

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## Life Is Rosy / La vie est belle (1987)

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### OVERVIEW

In December 2021, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) officially placed Congolese Rumba on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Jules Shungu Wembadio Pene Kikumba, also known as Papa Wemba, the hero of *Life is Rosy*, was one of the greatest disseminators of this Congolese music and dance genre. On April 24, 2016, the most popular singer of rumba seen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Papa Wemba, known as the “King of Rumba-Rock,” collapsed and died on the stage while performing at a concert in Côte d’Ivoire. Rumba, the modern version of traditional Congolese *Nkumba* that the singer helped disseminate, is a popular music and dance that penetrates both the formal and informal substrata of Congolese society. Rumba developed a network of not-so-legal petty jobs that allow the bottom tiers of the Congolese population to survive poverty. That network of fraud and swindle is known as *Le système D*, or *le système de la débrouillardise*.

### CHARACTERS

**Kuru** (Papa Wemba): A country singer who travels to the city of Kinshasa with the hope of becoming a famous singer.

**Kabibi** (Bibi Krubwa): A young girl freshly out of secretarial school who is looking for a job. She will become Nvuandu’s second wife and Kuru’s lover.

**Nvuandu** (Kanko Kasongo): Mamu and Kabibi’s husband. An important man with erectile dysfunction. He is seeking a cure for his condition.

**Mamu** (Landu Nzunzumbu Matshia): a successful businesswoman and Nvuandu’s first wife.

### SYNOPSIS

Kuru, a successful traditional musician with a faithful rural audience, dreams of making a splash on national radio and becoming a star in the big city. So, he leaves his loyal audience and his traditional instrument behind him and travels to the big city. After a few nights wandering in the Congolese capital city of Kinshasa, Kuru lands a job as a domestic in the home of a successful music producer, Nvuandu. Though financially successful, Nvuandu is sexually deficient. So, he consults with the local healer, who advises him, as a solution to his “crime” of impotence, to marry a second wife, a virgin, with whom he must not have any intercourse during the first thirty days following the marriage. Nvuandu’s marital choice has fallen on young Kabibi, a graduate of a secretarial school whom Kuru, passing for a successful man, has also seduced. To punish her husband for taking a second wife, Nvuandu’s first wife, Mamu, not only encourages Kuru’s affair with Kabibi and facilitates their encounters, but she also takes as her lover Kuru’s cousin Mongali. The plot of the movie is thus articulated around Nvuandu’s laughable attempts to manage his life as a polygamous man and to take control of his wives who are making a fool of him.

### SCENES

**Kuru is a country musician.** Kuru is an itinerant musician who travels from village to village to entertain people. His arrival in each village is awaited with anticipation and announced with excitement. Kuru plays his traditional instrument and sings, as he is surrounded by a crowd of admirers who rehearse his songs in a chorus. A big, loaded truck headed to the city arrives, with radio music blasting onboard. Kuru watches his audience scurry towards the truck, and the country musician vows to someday go to the capital city and play on the radio, too.



**Kuru migrates to the City** Kuru boards a truck *en route* to the city. As he climbs on the moving vehicle, his traditional instrument falls on the road and breaks into pieces.



**At the bar** Kuru roams through the Congolese capital city of Kinshasa until his wandering leads him to a joint where a local band is rehearsing. His spontaneous attempt at singing draws mockery from the city band members. Nvuandu, the bar owner, approaches Kuru and contemptuously suggests that Kuru is only good enough to play in his wife's band, meaning in the kitchen, amidst the sounds of pots and pans. Nvuandu hires Kuru as a domestic in his home.



**Nvuandu and Mamu's infidelity** Nvuandu's wife, Mamu, does not believe that her husband is really going on a business trip and follows him in the house to prevent him from going out in his Sunday clothes on an ordinary workday. Nvuandu eludes her and speeds off in his white Mercedes, instructing Kuru to inform his wife that he is going on a three-day trip. Kuru introduces Mongali, who has come looking for a job, to Mamu as his "cousin." Mamu hires him as her driver and tells Kuru to inform her husband that she, too, is going to Brazzaville for a two-day shopping trip. Kuru is left to watch the house.



**Kuru meets two women.** While doing the laundry, Kuru discovers money in his boss' shirt pocket. Dressed in his boss' outfit and using his boss' money, Kuru goes barhopping. Passing for an important man, Kuru meets Kabibi, a recent graduate from a secretarial school who has come to the club with her friend Nzazi to celebrate her graduation. Kuru promises Kabibi a job. Nzazi fights Kabibi for Kuru's attention, and she ends up spending the night with him at his boss' home. Nzazi thinks that she is at Kuru's home and promises him to come back and cook for him.



**Witchdoctor** On his second visit to a witchdoctor to find a cure for what the healer qualifies as a "crime," his sexual impotence, and for which the healer insists that only a virgin can help, Nvuandu crosses path with Kabibi and Nzazi. They, too, have come to see the witchdoctor. Nzazi has come because she wants to conquer Kuru, who she thinks is an important man, and Kabibi, because she wants the job promise Kuru made her to concretize. The witchdoctor reveals to Nzazi that another woman has already taken Kuru's heart. Nzazi leaves disappointed, and the witchdoctor makes Kabibi see the true image of Kuru in a magical bowl of water. Kabibi realizes that Kuru is a mere domestic. Nvuandu waits for Kabibi outside the witchdoctor's place and convinces her to let him drive her home.



**Nzazi and Mamu fight** Nzazi has vowed that she would not let another woman steal Kuru from her. She comes looking for Kuru at Nvuandu's house. She sees Nvuandu's wife, whom she mistakes for Kuru's lover. Mamu also mistakes Nzazi for her husband's lover. The two women get into a fight for the wrong reason. When Nvuandu returns from his trip, Mamu tells him that his lover has come fighting her for him. He thinks that she is referring to Kabibi and displays a satisfied air. He tells Mamu that it is because she is childless and his father threatens to disown him that he is looking for a second wife.



**Mama Dingari's commercial Schemes** Mama Dingari is an unpredictable landlord who raises her tenants' rent on a whim or because they make too much noise for her liking. She also employs a little person to sell the kababs she makes, and she gets very angry when he does not sell all his day's supply. Unbeknownst to Kabibi, her mother, Mama Dingari,



who has been receiving gifts and money from Nvuandu, has agreed to a marriage between her daughter and Nvuandu.

**Nvuandu marries Kabibi** Kabibi becomes Nvuandu's second wife. Keeping to the witchdoctor's instructions not to make love with his new wife during the first thirty days following the wedding, Nvuandu sleeps patiently in the living room couch and crosses the days on his calendar.



**Mamu's schemes** Mamu greets Kabibi with open arms and makes her a member of her exclusive women's club, the Musiki Group. The instant friendship between his two wives makes Nvuandu apprehensive, and he is right. Mamu becomes Mongali's lover, and she facilitates secret meetings between Kabibi and Kuru. Mamu is delighted to have perverted her husband proud second wife by making her the lover of his servant.

**Nvuandu's Schemes** Nvuandu has Kuru rent an apartment at Mama Dingari's place to keep an eye on Kabibi for him and arrange meetings with her. Kuru subverts Nvuandu's plans by sending other girls his way, and he offers Kabibi and Mama Dingari presents bought by Nvuandu or with Nvuandu's money.

**Kuru's dream** Meanwhile, Kuru, who has been performing his musical skills in the street, has caught the attention of passersby, including the band members that laughed at him on his first night in the city. Kuru's street audience is growing, and his songs are popular, but he is still struggling to make it in the city. He tells Kabibi about his dream of forming his own band. She promises to help him realize it.



**Lovers quarrel.** On the night Kuru and Kabibi have their first intimate relation, Kabibi discovers that Kuru has been in contact all this time with Nvuandu while she has been trying to avoid him. She gets upset and decides that she will no longer see Kuru. He tries to commit suicide by hanging but fails. Seeing Kuru's condition, Kabibi, too, collapses. The witchdoctor is sent for, who gets Kabibi on her feet.



**Kuru becomes a star.** While Nvuandu is transporting Kuru to his bar to replace his unwell lead singer. The whole neighborhood walks to Nvuandu's bar, where Kuru, joined by Kabibi, is performing on television. Kuru has finally reached stardom and conquered a city audience.



**Mamu returns to Nvuandu** Mamu is with the women of the Musiki Club to watch the first television appearance of her husband's band. She sees Kuru on scene with Kabibi and gets upset. The Musiki women laugh at her, because Kabibi has supplanted her. They get into a fight, and Mamu accuses them of leading her astray. Mamu returns to Nvuandu and asks for his forgiveness. Nvuandu also apologizes to Mamu and the couple makes up, concluding that after all they are happier with each other.



## CHARACTERS ANALYSIS

**KURU** Kuru is a resourceful, talented, ambitious swindler with his eyes focused on being successful in the city as a singer. For the achievement of his goal, Kuru shows admirable resourcefulness and resilience, but also a disconcerting skill at duplicity. It is a cocktail of lies, swindles, and talent that propels Kuru to fame.

*Resourceful* From the day he declared that he would be heard on the radio, Kuru never ceased working towards his goal. To all the obstacles that presented themselves to him, Kuru found ingenious solutions, even if he must veer a little to the right or to the left of his objectives before straightening the rudder to the right direction. A domestic, then a shoe shiner, then a painter, then a hustler, and finally an

accomplished musician singing on national television, Kuru proves himself a resourceful and resilient man, in the image of the millions of young Congolese who every day face the vicissitudes imposed by a derelict state existing only in name.

*Swindler* Each one of Kuru's swerving paths towards becoming a recognized singer is characterized by acts of fraud and deception. Kuru steals his boss's clothes and money to pass for an important man and gain access to the night club where people of a certain stature meet. It is there that Kuru meets Kabibi and her friend Nzazi for the first time. To them, too, he lies, passing for what he is not. It is nevertheless this falsehood which, by a combination of circumstances, allows Kuru to better rob Nvuandu, using the latter's resources to impress Kabibi and Kabibi's mother. In fact, Kuru has swindled his way all the way to Kabibi's heart and to fame.

*Talented* Whatever one says, it is ultimately Kuru's talent that leads him to glory. He developed this talent by singing in the villages and hamlets of his country. Kuru's success demonstrates the importance of recognizing and reconciling traditional skills with modern technologies. Papa Wemba, who plays the role of Kuru, is an example of that marriage of the country and the city. He learned to sing with his mother who was a professional traditional mourner paid to cry and chant at funeral ceremonies. Through Kuru it is a nod that the filmmaker makes to the hidden rural talents of many young people that are waiting for the right opportunity to flower.

**KABIBI** Kabibi is an am ambiguous character, she is honorable yet an opportunistic and duplicitous girl. She graduated from a secretarial school and is in search of a job adequate to her degree. Nonetheless, in a country like former Zaire (today's Democratic Republic of Congo) where what matters in a job search is more which big man you know than what skills you have, Kabibi, like a pendulum, oscillates between decency, opportunism, and duplicity.

*Conflicted* By Congolese standards, Kabibi is a virtuous girl. She has decided to wait until marriage to have sex, because, societally, her sexuality is reserved for procreation. It is in fact for that reason that Nvuandu married her, to be the mother of children that his first wife, Mamu, has failed to give him. However, Kabibi's virtue becomes tainted the moment her individual desires clash with societal expectations. It is Kuru she loves. Therefore, she refuses herself to her husband and, instead, offers herself to her lover, with no other motive than reciprocal physical and psychological fulfillment. Kabibi transgresses the societal tacit pact of procreation to embrace her own desire for eroticism.

*Opportunistic* Kabibi has just graduated from a secretarial school, and she carries her diploma everywhere she goes, even to the bar. She understands that in a country where most of the population scrape at the bottom, those who can afford a night out at the club are among the privileged ones. In the bar, she might find an important man with a job offer. With Kuru, she thinks to have struck luck, and so she does not hesitate to seize the opportunity and show him her diploma. However, Kuru is a fraud. She then marries Nvuandu, not out of love, but out of necessity, for it is Kuru the con man that she really has come to love, as he has finally come clean to her and confided in her his desire to form his own band.

*Duplicitous* Kabibi marries Nvuandu, because he is an important man that can take care of her financial needs in a country that is unforgiving. With this marriage, she enters a nice home, she has a chauffeur to drive her around, and she is sheltered from financial troubles. However, she does not love her husband. Her heart belongs to Kuru, but she recognizes that he is a penniless artist. Thanks to her marriage with powerful Nvuandu she devises clever schemes to funnel money to Kuru.

**NVUANDU** Nvuandu is an irrational, nave, and contradictory character. He is in constant movement. When he is not running away from his wife and to his witchdoctor, he is chasing after his swindling domestic or his cheating second wife. His ambulatory instability denotes an intellectual unpredictability that delivers him to irrationality and gullibility. Nvuandu is running wild, because his mind, too, is running wild and not sensibly.

*Irrational* Nvuandu suffers from erectile dysfunction. To remedy his malaise, he sees, not a urologist, but a witchdoctor, who prescribes him marriage to a virgin and abstinence from her the first thirty days following the wedding. The witchdoctor also prescribes him to perform an odd dance during that period. Nvuandu follows the witchdoctor's prescriptions religiously, convinced of their efficacy.

Nvuandu's cure may shock some people, but it finds its validation in a system of esoteric mysticism that from time immemorial governs the spirituality of Congolese, and which has survived modern science, and rational thinking.

**Naïve** Nvuandu is naïve; but the source of his naïveté resides in his intellectual backwardness, in his thinking that is stalled in an ancient system of belief that prescribes illogical remedies to logical affects. It is difficult to perceive how jumping on one foot while chanting "push, push, piston" can restore one's erectile function. For naïve and irrational Nvuandu, however, it makes sense.

**Contradictory** Despite his contemporary appearance and the modern comfort that furnishes his everyday life, Nvuandu's thinking has remain paradoxically backward. He is despondent that his marriage with Mamu has produced no children. Yet he takes no sensible step to understand the medical causes of it and find it a rational solution. Instead, he immediately assumes that his wife Mamu is to blame, and he torments her about it, because his own father torments him, too, and threatens to disown him if he does not produce an heir to continue the family line. In order to please his father, this grown, "independent," modern man takes the irrational advice of a charlatan, which further complicates his life, making him a plaything in the hands of his two wives, his domestic, and his wife's driver.

**MAMU** Mamu is a lonely and cunning woman. She is an unfulfilled woman. She is a savvy entrepreneur with a flourishing textile business. She buys textile from Brazzaville, which she sells to women on the local market. She is financially independent: she owns a house and a car. She is, nevertheless, emotionally dependent on Nvuandu to whom she clings despite the abuses that he proffers at her, for in the Congo, it is a scorn for a woman to be unmarried, and for a married woman to be childless.

**Lonely** Mamu's joining the Musiki Club was at closer look a cry of distress. The club was for her a lifeline against a marriage that was adrift: her husband was deserting her, because he viewed her as sterile. She needed friends and thought to have found them among the club's members. She left the club when she realized that, instead of support, what she received from the club members was ridicule.

**Cunning** Mamu did not appreciate the fact that her husband imposed upon her a sister-wife. Instead of protesting, she pretended to greet Kabibi with open arms, only to concoct plans with the complicity of her friends from the Musiki Club to make Kabibi appear undeserving in Nvuandu's eyes. She arranged meetings between Kabibi and Kuru, making sure that her husband's chauffeur saw Kabibi and Kuru in culpable situations. Her plans worked. The chauffeur reported Kabibi's infidelities to Nvuandu. When Kabibi realized that she has been exposed, she packed her suitcase and fled to her mother's. Nvuandu returned to Mamu for consolation.

## THEMES

### SOCIETY

**Patriarchy** Mamu and Nvuandu's marriage has produced no child. As a man, Nvuandu expect the perennity of his dominance through a child, and preferably a male child. He considers it his wife's responsibility to make this happen. Nvuandu does not question his fecundity. The thinking is that he is a man, and therefore, cannot be the cause of their lack of child. His wife Mamu is ineluctably the wrongdoer in the marriage. Whatever his condition, she must play God and give him a child, preferably a male child; that is something in his likeness. If she cannot, then, he is fully justified to take a second wife; hence, Nvuandu's pursuit of Kabibi.

**Rural Exodus** Kuru's movement from the rural zone to the urban center is typical of the rural exodus which in Africa depletes the countryside of its youth and overcrowds the urban center. This happens because, as we can see in *Life is Rosy*, the difference in development between the rural areas and the urban centers is striking. The urban area is lacking any infrastructures, such as, factories, services, and leisure, likely to retain the youth while the urban centers concentrate, but in insufficient numbers, the opportunities that attract the youth. Thus, the city becomes a zone of broken dreams, where young people survive on menial and insecure jobs that force them, like Kuru, Mongali, and many others, to turn to a system called *le système D* or *le système de la débrouillardise*, a hustler system.



**Hustling-Systeme** *D (la débrouillardise)* comes from the French verb *se débrouiller*, meaning to manage, to get by the best one can, legally or illegally. Hustling is the Congolese way of surviving a society that has been forsaken by its government. From the witchdoctor to the police officer passing through the government official and the unemployed youth, all the 90 million souls of the democratic Republic of Congo are actors of the system D. Those who profit the most from this parallel and not-so-legal system, however, are the people in the higher echelon of the society, whose corrupt practices generate them immense profits, but deplete the state of much needed receipts. For the lower class, music is a way out, which has made the Congo one the hubs of African music and dance, and its capital Kinshasa the premiere destination for country youth seeking to emerge. Kuru is representative of the *débrouillard* the hustler), as his trip from the countryside to the city of Kinshasa takes him from poverty to glory through a meander of lies, frauds and swindles, and false pretenses.

**La sapologie** “Être sapé” is to be well-dressed. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, this expression developed into a concept, a philosophie called *la sapologie*, which Papa Wemba, the hero of *Life is Rosy*, is credited of having launched in the 1980s. In fact, besides being referred to as the “King of Rumba-Rock,” Papa Wemba was also dubbed “The father of sapologie,” of the art of dressing well. Contrary to the adage that one cannot judge a book by its cover, *la sapologie* maintains that What you wear says who you are. Therefore, in this instance, one must judge a book by its cover, for impression matters much in getting one’s foot on the first step of the social mobility ladder; and the ostentation of expensive clothes helps give a good impression. We see how Kuru, a mere domestic, is treated the moment he puts on his boss’ clothes. Nzazi fights Kabibi and then Mamu for him. The kabab seller, who had ignored him on his first night in the city, having later fetched a taxi for him on his night out as a boss, is now disposed to offer him some free food, even as he sees him in his domestic uniform. For the food seller, the impression he had of Kuru dressed like a boss is telling: Kuru may be dressed later like a domestic, but he could just be a boss wanting to dress down, a boss in disguise, walking the streets of Kinshasa *in catimini*; a boss one must be in good terms with, a boss whose belly one must feed, just in case one comes to need an important man’s help some day.

**Corruption (Politics of the Belly)** The morning after their first encounter, Nzazi offers to come cook for Kuru. When her husband returns home after his disillusion with Kabibi, Mamu offers to cook him his favorite meal, in the hope of retaining him at home. The belly seems to be the medium through which domestic conflicts are resolved and stability is attained, but that belly must first be fed. However, it is not just in the domestic space that the belly needs feeding. Feeding the belly is also a metaphor for corruption or exchange, for quieting the gurgling noises of desires and lacks. In the hustler society of the Congo, in order to attain one’s objectives, many bellies must be fed; many quid pro quo deals must take place. It is at this cost that life can be less dull and rosy.

**Gender (Women entrepreneurship)** Mamu and the Musiki Club women are part of a vibrant women entrepreneurship in West Africa whose savvy in business management is known to surpass that of their governments. These women, who usually start their businesses with a very small loan from their husbands, travel over time to international fabric factories to order the confection of textiles whose themes they have designed according to the familial or national topics of the moment, and which they advertise aggressively to women on their local markets. In *Life is Rosy*, one can see Mamu advertising her latest fabrics: “*Mon mari est capable*” (My husband is capable), a theme that either touts a husband’s sexual prowess or financial means or “*L’oeil de ma rival*” (my rival’s eye), a fabric that either protects from a woman’s rival’s mean intentions or mocks her rival. The ambiguous meanings of the themes these businesswomen choose for their fabrics are so well-thought that their merchandises appeal to all segments of the woman populations. They are expert in direct advertising, with impressive wealth, which in some countries of West Africa has won them the nickname of “Mama Benz,” because of their penchant for Mercedes Benz in which they are driven around by their personal chauffeurs. Women entrepreneurship, as *Life is Rosy* shows, is not limited to dealing in textile. Mama Dingari, for instance, is a successful landlord, though with questionable business practices. Besides, much of the African foodstuff sector is dominated by small women entrepreneurs whose activities sustain many families. In African countries that are struggling to pull their people out of poverty, one would think that given their contribution in reducing the high rate of poverty women entrepreneurs would be supported by the financial institutions and their governments. Only the contrary is true. Women entrepreneurs are heavily

harassed by city tax collectors, and their access to funding is limited by institutions whose practices are entrenched in a patriarchal mindset.

## RELATIONSHIP

**Sexuality** While Kabibi has “chosen” to remain a virgin until marriage, Nzazi, as for her, has elected to satisfy her urban needs by leading an unprincipled lifestyle of sexual promiscuity, theft, lies, abuses and drunkenness. Like Mama Dingari, Kabibi’s mother (played Mazaza Mukoko) and the “liberated women” of the Musiki Club to which Mamu belongs, Nzazi is part of this class of women that one so easily refers to in some Francophone milieus as “mal baisées” (desperately seeking what men supposedly find in each sexual intercourse, orgasm). The suggestion is that their social lives are chaotic because their sex lives are in shambles; so, their devastating sexual experiences or lack of orgasmic satisfaction, create a negative hormonal reaction that causes them to take their frustrations on the rest of the world. Thus, Mama Dingari’s exploitative and ruthless commercial methods and Nzazi’s abusive tendencies, for instance, have a common root cause. As single mothers with no men of their own—Mama Dingari for example must pay for the sexual favors of a little person, a metaphor of masculine abnormality, phallic imperfection and orgasmic insufficiency—they are sexually unfulfilled, and their jouissance *en reste* maintains them in constant mood swings and makes them incapable of relating positively to people around them.

**Desire** While accounting for male and female sexualities, the film seems to have fallen into reproduction of a phallocratic agenda; thus, viewing women as sexual animals whose sexuality should conform to the strict, unsophisticated orthodoxy of reproduction and not of mere desire or quest for eroticism and men as more sophisticated beings whose sexuality ought to be an exuberant quest for psychological fulfillment, that is, for eroticism. Thus, orthodox feminine sexuality, of which Kabibi is the epitome in *Life is Rosy*, is expected to remain quiet, subdued and kept under lid until the moment of tolerated transgression, that is, until marriage; for feminine sexuality is first and foremost a sexuality dedicated to reproduction within the institution of wedlock, and to a certain extent, put at the service of man’s desire. The filmmaker shows this clearly when he opposes Kabibi, the virtuous graduate of a secretarial school to Nzazi, the unemployed, opportunistic single mother who preys on unsuspecting men in search of fleeting erotic moments.

## PSYCHOLOGY (nostalgia)

**Nostalgia** On the surface *La vie est belle* appears critical of polygamy and its debasing effects on women and its humiliating effects on men. However, the film does not condemn the institution of polygamy as such. The critique of polygamy appears as nothing more than a pretext for a historical nostalgia—the good old sexual order—and an excuse for the condemnation of sexual dysfunction as it is practiced in the modern African society. This explains why the place to find *Life is Rosy*’s sexually deviant characters is the city. The city is the locus of sexual/social chaos and the site whence to restore traditional sexual/social order. What should that sexual organization look like? Although *Life is Rosy* indicates that this new structure should be gendered, and although the film hints at the structuration of “conventional” feminine sexuality, it remains ambiguous as to the form of “normal” masculine sexuality, other than showing that male impotence is both a state of corporeal condition and social instability.

## QUEST (search)

**Search** Nvuandu is impotent. This is patriarchy’s greatest fear, the loss of his erectile **function**. The witchdoctor tells Nvuandu that his erectile dysfunction is a crime. In other words, it is not just Nvuandu that is affected by it; it is the whole social order that Nvuandu’s erectile dysfunction upsets. Of course, Nvuandu’s search for a cure against this “abnormality” causes him to be made a fool by his wife and his domestic as well as by complete strangers, such as the gas station attendant. However, beyond his personal woes, it is an entire community that his defect affects, and which looks for ways to repair the damage he has caused: Kuru’s attempted suicide, Kabibi’s malaise, and Mamu’s fight with the women of the Musiki Club are all consequences of Nvuandu’s corporeal inadequacy. Nvuandu’s biggest crime, the one the witchdoctor is referring to, is the shame he brings on all men in this patriarchal society where men are supposed to be powerful and virile.