Understanding Society through Fiction: an X-ray of the Remote Uganda from the Perspective of Nakibimbiri Omunjakko

Abstract: The saying that literature is a mirror of society is well demonstrated in Nakibimbiri’s The Sobbing Sounds. The novel leaves the reader with a clear picture of how life was lived in the rural part of Uganda in the immediate past. People who grew up in rural areas read and enjoy the story as it shares similar experiences with them. Those who grew up in urban areas read the novel and see the episodes in the novel as bizarre and unthinkible. Nakibimbiri has through the novel, naturally shown the society the way it was in the recent past. The researchers discover that Nakibimiri has profusely blended historical facts in the novel so naturally in such a way that the reader is not left in doubt about the credibility of any episode of the novel. They have therefore, parsed the novel with a view to unraveling some societal facts about the rural part of Uganda so that contemporary audience would have an idea of many transformations that have taken place over the time. It is observed from the novel that only little or no disparities at all existed in the way life was lived in almost every rural parts of Africa as a whole.

Keywords: Uganda, Erotica, Africa, Culture

INTRODUCTION

The Sobbing Sounds is a post independence novel about a young African man, Kabaliga, born in the primitive part of Uganda called Buganda. He was born not too long after the colonial masters had left the country. The rural Africans detest a lot about the Europeans whom they believe meant no good for them. Kabaliga’s parents therefore, refuse to have Kabaliga delivered in Mulago hospital because it was established by the Europeans. Their belief that children born in Mulago are too docile and that they are always saying “yes” to the white man is a mere illusion. Kabaliga discovers that he is stupid despite not being born in Mulago.

In a bid to effectively pass across his message, the novelist adopts the first person narrative, using Kabaliga as the naive narrator. He narrates as a child and through him, the reader understands a lot about life in Kampala metropolis. He narrates about incessant quests for extra marital sex profuse especially among the village women who are presented as being too loose. Majority of the rural dwellers are Muslims polygamists who are unable to sexually satisfy their retinue of wives who, in order to have the satisfaction they so desire, look for energetic young men who would give them that which their husbands could not.

One does not have to doubt any message of the novel. The writer, we are told, presented the story the way he experienced it first-hand. The novel is not fiction; it is simply a mirror of the society. The implication is that little or no exaggeration was employed as a technique by the novelist. We are made to understand this via the synopsis in the novel that "The Sobbing Sounds is … the frank and revealing autobiography of an audacious young African with a lust for life.”
Theoretical Background

Among similar theories, Sociological Approach is believed to be the most appropriate literary theory for the work. The reason is that the work is an attempt at the study of the tenets of the rural Ugandan society in the recent past via the fiction of Omunjakko Nakibimbiri. It can be inferred from the views of scholars that though fiction is a product of the imagination, historical and sociological facts are aptly integrated by creative writers. Laurence Perrine for instance, asserts that when fiction is studied, a particular society’s way of life is made known to the unwary. The Sobbing Sounds is a novel that so vividly let the tradition and culture of the rural Ugandan society bare. Therefore, from the plethora of the literary approaches available, the researcher has considered the sociological approach as the most suitable theory for his work. Nakibimbiri’s approach is akin to the style of Chinua Achebe. Both so aptly integrate societal facts, tradition and culture in their individual novels. Therefore, The Sobbing Sounds, like Achebe’s Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, regarded as the ethnography of the Igbo, could as well, be regarded as the ethnography of the Uganda. Based on this fact, the researcher believes that sociological approach will fit in more appropriately in the research.

It is important at this point to state that the sociological criticism focuses on the social context that the literature is created in; it analyzes social issues and uses the literature as social commentary. According to Chinyere Nwahunanya, each text is part of a gamut of texts which are functions of the society they are created in. Any writer is seen as a mirror of his or her society and, so, the work is read as a mirror of the writer’s society. Comparing literary texts can reveal the ideologies and experiences of people who lived in that time, period and culture. Literary texts contribute different viewpoints of any given society. Sociological criticism, therefore, analyzes the way individuals are molded and how they in turn, mold their societies. Because literature is believed to be a product of society, sociological criticism is interested in how literature comments on existing social hierarchies, and whether the text supports or spurns them. According to Ann B. Dobie in Theory into Practice: an Introduction to Literary Criticism, Hippolyte Taine is a French critic who was one of the earliest sociological theorists. Taine, Dobie says, listed three major factors he believed that determine a work of art to include: race, milieu and moment. By race, Taine referred to national characteristics that are typically found in works of art produced by the creative artists of a given country. Race, therefore, is believed by Taine to actually mean culture. By milieu, he meant environment and by moment, he meant the personal influence in a writer’s life; the immediate happenings in the writer’s environment that inspire the writing. A more contemporary statement of social approach, according to Ann Dobie comes from Rene Wellek and Austin Warren. In their Theory of Literature, they have named three similar areas of interest to the social critic. The issues include the sociology of the writer, the social context of the work and the influence of literature on society (14). This form of literary criticism was made prominent in the twentieth century by Kenneth Burke, a twentieth century literary and critical theorist, in his article “Literature as Equipment for Living.” In the view of M. H. Abrams, the sociological approach to fiction emphasizes the influence of the social and economic conditions of an era on shaping characters and determining events; often it also embodies an implicit or explicit thesis recommending political and social reform (201).

Sociological approach, therefore, prescribes that literature is an expression of society for it originates in society. Literature, this approach maintains, represents life which is a social reality. In this approach, happenings in a particular society constitute the story of the novel as it is the case in The Sobbing Sounds. This approach affirms that culture and tradition of a society are what a particular literature mirrors. This is why Margaret Drabble and Jenny Stringer say that socialism is a theory or policy of social organization. Drabble and Stringer’s opinion here still point to the fact that sociological approach to literature has to do with the relationship of a particular literature to the society. Nwahunanya, Chinyere makes it vivid that “the sociological approach to literature begins with the axiom that literature is an expression of society, since it originates in society. It is a fact that literature ‘represents’ life” (34). Aristotle, an ancient but prominent philosopher and literary critic, has stated that literature is “an imitation of life”. Since literature imitates life which is a social reality, the obvious fact remains that literature represents reality and so it is a product of society. Nwahunanya further makes sociological approach to literature more categorical when he states that social forces inevitably form and condition the writer, his work and his audience, and therefore what he creates has to be studied as a social phenomenon” (34).

Literature as Mirror of Reality:

In his “The Nature of Oral Literature, Uche Nnyagu has made it clear that literature is an indispensable means of preserving culture as to keep it from going into extinction. Chinua Achebe had made it clear in his “The Novelist as Teacher” that writers need to integrate their tradition and culture in their novels in such a way that the unwary reader understands from the novel, the way of life of the society. He clearly puts it thus “… I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf
delivered them” (African Literature: an Introduction of Criticism and Theory, 104). One who wants to understand the way of life of a particular folk needs to read creative writings written by authors form that society. It is a fact undisputed, as Achebe has put it, that no writer writes in a vacuum; the cultures and traditions of the author’s society inspire the author. Chimweizu, Onwuchekwa, Jemia and Ihechukwu, Maduhuikde do not think differently from Achebe in terms of integrating culture in literature. In their Towards the Decolonization of African Literature, they are of the view that literature is inseparable from tradition. In their own words, “Inclusion within a national literature is something to be determined by shared values and assumptions, world outlook, and other fundamental elements of culture – ethos, in short” (12). Omunjakko Nakibimbiri subtly integrates a lot about the way of life of the remote people of Kampala of Uganda in his novel, The Sobbing Sounds.

The reader understands from the novel how important children, especially male children are in marriage in Uganda. This is peculiar in almost all African nations. In any marriage without a male child, the man does everything he could to have a male child who would maintain the family name. In Igbo, a saying goes that when men marry is basically to have children. This is why, few months after a man has married in Igbo society in particular and in Africa in general, if the woman is not quick in getting pregnant, everybody is worried. When the wife gets pregnant, expectations are high as to the sex of the unborn child. This is not different in Uganda. Omunjakko Nakibimbiri has made this fact vivid in the novel. Through Kabaliga, the naïve narrator, this fact is made very categorical. He discloses that his father did not waste time to take a second wife when the only son his mother had died. By then, he had not been born. In a quest to have a male child, his father had quickly got himself another wife. The matter becomes worse when the third wife miscarries. Kabaliga, the narrator says “It took my mother two years to get another child. In desperation, my father acquired a second wife, and a third. The third wife had a miscarriage five months after she had been married. And the child would have been a boy” (9).

In polygamous homes, wives suspect co-wives as being responsible for whatever misfortune they have. This fact is well demonstrated in this novel when Kabaliga’s mother is quickly suspected as being responsible for the miscarriage. Kabaliga makes it vivid when he says that the miscarriage of the third wife “brought a lot of misunderstandings between my mother and her elderly women-friend whose hut was next to our home on the one hand, and my father’s special sisters and half-sisters on the other hand. These stupid aunts of mine started saying that my mother, helped by her elderly neighbour, had bewitched her co-wife so that the later did not bring forth an heir” (9). This goes to underscore how male children are valued in a typical African society. Kabaliga’s mother had already had two daughters but his father is never happy that he had no son. As had said earlier, in many African societies, men do whatever they could to have a male child. In the case of Kabaliga’s father, he married even a woman already pregnant in her father’s home. This goes to reveal that in Uganda as it is in some other African societies, it is not a taboo to give out a pregnant girl to a man in marriage. This fact is made more categorical in the later part of the novel when Kaggoggo, a teacher in Kiyinikibi Primary school, impregnates her pupil, Nakibotte, Kikanzu, the girl’s father quickly arranges for an old man willing to marry her. Even though Kaggoggo the lecherous teacher never talked of marrying the poor girl, Kikanzu could not think of giving Nakibotte to him because he is not a Muslim and he would not want a non Muslim to marry his daughter. To emphasize how male children are valued in Uganda, Kabaliga says that happiness only gets back to the family when he was born. As the author puts it,

When Kyanakigimu died, my mother was four months pregnant. Everybody was quickly praying that when ‘the parcel was untied’ it would produce a boy. Five months went by and the stork decided to bring the child to earth. And it was my sister Nakabaliga. A second daughter and no son to my parents. So my father had not got himself an heir yet. You may appreciate how important it is in my society to have a son… (8).

Superstitions as Part of Life in Uganda

Superstition is a belief that certain events or things will bring good or bad luck. It is part of oral tradition as it is handed down from generation to generation from mouth to ear. Today, modern writers incorporate superstitions in their works of art as a way of preserving oral tradition as well as make their works unique. Omunjakko integrated many of them in his novel to show the belief system of the rural people of Uganda. The novel begins with a superstitious belief of the people originating from the colonization of the European. The colonizers had brought many essential facilities to Uganda including medical centres. After they had left, leaving behind the facilities for use by the Ugandan, the uninformed people of Uganda wallow in ignorance as they believe that people born in the white man’s hospital are always too docile. They prefer to have their children the traditional way in the banana plantation. This is the place Kabaliga is born. Years after he was born, Kabaliga discovers that everything is an illusion. He narrates thus:

It all started some years back, when I was born. I was delivered in the maternity home of my ancestors, the banana plantation. Yes, that’s right. I was born in a banana plantation, or lusuku as the thing is called in the primitive part of Uganda called Buganda. The way I get it, there were two good reasons why my mother did not go to Mulago hospital to have me. First and foremost, it
was believed that children born in Mulago grew up stupid and they were always saying ‘yes’ to the white man. It was believed that the white man bewitched these children at the time of their birth so that when they became adults, if they ever become adults, they would always agree with the white masters” (7).

Superstitions appear funny and they are simply contingent upon illusion rather than science. Example is the belief of the people that the tree under which children are born determines the fate of the children whether they would be tall or short. They believe that if the tree is short, the child would be short and vice versa. The fact remains that the parents’ genes determine whether the child would be short or tall and not about whatever tree. Kabaliga is given the impression that why he is short is because the tree under which he was delivered is short. He says “I was born in this *lusaku under one of the numerous species of bitooke* or banana trees called *Nakittembe*. This *Nkittembe kitooke*, or banana tree, is very short tree….” (8). Another superstition similar to the above is Kabaliga’s belief that the reason why he digsresses a lot is because the local nurse that helped his mother to deliver him digressed a lot. According to Kabaliga, “I have a feeling that my digressing habits have something to do with this native nurse or midwife who helped my mother deliver me. From what I was told, this woman really digressed a lot ….” (12). The profuse integration of superstitions in the novel shows the belief system of Ugandan people. Another instance of superstition worth mentioning here is the belief of Ugandan people that wetting the bed heralds blessing. When Lusambya, Kabaliga’s cousin visits them, Kabaliga, like other children, is enthused. They keep pestering Lusambya, asking him who he would like to join him in the bed at night. Obviously, Nakabaliga, Kabaliga’s sister is out of the game because she urinates in bed. When taunted, Nakabaliga retorts that “wetting the bed was a blessing, for didn’t the elders say that a child who wetted her bed would be blessed with a lot of children during adulthood” (26). Nakabaliga believes this to be true and she takes solace from that each time she is taunted for wetting the bed.

The society, like some other developing African societies, does not value western education and so their teachers are not encouraged. The society thus has the belief that the reward of teachers are in heaven. The fact that teachers are not recognized in the society despite their sacrifices is vivified in the novel. In Nigeria, different governments fail to give education the required attention. Teachers work hard to ensure that ignorance is not given position in the society. Despite the efforts of the teachers, they are paid peanuts as salaries with no any form of incentives. They take solace on the fact that their wage is in heaven. Omunjakko has in this novel, made it known that in the annals of Uganda, teachers were at a time neglected by the Ugandan government. Our leaders fail to realize that education is the hub of government and should not be neglected. Omunjakko makes a crucial case that when teachers are not given any incentives, capable people abscond from the profession leaving the profession for mediocrity. Kabaliga talks about how poor their teachers are. They do no research because they are not encouraged and in the class, they ramble. To make whole matter worse, naughty pupils humiliate the teachers by giving them names, making a caricature of them and causing them perils. Kabaliga talks of how teachers – Mr. Fimbo and Nature study are humiliated by their pupils. The pupils have no regard for their teachers obviously because government does not value them. (45). Further, on page 50, the author emphasizes the profuse humiliation meted to the teachers by the pupils they toil to teach. According to Kabaliga, as the teacher teaches, one of the pupils, art inclined, decides to draw Mr. Sezinnyo’s picture, emphasizing his ugly parts. His aim is to make caricature of the teacher. Also is the case with a female teacher, Miss Netball alleged to be the headmaster’s sex mate. The pupils plant mirror to watch her panties. It is unfair that after all these sacrifices, the government fails to appreciate the teachers’ efforts. The author states the obvious fact through the naïve narrator, Kabaliga who laments in the following words, “Teacher! Poor things, they work like donkeys and are paid meagerly, so they cannot afford many of the good things other people get easily. One must be dedicated to be a teacher” (50).

**Important Rites in Uganda**

Almost all parts of Africa have similar traditions. Funeral for instance, is not to be played with in Africa. It is the belief of Africans that once somebody dies, funeral must be done according to tradition. Funeral enables the dead to rest in peace. In Uganda, it is the tradition that when an adult Muganda dies, the wailing and the funeral come first together. As a Muslim, the dead body is wrapped into turns of backcloth sheets. Funerals are conducted for the individual deceased according to their social status. According to Omunjakko, the more important the deceased was in society, the more backcloths the corpse is wrapped with and after the burial, an unspecified period of time elapses and then the deceased’s relatives “burst the death” (31). Bursting the dead is a tradition peculiar to Ugandan people. The author makes it vivid that bursting the dead is an important tradition in Uganda. It is a serious funeral rite. According to the author, it is done so that the mourners can forget the grief caused by the death of the late person, and for the installation of a successor and the distribution of the earthly belongings of the deceased to entitled relatives, mainly the widow and the children but also the multitude of hangers-on claiming to be close relatives. Uganda people believe that unless this bursting of the dead is done, the relatives of the deceased are in constant horror as they are not yet liberated from their departed relation. According to Omunjakko, bursting of the dead is the last lot of ceremony, the climax of
funeral in Uganda performed when somebody dies and it takes between two to four days. As the naïve narrator says, “My mother went for such occasions. She was going to be away for either two or four days” (31).

Marriage is another aspect of tradition worth talking about here. From the novel, we understand that Uganda, as a Muslim country, practices polygamy. Their men marry as many wives as possible and most of them marry girls they are old enough to be their father. Because of the gap in age, the men are not capable of satisfying their wives sexually and many of them look for alternative means to get the satisfaction they desire. Kikazu’s fourth wife, Tai is Nakibotte, Kikanzu’s daughter’s age mate. Nakibotte, and Tai freely discuss their sexual experiences. Both befriended same man, Kaggoggo, Nakibotte’s school teacher who later gets Nakibotte pregnant. The people fail to consider the fact that their women cheat on them because they are unable to satisfy their profuse sexual urge. They keep pushing their girl children who had unwanted pregnancy to old men as their husbands not putting into consideration that soon, the girl would begin to look outside for satisfaction. Even mothers who should understand the impending plights of their daughters forced into an unplanned marriage with old men, fail in their duties as women. Nakibotte’s mother is said to have been weeping, not because of the problems that her daughter would soon face marrying the old man, but in condemnation to her daughter. Nakibotte’s aunts and uncles condemn her as if she had committed the worst taboo. As a way of averting the shame of having a bastard child in their home, the converged relatives made their conclusion through the mouth of their chairman, who says, “When my brother here told me of the punishment God had imposed on us, I decided to try and find a solution. I have looked around and, thank God, I found a good man who will keep Kanifa for us” (85). We are however surprised when the author reveals that Nakibotte’s prospective husband is a sixty-year-old man. The narrator says that “Nobody liked him especially, though had any pronounced dislike for him. He was just another man of Kikanzu’s generation, a man fit to be the father of any of Kikanzu’s kids” (86). The only discordant voice is Nakibotte’s youngest auntie who had married about eight month ago. She is thought of as a rebel who has no respect for her elder brothers because she would always say her mind. When she speaks condemning the choice of Nakibotte’s husband, Kikanzu quickly retorts to her, “Did I not marry Tai? Isn’t she about the same age as your daughter?” (86).

It is obvious that part of what makes the Uganda women loose is the fact that their husbands are too old for them. Instead of addressing what causes the problem, the men rather prefer tackling the issue of infidelity through capital punishment which rather than ameliorate the problem, would compound it. For instance, Nazikuno had been suspecting his wife of cheating. On the advice of Kikanzu, Nazikuno tells his wife that he would be going to Kampala and would be away for two days. This is a plot to get his wife and deal with her lover. Eventually, Mujoozi, the man he has been suspecting comes while he is hiding. The wife had improvised bed on the banana plantation. The writer writes:

Dinner was served and the kids were bundled off to bed. Everybody went to bed. The time was 9.00 pm. The moonshine had never been so brilliant. The figure that tip-toed to the verandah of the house was very masculine. The Kanzu was spotless white. The figure in the Kanzu was unmistakable. It was Mujoozi, the man Nazikuno kept suspecting (67)

The author tells us that Nazikuno in anger, set to apprehend the man to teach him a lesson but he escapes. With fury, he gives his wife some treatment to the extent that he almost destroys her. The narrator says: “Suffice it to say that she was disqualified from sexual intercourse for the rest of her life” (68). Similarly, after having sex with Tai, Kikanzu’s wife, Kaggoggo is enveloped in fear for he knows that her son, Kalaakya would spill the beans around when his father comes back. Although Kalaakya did not catch them, they suspect he knows everything and Kaggoggo subtly dissuades him from telling his father what has happened. Kaggoggo is aware that Kikanzu would not spare him and Tai should he be aware of the amorous affairs between him and his wife. When eventually, it becomes obvious that Nakibotte is pregnant for Kaggoggo, every effort is made to get her married to any willing person. An old man is contacted to as a matter of urgency, come and marry her off. The writer writes that “The previous night, Nakibotte, who had been isolated and was sleeping in her grandmother’s hut, was called to a family gathering….. When she came in, Nakibotte saw that a big lecture was about to take place, but it was not to be by her father. She even speculated on being expelled from the family, since one of her uncles had done a similar thing to a cousin of hers…” 84.

Pedophile, though practiced in Uganda, the author advocates its total eradication. As literature is believed to be an indispensable tool for fighting ills, Omunjakko in this novel aptly X-rayed the resultant dangers as discussed in the above paragraph. The persons in the novel involved in the act almost all end up in disappointment. Kikanzu marries a girl young enough to be his daughter and the small girl becomes rather a lover to men outside her marital home. She does not see anything wrong with discussing extramarital sex with Kikanzu’s daughter, Tai who is her age mate. Both Tai and Nakibotte her step daughter have affairs with the same man. Nazikuno’s wife young wife profusely cheats. While condemning the act, Omunjakko extols the good tradition of Uganda as it concerns marriage rites. In almost all parts of Africa,
series of marriage negations are performed to ensure that one does not marry a bad wife. In *Dilemma of a Ghost*, Ama Ata Aidoo exemplifies this and vividly discloses the tradition in Africa that a man does not marry a wife all alone. Ifeoma Okoye in *Behind the Clouds* discloses that such is also the tradition in Nigeria. Ama and Okoye in their respective novels emphasize marital negotiation in Africa. It is good that the family of the man asks questions about the family their potential wife is coming from. The family of the girl also does same to ensure that their daughter does not marry into a family she would start having problems in near future. This act is equally practiced in Uganda and it is well demonstrated by Omunjakko in the novel when he writes:

> When Musolo was told about the marriageable girl, some twenty miles away, he sent scouts to find out about her character, her trustworthiness and her attitude to work. It was important to know about her background lest his son marry a night-dancer or a woman who could not tend the gardens and be hospitable to visitors.

After satisfying himself as to the girl’s integrity, Musolo had to find someone close to Sifirwakange to insinuate that Musolo’s son Mwanoomu, a good and well-behaved young man, would like to marry Kabirinnage. Then it was Sifirwakange’s turn to find out about Mwanoomu’s background.

When the two families were satisfied with each other, a date was arranged for the prospective partners to meet as the house of Kabirinnage’s eldest brother …. (88 – 89).

**The Sobbing Sounds** as Obscenity

Omunjakko fails to be subtle in his presentation of sex and sexual scenes in the novel. In fact, the novel could rightly be described as a piece with profuse chronicle of visual sex episodes. Critics do not see anything wrong with talking about sex and sexual scenes in a work of art. They are rather against profuse exposition such that it tends to corrupt the minds of the juveniles. Obscenity is not a new phenomenon in literature. According to John Sutherland, no one is too clear about the etymological origin of the word ‘obscene’ but its application in literature is clear. In his words, obscene:

> ... is a non-literary label attached to literary work that happens to be morally objectionable to non-literary people because of its sexual content. Obscenity is to be distinguished from pornography (etymologically, ‘writing about prostitutes’), in that obscenity is in charge commonly levelled at high, or experimental, literature, and it is, by legal definition, a criminal offence. Many have been imprisoned in the cause of ‘justified obscenity’ (168).

Though, according to Sutherland, obscenity traditionally brings the author into conflict with authorities outside literature – not ‘critics’, but police, the courts and the court of public opinion that the Victorians called ‘Mrs Grundy and the 1960s knew as ‘Mrs Whitehouse, it is not regarded as obscene in some societies. Where such obscenities are frowned at, authors are meticulous to expurgate and bowdlerize porn materials in their literature. Those who wish to publish the material without expurgation and bowdlerization take their manuscripts to other places where such material is not seen as a crime. Omunjakko in *The Sobbing Sounds*, presents series of naked pornographic episodes without check. The Prologue of the novel makes it vivid that the novel is simply an erotic. The narrator recounts his experience, how he has gone to the house of Maaso to have sex. Maaso never disclosed to him that she had a husband all the while they had been sleeping together. He vividly illustrates his experiences in Maaso’s house not without a picture of how Maaso’s husband comes back suddenly to catch him in his bed. The narrator, well educated and a senior Officer in government, wonders why he had to stoop so low to be humiliated:

> …, I wondered what the hell I, a ‘man of letters’, was doing in Kivvulu where I did not belong? With all the letters after my name, with the fact that although I had not worked there long I was a Senior Officer in the Vice-Minister’s office. How could I let myself be clobbered by an illiterate thing like Zaidi? How? Why the hell did I have to succumb to the loving wiles of Maaso, whose residence was in the Slums, when there were Betty, Cathy, Milly, Maggie, all fellow-graduates of mine? Was my education all gone to waste? This education – how did it start, and how did education shape my social life, including this vital activity called sex? How did I come to honour girls and women who knew what ‘sobbing sounds’ meant to sex? (4-5)

From the lamentation of narrator above, one has the picture of what the entire story of the novel would be. One important issue mirrored in the novel is the fact that education does not offer self control. Despite the education status of the narrator, and his elevation in the society, he still meddles with the degenerated Maaso. All through the novel, pornographic materials are copiously let bare. The narrator talks about Matama, his loose cousin. Despite her underage, she is so free with sex and she has sex with even aged men with reckless abandon. The author believes that the life of the mother positively or negatively influences his or her child’s life. He discloses through the narrator that Matama lives such a lowlife because her own mother is simply a tart. According to the narrator, “Although she was only about thirteen or fourteen, her behaviour put her in her early twenties. Many parents in the village were scared of her, and loathed her company with their children…. (16). Further on page 17, the author makes the sexual scenes profuse when he writes:
The venue was my mother’s bedroom. We entered. No sooner had we entered than she started screaming. I was thunderstruck. I was bewildered. I was dumbfounded. I was everything pertaining to amazement. It was too late to look away, let alone get out of the room. In a minute she was stark naked and lying flat on her back. Her legs were wide apart as she motioned me to come on top of her. Scared – that is what I was. Her crude hole was gaping at me. … Once on top of her, she instructed me to effect a piston-like motion; which I did with unhesitating obedience. I enjoyed the act, and yet I am sure I was not effective. Then she started the sobs. I knew now that they were artificial, but she sobbed. Boy, she sobbed! It was not until she said “You are killing me’ that I jumped off her (18).

Though Omunjakko so effusively talks about sex, demonstrating sex episodes so verbalized, he has done well to condemn the act whereby parents have sex in the room where their children are. Children are so smart, they pretend to be sleeping so as to watch the whole game. At last, they begin to practice that which they had learnt from their parents. We have been told that Matama, Kabaliga’s cousin becomes so sex addicted at an early stage because her mother is simply a whore and of course, she watches the mother have sex with her retinue of men. Then, Kabaliga makes it clear, that children are so smart and are kin to witness everything their parents seem to be hiding from them. In order to achieve their aim, they pretend to be sleeping. He makes it vivid in the following words, “But of course for Kalaakya, as for most of us, it used to be fun. We could not sleep until long after the whole process was finished, in the hope that there would be another session” (20). For Kalaakya, like some other unwary children watch the entire play innocently as they are yet to understand what the whole episode means. The author demonstrates this fact when he writes: “At first, Kalaakya had been confused that he asked his mother, the following day, why Daddy had been beating her up, and why she said she enjoyed being beaten” (20).

Life of a Child in a Typical Ugandan Village Setting:

Omunjakko has so aptly in The Sobbing Sounds disclosed the true picture of Uganda in the recent past, vividly showing how crude the society was. The reader who grew up in a rural area in any part of Africa in around 20th century would simply have a reminiscence of his childhood. In a rural village setting, people are gregarious. People associate with one another and they understand each other well. This is well demonstrated by the author in the names people in the rural society bear. These names are derived from what happened to people or the way the people look. The narrator has told us that his name Kabaliga has to do with the physical looks of his feet. Then he talks of his uncle name are Uncle Mukodo. He says, “We called him Mukodo because he was either thrifty or downright mean. He never gave us anything (27). Then he talks of his cousin. According to him, “The boys and girls at the school called him Birali, which was a nickname on account of his squinted eyes (38). In school, teachers and pupils are given names based on their nature and activities. Kabaliga says this about the head prefect of the school, “The man was about six feet high and had a head the exact shape of a pumpkin. That was why we used to call him (during his absence of course) Mr. Nsuju – the Luganda version of ‘Pumpkin’ (40).

Every child who grew up in a rural area in Africa must appreciate the fact Omunjakko paints here. Children hate to go to farm work and they always seek excuses to dodge going to the farm work with others. Kabaliga says, “For me, working in the shamba was out. You see, I had this chronic headache every morning. It usually came when it rained early in the morning at the time for going to school, and every time my grandmother mentioned such a thing as a hoe. The old woman was found of pronouncing that word every Saturday and Sunday morning when there was no school. So I made sure every Friday and Saturday evening that I was sick, and I remained sick all the night” (36).

CONCLUSION

Though a fictional autobiography, Omunjakko Nakibimirri has in a very natural way, revealed pertinent facts about the way of life in rural African setting. He has through the naïve narrator, shown the life the way it is so that the reader who grew up in rural area simply has a reminiscence of what he has passed through in childhood. Those born in urban area read and tend to see life differently from the way it is lived in urban area. Omunjakko fails to mince words in talking about certain issues thus, a lot of erotic materials feature in the novel without check. The way and manner the author has described issues about sex in the novel leaves the audience wondering if he actually wrote the novel for general audience. Indeed, the novel is an example of erotica, not apt for the young child. It is the type of literature Plato believes would tend to corrupt the minds of the young one. Although he incorporated a lot of pornographic materials in the novel the way many critics do not encourage, the novel has revealed a fundamental fact – parents must be aware that the life they live positively or negatively affects the life of their children.

REFERENCE

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