnes's boarding school which promote "experiments useful for study purpose but also for home use" (106).
52. Gikandi, *Maps* 136.
53. Attwell 63.
54. *Consequences* 133.
55. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. "Weevil."
56. See Nazareth's review of the novel.
57. See Chapter 4 for a more elaborate discussion of metaphorical representations of HIV/AIDS in the fiction of Marjorie Macgoye, Carolyne Adalla, and Hope Keshubi.
58. Kaaka means "grandmother" in several Ugandan languages, including Runyankole.
59. See Giddens, *Consequences* 102.
60. Okurut 87–88, 134–35, 155–56, 171–74.
61. Okurut 125, 145, 152, 205.
62. Okurut 45, 134, 205.
63. See Giddens, *Modernity* 23–27.
64. That seemingly antagonistic cultural practices can work together is demonstrated in Kaaka's success in producing the desired son as a result of her faithful practice of monogamy and her reliance on the authority of the traditional healer (15). Named for the arrival of

the locusts and the first book of the Bible, the child is literally inscribed into the cultural memory of two worlds (22).

65. Consider the meaning of Nkwanzi's postwedding honorific, *Bacureera*, a name that applauds her for being quiet and calm (4), or the cultural taboo that prohibits a woman from eating the tongue of an animal for fear that "she becomes proud and thinks that she should speak like a man" (38).
66. See Gyekye 230–32.
67. In addition to holding several senior government appointments in Museveni's administration, the author also served as presidential press secretary. See, "Okurut, Mary Karooro," Evan Mwangi, and Simon Gikandi, *The Columbia Guide to East African Literature in English since 1945* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007) 133–34.
68. I am indebted to Gikandi's discussion of the rhetorical employment of modern rationality in African nationalist discourses ("Reason").
69. "The he-goat smell on [Rex] grew stronger and [Nkwanzi] was reminded of Matayo, the herdsman who had defiled her years ago" (153).
70. On Blyden, see Mudimbe, *Invention* 98–134; on Crummel, see Appiah 3–27. See also my discussion of Blyden in Chapter 1.
71. In the novel, the title *s(s)enga* is used as a personal name. Among the Baganda of central Uganda, the *Senga* (*ssenga*) or "paternal aunt" has historically been responsible for instructing young girls in acceptable feminine behavior. See also Chapter 4 on the institution of the *senga*.
72. The quote also implicates the author's political allegiance: in 1997, shortly before the publication of *The Invisible Weevil*, Museveni published his autobiography entitled *Sowing the Mustard Seed*.
73. See also Attwell 63.
74. *Athomi* is Gikuyu for "the one who reads," though, as Gikandi explains in *Maps of Englishness*, "the word quickly came to connote a whole configuration of identities: those who could read were now defined as 'the civilized ones,' radically distinguished from their non-Westernized kinsmen and kinswomen as much by their new colonial identities as by their literacy and Christianity" (34).
75. Attwell 165.
76. That the vision of gender emancipation celebrated in these works might be a return to past hopes is evidenced by one of Grace Ogot's novels. *The Graduate*, a novel she published in 1980, features a female politician who aspires to remake the Kenyan nation in the image of moral integrity and political autonomy. How then, 20 years later, can three literary texts by East African women celebrate women's entry into national politics as an act of cultural innovation and a *new* sign of future progress?
77. Knauft 7.
78. Gikandi, *Maps* 195.

Chapter 3

1. Joseph Kabasele and African Jazz. In the short story, his name is spelled Kabasellé.
2. Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, *A Farm Called Kishinev* (2005); Yvonne Owuor, "Weight of Whispers" (2003); Goretti Kyomuhendo, *Waiting* (2007).
3. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust, Modernity and Ambivalence*, and "Modernity and Ambivalence"; Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, "At the Edge of the World," and "Faces of Freedom."
4. See Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers.*
5. *Holocaust* 27.
6. Quoted in Bauman, *Holocaust* 22.
7. *Holocaust* 98.
8. *Holocaust* 77.
9. *Holocaust* 191.
10. Kuper, quoted in Bauman, *Holocaust* 11.
11. Momoniat, "The Logic of Cruelty."
12. "Freedom" 296.
13. Bauman, *Holocaust* 173; Mbembe, *Postcolony* 192–93.
14. *Postcolony* 188.
15. Mbembe understands the colonial *commandement* as an authoritarian government whose sovereignty was based on the denial of the rights of colonial subjects (effectively turning them into disenfranchised "natives") and on the constant recourse to violence. His reading of the African postcolony as a political landscape shaped by authoritarian governments is shared by Zeleza, who maintains that "[a]t the beginning of 1990, all but five of Africa's 54 countries were dictatorships, either civilian or military" (1), though he also emphasizes the democratization of African societies in the mid- to late 1990s.
16. *Postcolony* 41.
17. *Postcolony* 46.
18. See Adeeko's critique of Mbembe in "Bound to Violence?"
19. *Postcolony* 76.
20. *Postcolony* 78.
21. *Postcolony* 86.
22. *Postcolony* 105. Elsewhere in this chapter, I will elaborate on Mbembe's notion of "the aesthetics of vulgarity." While Mbembe applauds the ability of postcolonial subjects to engage in the language of the grotesque and the obscene, in baroque practices "fundamentally ambiguous, fluid, and modifiable even when there are clear, written, and precise rules" (*Postcolony* 129), he also cautions that such practices fail to change relations of power. Sharing the same social and epistemological spaces, the dominated and the dominant are tied together by the logic of "conviviality." The internalization of authoritarian epistemologies leads "to the point where

postcolonial subjects reproduce [them] in all the minor circumstances of daily life" (128).

23. Owuor, "Whispers" 34.
24. See also Laqueur.
25. See Anderson on the significance of kinship and love in the rhetorical construction of the nation (197).
26. The narrative repeatedly fictionalizes the statements of historical figures. See, for example, the similarities between the novel's and Laqueur's descriptions of Nordau's famous notion of the *Nachtasyl* (128).
27. "The name Uganda still hung, inaccurately, in the air, and a young woman tore down the map" (Macgoye, *Kishinev* 16).
28. See Mbembe, "Edge" 261–64.
29. On the gendering of the national collective and the notion of "muscular masculinity" and "fertile femininity," see Weitz 33.
30. On the conflict between divine and human sovereignty, see Mbembe, *Postcolony* 212–34.
31. Bauman, *Holocaust* 37.
32. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 183.
33. For a discussion of human survival in enclosed spaces, see Ilieva's review of *A Farm Called Kishinev*. For a general introduction to the writings of Macgoye, see Kurtz, *Nyarloka's Gift*.
34. The novel only mentions in passing the "protracted war" between European colonizers and the Nandi (28), or the brutal punitive expedition by Col. Meinertzhagen, whose "perfidy towards [the Nandi leader] would soon make the Nandi suspicious of any foreigner" (29).
35. Bauman, *Holocaust* 238.
36. Bauman, *Holocaust* 142.
37. Mbembe, "Freedom" 294.
38. Anderson 149.
39. On assimilation as the state's war against ambivalence and as a unidirectional process aimed at maintaining the identity of the assimilating body, see Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* or the earlier article that summarizes his main arguments, "Modernity and Ambivalence."
40. Weitz 29.
41. On the metaphor of modern culture as a garden culture committed to the design of an opportune social order, see Bauman, *Holocaust* 70–71.
42. Bauman, *Holocaust* 191.
43. Weitz 44.
44. See Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* 294.
45. Bauman, *Holocaust* 173.
46. For a reading emphasizing the commonalities of Jewish and black history, see Mbembe, "Freedom." By contrast, Gilroy criticizes "the missing dialogue" between Jewish and black writers and in particular Bauman's notion of the stranger (213).
47. *Victims* 39.

48. For a persuasive reading of the dynamics of race and genocide in the short story, see Partington.
49. Throughout the narrative, the prince's mother, Agnethe, will refer to him as "Mwami," the honorific reserved for the Rwandan king (Mamdani, *Victims* 68).
50. Mamdani, *Victims* 89; Partington 112.
51. Mamdani, *Victims* 89.
52. Partington 113.
53. See Mamdani on the historical mutations of the Hamitic hypothesis (*Victims* 79–87).
54. As I explain in my analyses of the literary texts, the politics of indigeneity conceives of citizenship in primarily ethnic and territorial terms (Mbembe, "Edge" 270). See also Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing" and "On the Power of the False."
55. Kamukama, quoted in Partington 116.
56. Strauss 22.
57. Between 1990 and 1994, Rwanda experienced a severe political crisis as both the government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) prepared for war. Increased RPF attacks from October 1990 to 1993 had led to a peace accord that signaled the end of one-party rule. Challenged by political opponents inside and outside the country, the government feared the political ramifications of a peace treaty that granted major concession to the rebels, including multiparty elections and the presence of an international peacekeeping force. Hutu extremists responded to this political threat with the creation of civilian defense programs, training of youth militia, and an increasingly defensive nationalism that framed the Tutsi as the common enemy (Strauss 153–200). See also Jean-Pierre Chrétien's work on the history of *The Great Lakes of Africa*.
58. Mbembe, "Edge" 280.
59. Bauman, *Holocaust* 73
60. See the testimonies of perpetrators quoted in Strauss 122–52.
61. Mamdani, *Victims* 5.
62. Consider the broadcasts on state radio, which instructed all Hutu to unite against a common enemy "who wants to reinstate the former feudal monarchy" (Strauss 50).
63. Presidents Habyarimana of Rwanda and Ntaryamira of Burundi died went their plane was shot down on April 6, 1994.
64. The term *inyenzi*, cockroaches, seems to have originated in the early 1960s when exiled Tutsi paramilitary troops invaded Rwanda in nightly raids. Only in the 1990s did the term acquire negative connotations (Strauss 184).
65. "I observe that Roger is shirtless, his hair stands in nascent, accidental dreadlocks. The bottom half of his trousers are torn, and his shoeless left foot, swollen. His fist is black and caked with what I think is tar. And in his wake, the smell of mouldering matter" (14).

66. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 78.
67. Bauman, *Holocaust* 17.
68. "'Listen, what Ph.D.? You are a refugee, man!'"
69. See Mamdani, *Victims* 89 and "A Brief History of Genocide" 44.
70. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 82.
71. On the impact of international humanitarian organizations on state sovereignty, see Mbembe, "Edge" 278.
72. For a discussion of the work of Goffman on the interaction between strangers in modern societies, see Giddens, *Consequences* 79–83.
73. On the logic of survival, see Bauman, *Holocaust* 129; on the individual's participation in the phenomenology of death and the reduction of the "native" to a thing, see Mbembe, *Postcolony* 173–211.
74. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 13.
75. Mbembe, "Edge" 270.
76. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 87.
77. Daymond 121.
78. Taking place in the 1970s, the novel identifies the Lendu woman's home country in the then-current political nomenclature as "Zaire."
79. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 86.
80. "Freedom" 296.
81. See Mbembe, "Edge" 284.
82. Bayart's *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* explores the imaginary of the belly and of eating in relation to the use of state power in postcolonial Africa.
83. See, for example, the concept of *djambe* among the Maka of Cameroon. Geschiere explains that *djambe* signifies a special force living in a person's belly that "permits its proprietor to transform himself or herself into a spirit or animal and to do all sorts of other exceptional things" (13). Potentially used either for or against the community, Geschiere argues that *djambe* is best translated as "occult force."
84. *Postcolony* 106.
85. Mamdani, *Victims*, especially pages 19–39, and "History."
86. *Victims* 42.
87. *Victims* 43.
88. "The colonial state considered as indigenous all those who were resident on the territory it seized at the time of colonization, and only those. Anyone who came after was treated as a stranger: If they were indigenous to Africa, they were racially branded as 'native' but ethnically as strangers; if they were from outside Africa, they were considered nonnatives in race but—and this is the important point—were not ascribed an ethnic identity in law. Most states in Africa continue to adhere to this claim, considering as 'natives' only those who were present on native soil at the time of colonization, with all others considered nonindigenous. The irony is that for a postcolonial state to make this claim is to uphold the colonial state as its true parent" (Mamdani, *Victims* 30). In Uganda, the expulsion

of 50,000 Asians in 1972, many of whom had come in the early 1900s as indentured laborers, allowed for the seizure and redistribution of the country's wealth, while capitalizing on the hostility of black Ugandans toward Asians (Mutibwa 93).

89. Mbembe, "Edge" 280.
90. As the author explained in an email communication, "'Jungu' is short for 'Mujungu' which means 'white person.' In Uganda, people of mixed blood are referred to as white" (email message to Marie Kruger, 9 Jun. 2008). Indeed, on one occasion in the novel, Jungu is greeted by the soldiers as "the white one" (Kyomuhendo, *Waiting* 82).
91. Bauman, *Holocaust* 64.
92. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 89.
93. Moore and Sanders 3. In addition to Geschiere and Moore and Sanders, see also Comaroff and Comaroff, eds.; Austen; Behrend and Luig, eds.
94. *Holocaust* 63.
95. Geschiere 11.
96. On the close link between the occult and the illicit accumulation of power and wealth, see Moore and Sanders 14–17.
97. For a medical assessment of the *ebino* teeth, see Iriso et al.
98. See Geschiere's discussion of "Witchcraft and the Art of Getting Rich" (137–168).
99. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 105.
100. In his fight against Western imperialism, Amin pursued a decidedly pro-Arab policy, supported by close alliances with Libya and Saudi Arabia. Though officially considered a sign of nationalist renewal, Islam primarily served "as the religion of the establishment and all those who aspired to gain power and influence" (Mutibwa 110).
101. Moore and Sanders 16.
102. *Postcolony* 128.
103. Partington 120.
104. Partington 120.
105. *Holocaust* 199.
106. "Freedom" 298.

Chapter 4

1. Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* 3–9. On the attempts of Western modernity to regulate the "unreasonable death," see also Posel, "A Matter of Life and Death."
2. Marjorie Odludhe Macgoye, *Chira* (1997); Carolyne Adalla, *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* (1993); Hope Keshubi, *To a Young Woman* (1997).
3. See Treichler.
4. An unidentified elder from Burkina Faso, quoted in Iliffe 55.
5. Iliffe 24.
6. Iliffe 114.

7. Iliffe 97.
8. My argument here expands Appadurai's concern with how conditions of labor migration impact ideas about property, propriety, and collective obligation (44).
9. In addition to my discussion of the alternatively modern in Chapter 1, see also King, "The Times and Spaces of Modernity."
10. See Appiah 141.
11. Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality" 628.
12. Gikandi, "Globalization" 635.
13. Gikandi, "Globalization" 636. See also Appadurai on the role of the imagination in social life: "[T]he imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (31).
14. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Featherstone, "Global Culture"; Gikandi, "Globalization"; King, "Introduction"; Hall.
15. Gikandi, "Globalization" 639.
16. Featherstone, "Global Culture"; Hall.
17. In addition to Hall, see also King, "Introduction."
18. See Hall; Gikandi, "Globalization."
19. See Posel, "Democracy in a Time of AIDS."
20. On these issues, see Treichler (125) and Chambers.
21. Appadurai 44.
22. See, for example, the following passages of internal focalization, Macgoye, *Chira* 9–11, 16–21, 26–29, 61–63, 71–73.
23. "But as you became older, even your beliefs and assumptions were at risk. People seemed not to believe that you had to keep strict records of the petty cash you handled. That a couple embracing within the forbidden degrees was as shocking to you as it would have been to your grandfather . . . These things he held to be self-evident (In school he had learned about the American constitution. But if people were really created equal, what place did you have to stand on? Obviously some communities had longer and cleaner roots than others.) Others needed to be pondered over" (28).
24. Muriungi, "*Chira* and HIV/AIDS" 287.
25. See Parkin 142–64; Ocholla-Ayayo 104–8.
26. See Atieno-Odhiambo on the Luo missionary Paul Mbuya, who, as early as the 1930s, emphasized the conceptual similarities between *chira* and the Christian notion of "sin," when he argued that both imply moral transgression leading to mental and physical decline. For Atieno-Odhiambo, "[these] debates [demonstrate] Africa's engagement with and reenactments of modernity on its own terms" (257).
27. Muriungi, "*Chira*" 293.
28. Macgoye, *Chira* 49; 145. See also Muriungi,"*Chira*" 299.
29. See Parkin 149.

30. As the narrator explicitly remarks, "The body politic has always been akin to the natural body. It supports the parasites and contains the bacteria, keeping up between crises a more or less civil order, only occasionally requiring the marshalling of allies and the exhaustive commitment of reserve supplied" (167).
31. Iliffe 21; see also Posel, "Life and Death" 14.
32. Narratorial omniscience is also exemplified in terminological changes; rather than referring to AIDS in the characters' words as *chira*, the narrator's use of the Kiswahili term *ukimwi* signifies a translocal and scientific understanding (154).
33. Muriungi, "*Chira*" 297.
34. See Chambers on the relationship between culture and the obscene, which, he argues, is exposed by "untimely interventions" into narrative and cultural scripts.
35. See, especially, Macgoye, *Chira* 30–33, 63–67, 159.
36. I am indebted to Posel's ("Life and Death") discussion of the politics and imaginary of life and death in Western society and postapartheid South Africa.
37. Posel, "Life and Death" 13.
38. "The intense politicization of death associated with war—the external threat to the life of the modern social body—contrasts markedly with the depoliticization/technicization of death within the social body" (Posel, "Life and Death" 14).
39. See Appadurai on locality as a "phenomenological property of social life, a structure of feeling that is produced by particular forms of intentional activity and . . . yields particular sorts of material effects" (182). Invested in the imagination and ideologies of cultural actors, the production of local neighborhoods challenges the ability of the nation-state to establish sovereign authority over its space (191).
40. In addition to the many instances of external focalization in *Chira*, see also the use of narrative irony (128, 132, 161), as well as the progressive blending of internal and external focalization in the second part of the novel, when Gabriel's reflections amplify the moralizing comments of the heterodiegetic narrator (112–15, 167–71).
41. Posel, "Life and Death" 27.
42. Adalla's novel is part of the popular Spear Books series published by Heinemann Kenya. Its first publication, Rosemarie Owino's *Sugar Daddy's Lover* (1975), inaugurated a series of romance and crime fiction, which includes the best-selling authors Mangua, Maillu, and Kiriamiti, in addition to works more explicit in their social criticism such as Koigi wa Wamwere's *A Woman Reborn* (1980) and Adalla's novel (See Granqvist; Ogude and Nyairo, eds.; Kurtz, *Urban Obsessions, Urban Fears*).
43. Felman and Laub, quoted in Gallagher 17.
44. On the act of writing as "passing on responsibility," see Chambers 8.
45. Muriungi, "Narrative" 62.

46. As I will explain elsewhere in this chapter, the culture of Englishness here interacts with Appadurai's emphasis on the production of local subjects in contemporary social contexts defined by "the nation-state, diasporic flows, and electronic and virtual communities" (198).
47. Sontag 125.
48. See Wilton 71.
49. On the formulaic plots of popular literature, see Bryce.
50. On the didactic and moralistic appeal of popular literature, see Bryce; Muriungi, "Narrative, Contradiction and HIV/AIDS in Kenya." My discussion of *To A Young Woman*, however, will also address the influence of oral literature on the educational objectives of popular fiction.
51. Chambers 301.
52. Chambers 297.
53. Chambers 296.
54. Chambers 301.
55. The novel frequently includes direct appeals to Marilyn, addressee and ideal reader of Catherine's letter (17, 20, 33, 35, 39, 41, 46, 65, 67, 75, 78, 80, 82).
56. Foucault, in Gallagher 25.
57. Doody, quoted in Gallagher 18.
58. Posel, "Democracy" 314.
59. Iliffe 55.
60. See Sontag 135; Wilton 69.
61. See Iliffe 59; Treichler 99–126, 205–234.
62. Sontag 156.
63. Wilton 62.
64. Adalla 6–9, 58–61, 75–79.
65. Chambers 32.
66. *Ssenga* is the Luganda term for "paternal aunt." Okurut's *The Invisible Weevil* uses the capitalized spelling *Ssenga*; I will retain the spelling *Senga* used in Keshubi's novel.
67. Nabweru, "Becoming a Man," *New Era* 2 (March–May 2000): 24.
68. Iliffe 155.
69. *Sengas* habitually reference sexuality in metaphors derived from daily life; in particular, agricultural activities (plowing, sowing, watering, weeding, harvesting) serve as opportune translations for sexual activities (Tamale 20–22).
70. Chambers 32.
71. See Posel, "Life and Death" 20.
72. See my discussion of Bakhtin's cultural heteroglossia in Chapter 1.
73. See the novel's repeated appeals to follow the advice of medical experts (70, 73, 91, 143).
74. Tamale 10.
75. Treichler 208.
76. Treichler 100.

77. Granqvist 88.
78. The novel insists on abstinence and faithfulness as "the first line of defense" and encourages the reader "[to] reduce sexual partners or use a condom" (133). Keshubi's novel thus reflects AIDS prevention programs that combine moral and medical arguments and that emphasize the need to abstain, be faithful, and condomize, the so-called ABC program (see, for example, Iliffe 130).
79. See Bryce on women's romance writing and its ambiguous negotiation of socially conservative and subversive agendas (119).
80. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* 13.
81. See Granqvist 87.
82. "That night, the two boys went to Kezia's house and asked her to open the door because they had an urgent message from Juliana. The unsuspecting Kezia opened the door only to be met by a heavy blow . . . Then they raped her several times before they tied her onto the bed, face upwards with her legs wide apart. They were about to pour petrol into her womanhood when one of them remembered that they had not yet cut her thighs. Before they mutilated her thighs, they got a piece of wood which they forced into her womanhood provoking her to eject a deafening cry . . . the two were taken to the village cell and Kezia was rushed to the local dispensary for treatment. The two boys were tortured until they revealed Juliana's plan. Before dawn, Juliana had been picked up and joined the plotters in the village cell. In the cell, the three were tortured very badly until they were bruised all over. The cell attendants raped Juliana in turns to show her that the punishment she had intended for Kezia was very painful. After raping her, they poured urine on her bruised body and tied her into a bundle and threw her in a corner of the cell" (51).
83. Mbembe, *Postcolony* 102–41.
84. Appadurai 198.
85. See, in particular, the representation of ethnic prejudice and the taboo on interethnic marriage in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim*.
86. Gikandi, "Globalization" 642.
87. By contrast, the novels discussed in Chapter 2 attempt to control the experience of cultural change through individual acts of moral mastery, which devolve into predictable rites of passage, especially when informed by the logic of sacrifice (*Silent Patience*).
88. Sontag 62.
89. Chambers 32.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

1. See Mbembe and Posel, "A Critical Humanism" 285.
2. Yvonne Owuor, "The State of Tides" (2005). In addition to Owuor's short story, the publication includes photographs of art installations, photos, and maps of the Essex coast, and Gabie's extensive correspondence

with the Ministry of Defence negotiating, unsuccessfully, for access to Foulness Island. An enclosed CD features Owuor's reading of her story as well as video footage from camera-equipped kites flying over the area. The publication itself is not paginated and can be ordered directly from the publisher. To assist in the location of relevant quotes, I have provided pagination in parentheses.

3. For further information on the Coast Project, see <http://www.nevillegabie.com/coast1.html>.
4. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 16.
5. On the notion of the "changing same," see Gilroy 198.
6. See Pieterse, *White on Black* 30–51.
7. Bauman, *Holocaust.*
8. Clifford 263.
9. Bhabha, *Location* 7.
10. Clifford 256.
11. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, New York: Dover, 1990.
12. Also consider the repeated use of the trope of silence in the description of the character: "The bizarre thing had been a silence which had joined her when she had swung the AK 47 and shot the three men who had killed her father" (5); "Before she left the villa she wondered what to do next with her existence. She had thought of asking the question aloud but silence had stopped her. So she listened to the silence instead" (5); "She reached the Atlantic shore and the silence in between the waves called to her because she had learned their tongue. No lines in the ocean. Just being. The woman listened" (6).
13. *Location* 9.
14. On the interaction between strangers in modern societies, see Giddens (*The Consequences of Modernity* 79–83), in particular, his discussion of Goffman's work on the various modes of "civil inattention" with which strangers acknowledge each other as potential acquaintances. See also the analysis of "Weight of Whispers" in Chapter 3.
15. "Her head high, she did not utter a word, but Joseph felt something shifting within him, as if space was being created" (12).
16. Ironically, the song "Bahia girl," made famous by the Trinidadian Calypso singer David Rudder, belongs to a diasporic musical tradition that resists exploitation. When framed by the desire for coffee, however, the song becomes an opportune vehicle for a global commodity culture and its sexualized imagery.
17. See my discussion of Hall in Chapter 4.
18. Giddens, *Consequences* 120.
19. "In conditions of modernity, place becomes increasingly *phantasmagoric*: that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them" (Giddens, *Consequences* 19; emphasis in original).
20. Hall 21.

21. *Modernity* 295.
22. See also Appiah's reading of postcolonial African literature as challenging the practices of modernity in the name of humanism: "and on that ground [African literature] is not an ally for Western postmodernism but an agonist" (155); however, he acknowledges that since this specific vision of humanism insists on its provisional and historically contingent formation and denies the universal aspirations of modern epistemologies, it can also be considered "postmodern" or "critically modern."

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