

## Call and Response

### *Responding to Spirits in Kampala's Shrines*

#### SEMUJU

It is Sunday evening and George is back again at Jjajja Kasumba's compound. It is a full house tonight, but George manages to find a seat on an old tire at the back of the compound where two of Jjajja Kasumba's assistants are playing Ludo. The game goes on for a long time and as the sky grows dark they ask George to hold a flashlight for them so that they can see. The dice clack against the handmade glass-topped board. There is a woman sitting next to George on the sagging tire and smoking a mixture of tobacco and herbs in a long *emindi* pipe, the smoke blowing into George's face as it makes its way up for the *balubaale* to enjoy. As she smokes, she spits into a small tin, which she periodically empties into the trench behind them. Some of this spit spills onto Ddungu, the dog, named for the *lubaale* of hunting, and she jokingly apologizes to him. Aunt Irene is also there, sewing beads onto leather sandals and selling twists of tobacco and small plastic bottles of waragi.

Though his back is getting sore from sitting, George continues to wait. Semuju, the young man he met there a few weeks before who struggled with drinking before finding Jjajja Kasumba, has promised to meet him, and George doesn't want to miss him. Finally, George's phone rings. It is Semuju. "Could you come and meet me? I'm just near the church. But hurry, I've left the baby sleeping alone in the house."

When George finds him, Semuju is standing near a small church, his slim frame barely visible in the dark. As he uses his flashlight to lead George along the roadside trenches, Semuju explains that he has been caring for his eighteen-month-old daughter for more than a year. The mother of the child left Semuju when he suggested that they consult a diviner to determine the cause of their financial problems. She accused him of being a witch and left—refusing to take the baby with

her. In the early days Semuju, a builder by trade, took the child to his jobs on construction sites, tying her onto his back as he worked.

This wife was also a heavy drinker, and he feared that one day she would come back and try to steal the child from the house. He had also come to believe that the balubaale took her away from him to prevent other marital problems in his life, despite the difficulty of caring for the baby alone. Semuju's own history with alcohol, and the role that his involvements with the balubaale played in ending it, are the reasons that George has come to find him.

Over the course of many more conversations, Semuju will tell George that he realized that he wasn't living a normal life when he was fifteen years old. His schooling was a problem because he could not see what was written on the chalkboard in his classroom. He had also begun to drink heavily, often taking a small bottle to be filled at an informal waragi distillery near his home, lying to the distillers and saying that he had been sent by his father. His uncles urged his father to attend to the balubaale spirits who they believed lay behind his drinking, to give them the care and attention that was their due, but at the urging of his stepmother his father refused to address the problem.

Semuju ultimately left home and went to live with a distant relative in Kampala. This relative, Jjajja Kasumba, is the leader of a community of people who participate in the form of mediumship and worship known in Uganda as *kusamira*. While Semuju was glad to find a home away from his stepmother, he was still drinking, fighting in bars, and getting fired from every job he found.

One day, while he was riding his bicycle, Semuju got into an accident. During the long period of convalescence that followed the accident, Semuju started questioning himself about his life and where his problems were coming from. He consulted Jjajja Kasumba, who began to counsel Semuju about his drinking and its spiritual causes.

With the help of the balubaale spirits who possess him during divinations, Jjajja Kasumba used *omweso* divination to consult with Semuju's ancestral spirits to discover the source of the problem. The spirits explained that Semuju had two opposing balubaale in him, Kiwanuka and Bamweyana. While Kiwanuka is a very good and powerful spirit who does not drink, Kiwanuka had sent another spirit, Bamweyana, to make Semuju drink in ways that would ruin his life to punish him for his neglect. The spirits said that Semuju must satisfy both Bamweyana, by making an offering of alcohol, and Kiwanuka by assembling a kit for him including a long white *kanzu*, a piece of bark cloth, a gourd, a stick, and a bag with money. Through these dual efforts, Semuju could effectively be relieved of Bamweyana's negative influences and come into a beneficial relationship with Kiwanuka.

After a long delay and many other signs, Semuju eventually relented and followed the instructions that the spirits had given him. He bought the necessary things and began to look for further instructions in his dreams. Soon after assembling the kit, Semuju stopped drinking and other things in his life began to change

as well. Family members with whom he had lost touch resurfaced in truly miraculous ways, and he received an offer to work on a lucrative job in Juba in South Sudan, managing two trucks delivering agricultural supplies. Before leaving for Juba, Semuju left his lubaale kit with his best friend, instructing him to keep it well and agreeing to send him money each week in exchange for his help.

Things were fine for a while, but one morning the friend who was keeping the kit took the long white *kanzu* out of the bag and put it on. He also took the stick and used it to strike a sheep in Jjajja Kasumba's compound. The sheep died instantly. That same night, Semuju was sleeping with other Ugandans in a tent in Juba when he suddenly woke up craving tonto. Wondering if something had happened to his kit, Semuju called his wife in Kampala the next morning and told her to bathe with herbs and to check his kit to see if his friend had tampered with it. When she looked, she found that all of the money he had stored in the bag was gone.

Distraught and late to work, Semuju got dressed and went where the trucks were offloading the daily shipment from Kampala. As soon as he arrived, one of the truck owners told him that he didn't need him anymore; he had gotten someone else. Then another called to give him the same news. Semuju was suddenly and inexplicably jobless. He called Jjajja Kasumba for help. When he heard the story, Jjajja Kasumba went and questioned the friend who had been keeping the kit and chased him from the compound.

With no job, Semuju decided to return to Uganda. Before boarding the bus home, he used all of his remaining money to buy tot packs of waragi, stuffing every pocket of his baggy trousers with plastic sachets. When he reached Kampala, he was drunk and nearly unconscious. In the week that followed, Semuju drank with abandon. Luckily, someone recognized him one night passed out on the side of the road and carried him back to Jjajja Kasumba's compound.

Eventually Semuju was able to reassemble the kit, and once he did, he was able to stop drinking. This was in 2012, and ever since he has not had any problems with alcohol. He makes sure to keep the gourds he has left for Bamweyana filled with beer and regularly lights fires for Kiwanuka. He has also started to take up the necessary training to become a *ssenkulu mandwa*, an advanced level of initiation in the community. From time to time, he drinks a little beer or a little tonto, but only during rituals or other offerings; it never causes him any difficulties now that he has again settled his problems with Kiwanuka and Bamweyana.

. . .

In this chapter, we build on the argument we made in chapter 4 concerning the affordances of spiritual experiences, relational models of personhood, and the importance of social connections in processes of ethical transformation. As in the preceding chapter, Semuju's story speaks to the benefits of experiencing oneself as living in a world that is densely populated by beings that might be obscured in certain versions of medical, social science, and philosophical discourse. While

the experiences of people like Daniella and Semuju differ radically in terms of how they understand the moral valence of the spirits that possessed them and whether these spirits were to be exorcised through deliverance or embraced and accommodated, they both found themselves called to respond to forces that seemed to come from beyond themselves. The members of Pastor John's church believe that many maladies are caused by the invasion of an "extraordinary, harmful, abnormal presence" (de Heusch 1981, 155) that must be exorcised through deliverance. By contrast, in the forms of possession found at shrines like the one led by Jjajja Kasumba, "the alien presence is no longer considered to be a pathological state but rather a pure epiphany. Far from being rejected as an evil, the spirit is accepted as a blessing" (156). Here "the purpose of initiation is not to expel the god, to exorcise him as in inauthentic, undesirable possession, but instead to accept him, to accommodate oneself to him, to deliver oneself up, body and soul, to him after learning how to do so" (159).

In this chapter, we explore this path of acceptance and accommodation by focusing on the dynamics of responsivity and ritual in the lives of people who gather around Jjajja Kasumba and his *ssabo* (shrine).<sup>1</sup> While we might read some of the activities that take place around the *ssabo* as acts of promising to commit oneself to a new kind of life (Lambek 2015), such as the moments when Semuju constructed and then reconstructed the kit of Kiwanuka's things, perhaps it is akin to the moment of commitment played out in the ingestion of the herbal emetic therapies described in chapter 3. Yet such a reading would, in this case, fundamentally misread Semuju's relationship to Kiwanuka. To understand this situation correctly, we must remember that the drinking was not the violation that Kiwanuka was punishing. Instead, the drinking was the punishment that Kiwanuka was inflicting on account of Semuju's failure to keep his ancestral covenant. In assembling the kit, Semuju was acknowledging and attending to promises and covenants between his ancestors and Kiwanuka that long precede his existence.

Understanding this situation, and many others like it, requires us to understand how people engage not only with the criteria established by the promises they make but also, and perhaps more importantly, how people find themselves caught up in situations defined by criteria and relationships that precede their own existence. It was only by acting in accordance with the demands of these prior relationships that Semuju found reason to hope that Kiwanuka would keep his promise to bless his life and to cease his punishment. Drawing on phenomenological writings in both anthropology and philosophy that explore these dynamics of responsivity and responsibility (Waldenfels 2011; Mattingly et al. 2017; Schwarz Wentzer 2014; Dyring and Grøn 2021; Zigon 2007, 2018, 2021; Mattingly 2018; Leistle 2014, 2016; Ingold 2017; Gunther 2006; Throop 2018) we ask how our thinking about the ethical life might differ if we foregrounded prior entanglements and forms of dependence that exceed our willing commitments. Anthropological understandings of ethics are so often founded upon an understanding of the subject as acting from

a position of relative freedom (Laidlaw 2002). What would happen if, instead of seeing ethics as an activity engaged in from a position of relative freedom, we looked more carefully at the prior entanglements that demand our response? And perhaps more importantly, how might a decision to respond transform a person's experience of the world and its possibility?

#### EMPEWO

Jjajja Kasumba's ssabo lies at the bottom of a steep dirt path just off one of the main roads in one of Kampala's southern neighborhoods. Near the bottom of the hill, there is a small opening in a wall of lush green vines. Next to this opening is a large *mutuba* tree, the tree used for making bark cloth, filled with the small spherical nests of yellow weaver birds. Stooping down to pass through the tunnel of vines, you enter the compound of round, brick, tin-roofed huts. Around the compound there are several fires burning, and the strange flat-smelling smoke of burning dung and herbs hangs in the air. Along the side wall of the compound is a long wooden bench where women are often seated, smoking herbs and tobacco in their long thin *emindi* pipes, sending pleasing puffs of smoke to the spirits.

Jjajja Kasumba's ssabo is a spacious and cool circular room with a high roof made of iron sheets. The roof of Kasumba's ssabo is held up by four smooth wooden poles. At the tops of the poles and all around the circumference of the roof are dry calabashes and bags coated in a thin layer of dusty soot. The floor of the ssabo is made of packed dirt and covered wall-to-wall by large mats made of different plastics and fibers in varying states of repair. In the far-left corner, toward the back, there is a square area covered with white animal hides surrounded by a row of thin iron spears with different kinds of points.

Jjajja Kasumba is a *musamize* (pl. *basamize*), or someone who has been initiated into the practice of mediumship and spirit possession through the ritual performance of kusamira. He is also a *ssenkulu mandwa*, meaning that he has reached a very advanced level among those who have been initiated and is the leader of a community of basamize, or people who participate in this form of mediumship and worship.<sup>2</sup>

As a *ssenkulu mandwa*, Jjajja Kasumba is responsible for diagnosing the problems his clients face through a process of divination. As discussed in chapter 3, visiting a *ssenkulu mandwa* like Jjajja Kasumba is often a last resort in a therapeutic quest, typically prompted by the experience of a series of misfortunes for which the family can find no other explanation or solution. During *omweso* divination, Jjajja Kasumba invites the balubaale spirits who originally came to possess him through a prior, and now long passed, process of diagnosis and ritual to communicate with the spirits of the person who has come to consult. This spirit who possesses him will then speak through him and also via the arrangement of the cowrie shells, coins, and other objects that he will scatter and sweep with his hands. In this

way the spirits will communicate what the problem is, what is causing the problem, and how it might need to be addressed.

While *omweso* divination sometimes reveals the cause of the problem to be witchcraft (*okuloga*) or simply the result of natural causes, a revelation that the problem is connected to balubaale may be followed by the performance of kusamira. Kusamira, which is also the verb for praying in Luganda and several related languages, refers to a set of practices aimed at a collective production and reproduction of well-being and prosperity (Hoelsing 2021). More specifically, it refers to the efforts made by the members of a patrilineal clan, now often in the company of a hired *senkulu mandwa* like Kasumba and his assistants, who use drums, gourd rattles, and singing to call the balubaale to come and speak to them by possessing one of the assembled clan members. The members of the clan must be assembled because the spirits to be addressed and welcomed are not spirits foreign to a person or family who have come and attacked from nowhere, but are rather spirits who have always been attached to the person and their kin. The demands that they make through illnesses and other problems are demands on the collective. They precede the existence of the person and speak to a set of relations and obligations that likewise preexisted the person's own beginning.

Immediately following kusamira, the family will organize a feast (*ekijjulo*) as a way of making an offering and satisfying the demands of the ancestors who have come during kusamira. At this feast, a goat will be sacrificed, and the liver and kidney burned along with sweet starchy *gonja* bananas. As with many medicines in Uganda and elsewhere, the names of plant medicines are linguistically linked to their purpose (Langwick 2010; Stroeken 2010). Here the word *gonja* is related to the verb *okugonjoola*, to solve problems—the solving of problems being precisely what the family aims to do by making this offering. Such a feast may also be delayed until a specified time in the future, at which time those assembled to perform kusamira expect that they will be able to use a portion of the wealth that has come by way of the blessings of the ancestors to make the necessary offerings.

Organizing a family to engage in kusamira is no small feat at a time when such practices are seen by many people in Uganda, nearly all of whom practice either Christianity or Islam, as spiritually dangerous or even Satanic. As discussed in the last chapter, contemporary Pentecostals like those who pray at Pastor John's church readily equate traditional religious practices with the forging of Satanic covenants (Meyer 1999), with some Pentecostals rejecting even the cultural practices accepted by Catholics, Anglicans, and Muslims, such as a groom giving a rooster to the brother of the bride. That said, even people who are not Pentecostal or intently focused on the spiritual dangers of traditional religious practices may fear to engage with balubaale in kusamira or even to visit a shrine like Jjajja Kasumba's with the intention of seeking out such an engagement. While part of this may stem from fears about what others might think or say, there is also a real sense of fear of what may unintentionally result from such involvements: that a relation with the spirits

could be opened that could not easily be ended or closed and that the demands that such a relationship might impose could quickly become excessive.

With this in mind, we can see that finding the necessary funds to repair or reconstruct the family shrine and to pay for the event and the animal sacrifices is one thing, but assembling one's clansmen is entirely another. Given the expense and difficulty of organizing kusamira, many who have problems with balubaale may make more private sorts of offerings, such as the gourd (*endeku*) of tonto that one regular participant at Jjajja Kasumba's ssabo set out in a locked room of his home, secretly and out of sight of his staunchly religious Anglican family. Others might go alone or in the company of a few others to visit Tanda or other sacred sites to make offerings.

Yet, the gathering together of the family members can be crucial because the person or persons suffering from the misfortunes may not be the one the lubaale seeks to possess. For example, the demands of the lubaale may manifest in the infertility of a woman, but it may be her sister who will find herself possessed by the lubaale when the family gathers for kusamira and who may subsequently come into a deeper relationship with this spirit through a process of more intensive training. Once a spirit possesses a person, this person and all of their paternal relatives and clan members become basamize. Medical anthropologists working in Africa have long attended to the importance of social bonds in processes of healing, and the anthropological literature on spirit possession has gone a long way both to unsettle bounded visions of the self and to open readers to more porous and permeable understandings of personhood (Lambek 2010). Yet this conceptualization of the interconnectedness of clan members, the distribution of maladies and the production of well-being across bodies, and the necessity of the cooperation of kin in the process of healing pushes this even further.

While Jjajja Kasumba sometimes translated the word balubaale as "ancestors," in this context this term refers to something far more complex than the deceased members of a person's own lineage, something closer perhaps to what is sometimes termed "powers" or *empewo* (literally, winds). The spirits of specific deceased people (s. *muzimu*, pl. *mizimu*) may sometimes be addressed in these contexts, but far more common are engagements with other sorts of spirits. Among these are spirits who guard or assist other spirits or who can be sent to do particular kinds of work and are sometimes housed or kept by their owners in horns, as described in chapter 3 (s. *ejjembe*, pl. *amayembe*). They may also include spirits who existed before human beings and who are associated with specific natural places like trees, rocks, or wells, and can come in the form of an animal like a python or leopard (s. *musambwa*, pl. *misambwa*), and, perhaps most importantly, a pantheon of other named Kiganda spirits (s. *lubaale mandwa*, pl. *balubaale mandwa*). The same named spirit can also come in different forms, sometimes appearing as a *lubaale mandwa*, and sometimes as a *jjembe*. All of this said, while we have, for the sake of clarity, tried to offer a brief schematic here, in

life the spirits appear less as members of classes or types than they do as particular persons with specific qualities, biographies, and relations to other spirits. One is unlikely to learn about them in a systematic way; rather, the spirits are learned as one encounters them in specific contexts, through embodied experience, performance, and narrative.

Each of these spirits has preferences and taboos dictating what sorts of food and drink they may consume; crucially for our purposes, only some drink alcohol. Many are also associated with natural phenomena. For example, Kiwanuka is associated with lightning and electricity and Mukasa with water, boats, and childbirth—especially the birth of twins. Their respective sacred sites are elaborately decorated with these features in mind. Kiwanuka's tree is filled with electrical cables and light bulbs, while Mukasa's is stacked with small wooden boats. Dreams featuring these elements can be taken as clear signs as to which spirit may be asking something from you. All of these powers are subordinate to Katonda, who is the creator of them all. While the Ugandan anthropologist and poet Okot p'Bitek (1971) has argued that both anthropologists and missionaries have misled readers through their efforts to emphasize the similarities between beings like Katonda and the God of Christianity, Jjajja Kasumba, who is himself a practicing Muslim, and the other basamize that we spoke with, were emphatic that Katonda, Allah, and the God of Christianity were one and the same and that the balubaale too were angels and saints called by other names (see Mbiti 1970).

At times these spirits may alight upon the heads of the basamize, but offerings can also take quieter forms, as we saw with Semuju's need to keep the kit he assembled for Kiwanuka safe from harm. Similarly, while balubaale may mount the heads of the basamize to speak directly, they also, and perhaps more often, send their messages in dreams.<sup>3</sup> Some of these dreams are interpreted to reveal advice and predictions about one's life, such as a student dreaming of a pile of white papers predicting their success on upcoming exams. In other cases, dreams sent by balubaale are read for signs about which of the balubaale are troubling the dreamer and what they are demanding in exchange for the dreamer's release from his problems.

Finally, while nearly any of these types of spirits may cause problems related to alcohol as a way of demanding the attention and care of those they visit, there is one specific lubaale, Bamweyana, who we have already met and who is worth mentioning by name. Bamweyana is one of the balubaale from the royal family of Buganda, and he is often sought out by those seeking to develop their musical talents or to close lucrative business deals. Many musicians in Uganda flock to his shrines, carrying calabashes of tonto and bags and hats woven from palm leaves to ask him to help them polish their talents. There, they drink and smoke freely as they sing and dance. He is also known for drinking. When other *empewo* wish to punish someone for their failure to attend to them properly, they will ask Bamu, as he is affectionately known, to drink through that person, as one drinks through

a straw, until that drinking destroys the person's life to such a grave extent that they realize the importance of attending to the demands of the *empewo*.

#### RITUAL, CARE, AND SOCIALITY

What was perhaps most striking in the rituals we attended at Jjajja Kasumba's ssabo and in the moments of offering, feasting, and visiting that we witnessed at the other sacred sites where we spent time over the course of this work, were the ways that ritual engagements with spirits resembled other intimate human relationships of caregiving (Kopytoff 1971; Lambek 1981). To purchase Ndawula's favored gifts of fruits and honey and then to travel to Tanda<sup>4</sup> to place them among the other offerings in front of his iron spears, each topped with ten curving fingers making an Islamic gesture of prayer, is surely an act of sacrifice, but it is also an act of visiting, entirely akin to the act of purchasing bread, margarine, sugar, and washing soap on one's way to visit rural relatives.

While these relations with intangible persons like Ndawula are of crucial importance, the ssabo also offers a space for a new set of materially and affectively rich social relationships that do not center on drinking to emerge. To be clear, Jjajja Kasumba's compound is by no means a place where alcohol is unwelcome. In fact, the consumption of alcohol is an important part of the feasts offered to many of the spirits and also part of more everyday forms of sociality. That said, the ssabo is a space where people who cannot drink are respected and where not drinking can be understood as evidence of their being cared for by the balubaale. Further, and perhaps more importantly given the social losses that can follow a decision to leave the conviviality of the bar, it is a place where people can come together to socialize, the laughter of the Ludo games alternating with the sound of drum skins being tested and tightened as people prepare to care for the balubaale and to be cared for by them in return.

Even where kin may no longer be willing to participate in the performance of kusamira, the collective of the healer's compound proved itself to be a vital force of support as people attempted to rebuild their lives. This collective was comprised of people engaged in processes of spiritual healing from a wide range of maladies, most of whom were not related by blood. Their interactions with one another not only took place in the ritual settings of the *ekijjulo* offering and kusamira rituals, which they participated in on behalf of others who came to Jjajja Kasumba seeking help, but also occurred in a much more mundane way. Jjajja Kasumba's compound was not only a place for engaging the spirits. It was a place for chatting and playing Ludo. People talked with one another as they filled their long *emindi* pipes with tobacco and herbs to offer the smoke up to the balubaale. People traveled with one another as they went to help Jjajja Kasumba organize performances of kusamira for other families, and as they went with one another to visit the *misambwa* at sacred sites throughout the region.

Like the Pentecostals you met in the last chapter, who find their days and nights filled with cell meetings and overnight prayer sessions, choir practices, and church renovation projects, and who simply have a quasi-public space to go to when they don't want to be at home, the people who have come to Jjajja Kasumba to be healed find that they too have a new space and a new community apart from the bars they have left behind. While alcohol is not prohibited and may even be served at rituals where the spirits in attendance are ones who drink alcohol, this is also a space where people like Semuju are supported in their efforts to refrain from drinking, even as they may continue to socialize with people who do drink.

Crucially though, the sociality to be found at Jjajja Kasumba's is not to be found in human beings alone. While there is certainly the day-to-day social life of the Ludo games and casual talk, there are also more intensive moments of conviviality that intentionally seek to welcome the spiritual visitors who are also part of this community into the space of the shrine, to care for them and appreciate them through gifts of food and music and to receive their blessings and advice as they speak to and enjoy the experience of being together.

#### EKIJJULO

We had spent many afternoons sitting in the cool darkness of the ssabo with Jjajja Kasumba and his assistants before we were ever invited to participate in any collective rituals. For many long afternoons we would sit, chatting, folding, and refolding our knees from one side to another against the dusty surfaces of the mats as we all learned to trust each other, until finally Jjajja Kasumba invited us to contribute something for firewood and to come for the *ekijjulo* that was to be held that coming Sunday evening.

On the afternoon of the feast, we arrived around 5:00 p.m. While we suspected that the feast might begin much later than the slated 6:00 p.m. start time, we hoped that we might be able to chat with people before it started. But as we entered the compound, we were surprised to find that there was no one there, until we saw a large pile of old and new shoes heaped at the entrance to the ssabo. Sarah and China had lost track of George at this point, but someone told us to go inside, so we took off our shoes and went in.

It was dark inside, and it took our eyes some time to adjust to the dark and to the smoke. The place was full of people crammed together and we struggled to find a seat. It seemed that the drumming and singing had been in process for some time. Drummers were beating the drums, and Jjajja Kasumba was leading the call and response of the *balongo* songs. Among the drummers was a man whom we had seen become possessed by Kiwanuka as we sat around chatting in the compound some days earlier. Everyone, except for the drummers, sat on the ground, singing, and clapping in time with the drums. Everyone was still themselves.

As we found our seats and our eyes adjusted to the light, we could see a feast laid out on the floor at the center of the ssabo. A group of women and children were peeling a large pile of unpeeled steamed bananas (*mpogola*) that were lying in a pile on top of a large steamed banana leaf (*olujjuliro*). There were also small bits of meat and long stringy mushrooms.

When the women and children finished peeling, they began placing portions of whole and half bananas and small pieces of meat on torn banana leaves and serving them to the assembled guests. Some people did not take the food, George explained, because they were fasting for Ramadan.<sup>5</sup> China was handed a hot moist banana on a leaf with some small pieces of fat and meat. As we ate, the drumming and singing continued. When everyone was finished, the women serving gracefully cleared the remaining leaves and took them out to the compound. After the first meal, Jjajja Kasumba started a song, “*Agabudde n̄abaana be*” (She has served her children).

As the center of the ssabo was cleared, the children were invited forward. First, Jjajja Kasumba’s daughter, a slender girl of seven in a long Islamic dress and headscarf, tentatively started a *baakisimba*,<sup>6</sup> and then the other smaller children, boys and girls together, joined her to dance *baakisimba* in the center of the ssabo while everyone sang a song for the spiritual *balongo* (twins) Walumbe and Nambi (Kizza 2010).

Jjajja Kasumba later explained that because they have not been handled well, the *balongo* have blocked development all over the world. He said that it is often because of them that people fail to find jobs or school fees for their children. These problems can come not only from a failure to handle physical twins well, but also from a failure to handle the spiritual twins, the children of Katonda, well. He told us that the *balongo* feasts “release” quicker than any other feast.

The children danced beautifully. It was so tender how they danced, and everyone else sang and enjoyed them. We were all together, everyone playing their role in this performance perfectly, but without direction or tension. After the song finished, the children left the ssabo, and most of the people followed them bit by bit. The drummers hung their drums up and went out, telling us to come back for another feast, which is being cooked. We sat for a while in the smoky ssabo, not fully knowing what to do. Having heard Jjajja Kasumba ask the couple seated near us if they had the sesame seeds they had been asked to bring, George suggested that the man and woman seated next to China had organized the *balongo* feast.

George eventually moved out of the ssabo to stretch his legs. Sarah and China went out too, just to clear the smoke from their eyes. Outside the ssabo, the ladies were preparing food for the next feast. As we talked to the women, we could see Amos, Jjajja Kasumba’s assistant, dressed in a bark cloth robe fastened at one shoulder over his trousers and polo shirt. He looked very handsome dressed like this.

Several years before, Amos had been working as a hawker, selling used shoes house-to-house with his friends. He was renting a room with one of these friends

for 40,000 UGX per month, but they weren't making much money and soon fell behind on their rent. He owed his landlord four months' rent, and he couldn't get it from anywhere. He didn't have any capital left or any other job that he could do. He was always worried about getting money, and his fellow hawkers taught him to drink as a way of forgetting. "Alcohol was like a blanket that covered me during that hard time," he said.

Amos and his friend were eventually evicted from their room. They moved into a shack nearby and often had to skip meals. His friend's brother decided to rescue them with some money for rent. He gave them the money, but they ended up buying alcohol with it instead of using it to secure a new house. Amos says that by this time alcohol had become like fuel for him, and that if he missed a day of drinking, his body would become very weak. His health deteriorated and his lips became red.

When he couldn't hold it together anymore, he decided to go home to his village. In the village, Amos began to dream. Through these dreams he came to realize that his drinking was not only the result of the stress of poverty, but also a sign that his ancestral spirits were not happy and that there were rituals he would need to perform to settle them. Messages in his dreams led him to the exact location of Jjajja Kasumba's ssabo. Though he had never been there before, he arrived effortlessly. Jjajja Kasumba welcomed Amos with open arms and led him through the required rituals. To cool down the ancestral spirits, he had to buy bark cloth, a spear, and other things. Since making these offerings, Amos has found that if he tries to drink the waragi he used to love, he gets a bad pain in his stomach. He drinks beer occasionally, but never exceeds two bottles.

Since that time, Amos has also become one of Jjajja Kasumba's favorite apprentices and is presently a *mutende*, a person in training to become a *ssenkulu mandwa*. On this particular night, Amos was moving back and forth from the bathing area at the back of the compound around to the side of the ssabo and then going inside. Ahead of him each time was a heavy-set middle-aged man wearing only a new red printed cloth wrapped around himself. He was wet and had small bits of green leaves stuck to his body. They moved back and forth several times as we talked to the women.

The women explained to us that the next feast would be for the female spirits of the water. It would be held inside the ssabo because these spirits eat *matooke*. The ssabo is dedicated to the lubaale spirit Muwanga and *matooke* is also his food, so the ladies can also have their feast inside.

The children were playing as they waited for the next feast to start. They collected fallen nests from the weaver birds. First, they kicked them like balls. Then one put one over his hand like a boxing glove and others wore them as shoes. We were not sure what the offense was, but Jjajja Kasumba was not pleased by this. He came over and took the hand of one of the children very firmly in his hand; the child knelt down as Jjajja Kasumba squeezed the child's hand and whispered to him very quietly but very firmly. Jjajja Kasumba returned to the shrine and the children stopped their game.

There was a sharp rattling coming from inside the shrine. George thought it might be a child playing with one of the rattles, but someone told us that the rattles were being shaken as wood was added to the fire inside the *ssabo* to invite the *balubaale* to come. The women checked the *matooke* and started to remove the leaves and stems that have been used for the steaming.

As we all moved back into the *ssabo* to take our places, a man poured kerosene into a large glass lantern and lit the wick. It was around seven o'clock, and it was beginning to get dark. The lantern cast a glow, and we could see the dark outlines of the shields and spears set off by the fire behind them. This space, where we had now been many times before, was coming to life.

The drummers took their places, and Jjajja Kasumba started to sing the *balongo* songs in a strong resonant voice. "*Leka emmere yo tojjula, gyenva ndiddeyoleka emmere yo tojjula lubaale anampa,*" he sang: "Please do not serve me with your food; I have already eaten. Lubaale has given food to me." They sang call and response with everyone singing and clapping along with him. George knew some of the songs well and joined in.

The women who had been cooking now brought the enormous bundle of *matooke* and the smaller pouch of folded banana leaves that contained the steamed meat. They placed these on banana leaves spread on the floor at the center of the hut and began to unwrap them.

Aunt Irene was dancing. Until this moment, we had always known her as the kind middle-aged woman seated at the back of the compound, round and motherly, sewing beads on shoes and selling twists of tobacco for pipes. Her corner of the compound is home to the nightly Ludo game, and hours can pass as people play and joke with one another.

Now a soft-spoken woman in middle age, Aunt Irene drank heavily when she was in secondary school. She started out just taking a little for fun, but in 1991, when she was in her late teens, she had progressed to drinking crude waragi and dropped out of Senior Four before she completed her exams. She stopped working and went days without bathing.

Her family members were ashamed of her drinking, and several tried to counsel her. Her niece tried taking her to the church of a famous Pentecostal pastor in Kampala. But the niece soon disappeared and when she resurfaced, she was sick with HIV and died, so Irene decided to leave the church. Her paternal grandmother tried to help her with her drinking problem by giving her an herbal medicine to be taken with milk. After taking this, she stopped drinking for a short time, but soon started again. The fact that this medicine did not work was taken as a sign by her family that there were larger spiritual forces, *empewo*, that were making her drink.

While many members of Irene's family were Anglicans who refused to engage with traditional religious practices, others had already constructed an ancestral home, and Irene was taken directly there without the need to consult a healer outside of the family. Upon reaching the ancestral home, she felt at peace.

Soon after she arrived, the *musambwa* spirit Bamweyana possessed her elder brother. Through him, Bamweyana explained that she was possessed by the spirit of his wife, Nakayaga, and that Bamweyana was causing her to drink as a way of demanding her attention. He said that, as his wife, she needed to provide him with alcohol, shoes, baskets, spears, bark cloths, and other things. Even before this, she had dreamed of a mentally ill woman, which she later learned is a sign of both Nakayaga and Bamweyana. Without further guidance, she bought a calabash of tonto and a palm bag and shoes for Bamweyana. She stayed in the ancestral home for three weeks and continued to return from time to time after that, each time taking alcohol with her to offer to Bamweyana.

Once Irene began making these offerings, she gradually stopped drinking. "If a lubaale wants your attention, it will find ways to hurt you," she said. In her case, Bamweyana made her drink in ways that threatened to destroy her life, but once she recognized him through participation in rituals and making offerings to him, she was able to stop drinking.

Many people who noticed her change wondered and asked how she was able to overcome alcohol. Irene only told her secret to those who were closest to her. Many of her relatives did find out though, and, as they were Pentecostals, did not take this well. They knew that she had a problem but would have preferred that she went for prayers in the Christian church instead. While Irene says that prayers never helped her, she has remained an active member of an Anglican parish.

That night Irene was at the center of the ssabo. Her short fine braids, dyed red at the end, flew as she tossed her head backward and forward. She was wearing a pink short-sleeved shirt buttoned to just below her breasts over a brown tank top. She rolled her head back and forth and danced hard.

The drumming stopped, and Jjajja Kasumba asked her who the visitor is. In a high breathy voice, Irene told us that she was Nanseeko, a female lubaale *mandwa* associated with laughter. Jjajja Kasumba welcomed her and greeted her and the drumming resumed again.

Nanseeko, no longer Irene, went down on her knees with the other women who were serving. They too flung their heads back and forth as they danced on their hands and knees, arching their backs up and down.

Nanseeko began to laugh, talking quickly and helping the other women to serve the food as they all continued to dance on their hands and knees. The women put large portions of *matooke* and meat onto banana leaves and distributed them to everyone assembled in the ssabo. These portions were passed around, and people ate. One of the women serving the food raised a piece of meat to Sarah's mouth. Sarah tried to refuse, but the woman insisted and placed the food in her mouth. Sarah looked disgusted and elated at the same time. Then a different woman serving did the same to China. She lifted a large pinch of thin tube-like strands to China's mouth. China, not sure what they were, feared that they were tiny entrails of some sort. The woman placed them in China's mouth; she could

not refuse. Then the women began to serve the soup. They took tiny cups folded from bits of banana leaf and dipped them into the *luwombo*, lifting the cups to the lips of those gathered to feed them the soup. One of the women lifted the cup to China's mouth, and it was salty and hot.

When everyone was done, the banana leaves and leftovers were cleared and taken outside. Throughout the feasting, the singing and drumming continued. As the women returned from the work of clearing the leaves, the drumming picked up, and the singing became more focused. It was now completely dark outside, but the inside of the *ssabo* glowed in the light of the fire and the lantern. The beam of a battery-operated headlamp worn by one of the women dancing flashed across the space as she moved her head to the music.

The women who had been serving along with Irene were all clearly possessed now. They took water from clay pots with long narrow necks into their mouths and then sprayed the water over us as they and we danced; big sprays of water showered over the dancing crowd. Water hit our faces, splashing in our eyes and soaking our clothes. These are blessings, but they are also fun, rowdy, and playful.

As the drummers started a new song, the women possessed by the female spirits of the lake sat down on the floor, each in the lap of the one behind. They placed the children, up to maybe seven years old, and including babies, some of whom were crying, between themselves. The women started to rock side to side together; they were clearly in a boat paddling across the water. The drummers drummed and we continued to clap and sing. China and Sarah bent their knees softly, and shook their hips, letting the weight of their bodies do the shaking, feeling the freedom of the fat and flesh moving itself.

The song shifted and the women got out of their boat. The oldest of the women was now a mother, Nagadya, cradling adults in her arms, as they made their requests. She took Sarah first, holding her in her lap. Then many others came. She cradled them, embracing them, squeezing them, and shaking them. Her gestures were quick and strange, her eyes no longer quite in this world. After she finished with each, she took their hands and blew softly and quickly on their palms.

China sat in her lap too. Nagadya asked her if she wants money; China said that she doesn't, she wants peace and happiness. *Mirembe, Sanyu*. This is true. These are the things she feels are missing in herself some of the time. She wants to be less restless.

Shortly after she finished with China, the woman possessed by Nagadya beat her chest twice with both hands and then lifted her hands in the air, a gesture that means she was leaving. She was going. The woman was back to herself. She calmed almost instantly. Her movements became more fluid, and her eyes refocused.

Irene now returned to the center of the floor and began to dance more intensely, and those around her sang energetically with the drummers. As she danced, she moved to the fire near the entrance of the *ssabo* and stepped into the burning coals. When she returned to the center of the *ssabo*, she got down on her hands

and knees and danced, arching her back and throwing her head up and down so that her hair flew back and forth.

Jjajja Kasumba reached behind himself for a large bark cloth. He threw the bark cloth over Irene as she danced on her knees, covering her completely as she continued to dance under the cloth. After a minute, she sat back, wrapping the cloth loosely around her head and body, covering herself completely. From inside the cloth, she spoke in the same high voice as before, now identifying herself as Nakayima. Jjajja Kasumba addressed her very kindly and directly. As they talked, the drumming stopped, and the ssabo was silent except for their voices. Jjajja Kasumba spoke to Nakayima with a sort of care and respect that anyone would wish to receive. She was treated as an honored visitor. He thanked her for coming, and asked if she drinks juice (*mubisi*) or alcohol (*omwenge*); she said that she takes *mbide* juice (juice also used to brew tonto). He asked her to make it possible for him to travel to Mecca. After a few minutes of talking like this, the drummers started again, and Nakayima returned to dancing under the cloth on her hands and knees. She moved up and down, rapidly arching her back and head in time to the beat of the drums. We all sang and clapped.

After some time, Nakayima returned to sitting with the bark cloth wrapped around her head, talking with Jjajja. Then she danced again. Eventually the bark cloth came off, and Irene returned to herself. Shortly after Irene became Irene again, the other women who had been possessed came back to themselves as well and complained that they had just arrived, and no one had given them any food. Jjajja Kasumba interjected that some food has been saved, and he produced a large portion that he kept back. Irene sat down in the center of the ssabo and ate ravenously. Jjajja Kasumba gently asked her to move to one side so that the drumming could continue.

One of the drummers came away from the drums and stood tall at the edge of the circle. He began to dance; he was now Kiwanuka. George whispered to China that he was Kiwanuka in *jjembe* form, the strongest of all the forms, and translated: he was saying that he wanted even to climb the poles. He danced energetically, springing up and crouching down low.

Another older woman in a *gomesa* with short braids became possessed again at the same time. She danced *baakisimba* while on her knees; they were both dancing, then they sat next to each other. A basket was placed in front of each of them, and people placed banknotes in the baskets. The baskets were evened. People greeted them, and we too came forward and knelt to greet them.

As the drumming continued, Jjajja Kasumba came to the center of the floor. He yanked one of the spears near the fireplace out of the ground, took the enormous *lubugo* (bark cloth), and pulled it over his head and around his body, securing it between his legs to make a cloak. He danced, holding his spear high over his head, and the people sang: "*Lubaale nannyini jjoba waliwo ensonga*" (Dear lubaale, the owner of our heads, we have a reason). He then moved to the fire and mixed

the ashes and coals with his bare hands, rubbing them over his face as though he were washing in water, making his face white with ash.

A woman sitting next to George whispered to him that it is Kawumpuli, *katikiro* or prime minister of all of the *empewo*, who had come. When he asked her how she knew, since the *balubaale* had not yet spoken, she told him that only Kawumpuli works with ash. The drummers also began a song that is reserved only for the princes, Bamweyana and Kawumpuli: “*Abalangira ngo- aliira waggulu nga ntaayi*” (The princes eat from above like birds).

Kawumpuli soon returned from the fireplace to dancing, spear raised high, cloak over his head, white ash defining his round features in the glowing space. He sat down on the ground in front of the area with the spears and stuck his spear into the earthen floor in front of him. People came forward to address him, and he clasped their hands in his, squeezing them tightly as they talked with him. China came forward, and he grasped her hands like this too. The connection felt intense.

He said that her grip lacks strength, *amanyi*, that her hands lack it. She replied that this was what she requested, strength. She was thinking of the strength not to become angry with her children when she is tired, the strength to stay calm even when things are difficult. He heard her asking for power, which she clumsily tried to correct.

Irene, coming to her rescue, introduced China and George to Kawumpuli, explaining that we were the ones who helped to organize the drumming. Kawumpuli asked what it is that we wanted done for us, and George explained that we were only asking him to pave the way for whatever we are doing. Kawumpuli turned back to China and explained to George that there were things that she is working on, but that are not yet implemented. That she needs to serve the *misambwa*. Then she will get everything, the power from Buganda. He continued, saying that she is a Nalongo who wants to rescue her nation from immorality that has led to diseases and mental illnesses. He can see that she is a natural Nalongo, and that she feels sympathy for her community, that she is a mother, a kind mother of her nation. He said that she is educated and that she thought she has traveled to Uganda to continue this education. But this is not the case; she has traveled here because she wants to rescue her own country, and her country is suffering because the *misambwa* are angry with it. He went on, saying that here in Uganda people can easily be healed from mental illnesses, but in her country they aren't. Then he started to name the things that China must look for, and George called for his bag so that he could take a pen and paper to help write them down. Kawumpuli said that China must look for a white hen, beads, and a bark cloth and that she would serve the *misambwa*. She should also bring a white goat for the feast, a white sheep for sacrifice, and a white cock for Mukasa, to be thrown alive in the lake.

After he talked to George and China, Kawumpuli stood and began dancing again. He took his spear out of the ground and balanced it on top of his head. As we stood near the edge of the ssabo, Irene came over and introduced us to the

man who had been seated next to us. He was Peter, another of those who had been drinking but who Jjajja Kasumba had helped to stop. He was leaving, and George prepared to leave with him too.

Things were quieting down for everyone now. The drummers stopped drumming; everyone was themselves. Things were back to normal. While the light hadn't changed, it was as though the lights had come back on at the end of a performance in a theater. The spell we had all been under was over, and we were in a different frame. Jjajja Kasumba came over to thank us for helping to sponsor the feast, and we thanked him for welcoming us into this beautiful event.

Peter and George started up the road, walking a bit ahead, and they exchanged contacts and made a plan to meet and talk the next day. Peter was home for a month from his work in Rwanda, and we wanted to try to see him before he returned. He got into the Toyota Premio that was parked at the top of the hill. We had seen the car there before, and China had joked that it must be a big night at the ssabo, not realizing who the car belonged to. We got into our car with Noah and drove away, too.

#### CALL AND RESPONSE

When they are fed and cradled in the laps of the balubaale, roughly bounced and soothed like babies, the basamize at the *ekijjulo* are reminded of their dependency on the *jjajjas*, on the balubaale, on all that has come before them. While the balubaale might not be ancestors in the sense of a traceable line of human descent, the *ekijjulo* and other rituals remind the basamize of their kinship with spirits who have long-standing relationships with their clans and families. Through gestures of care and enforced dependency, the basamize are reminded, in a deeply embodied way, that they are as dependent as infants on these intangible persons. To be clear, in saying this, we are not speaking of the basamize as symbolically becoming infants in these spaces, in the sense of their awaiting a rebirth into a new stage of life, as we might think of it if we were talking about moments of liminality in rites of passage (Turner 1967). Rather, they engage the balubaale—who manifest themselves in the bodies of their companions—with their own bodies as if they were infants or small children engaging with a grandparent, without an eye toward transforming this relationship into something else. In referring to themselves as grandchildren and to the balubaale as grandparents, in feeding and being fed by them, they acknowledge an ethical relationship of dependency and reciprocal care with those spirits, ancestors, and elders who have always and already had a hold on their life.

These enactments of infancy and care speak to the nature of the interruptions that define the experience of recovery for basamize seeking to leave histories of problem drinking behind. Dreams and other signs interrupted the lives of Semuju, Irene, and Amos and called them to tend to the obligations and responsibilities

that precede their own existence. These experiences stopped them in their tracks and made them question their lives—and the actions and identities of the more-than-human others who they came to think might have a hold on them. Drawing on the work of Rasmus Dyring (2022) and Lisa Gunther's (2006) readings of Emmanuel Levinas and Gertrude Stein, we want to suggest that these interruptions are "anarchic" in the sense that they call people to return their attention to obligations and responsibilities that were always and already prior to their existence. As Lisa Gunther writes, "anarchy refers to a time before the origin [an-arche], in which I find myself already responsible for the Other before having willingly undertaken to commit myself to such a responsibility. The anarchic response to the Other antecedes and interrupts the projects through which I define myself" (2006, 4–5). In emphasizing this dynamic of responsiveness in these stories we shift the emphasis away from a focus on how people come to determine the meaning of their experiences or how they determine what rules might apply in a given situation, instead looking towards "the point where something challenges [them] and puts [their] own possibilities in question" (Waldenfels 2011, 30).

These questions of responsivity and interruption return us to the questions that lie at the center of our larger project, helping us to construct a model of ethical self-formation and recovery that can more adequately attend to the effects of spiritual experiences in people's processes of ethical transformation. In taking up a focus on anarchic responsivity and interruption, we move beyond approaches that would foreground the human practices that might generate such experiences and refuse ontological questions that would seek to define what the *lubaale* really are. Like Dyring and Grøn (2021) we instead ask how these anarchic interruptions impact the world that we share. Taking such an approach allows us to attend to the effects of more-than-human beings, God, or other special beings in people's lives, without either requiring us to explain their manifestation as the product of human action or requiring us to make ontological assertions or denials about that which lies beyond us.

#### EXTROSPECTIVE QUESTIONS

For all of their differences, the people who attend Pastor John's church and the people who visit Jjajja Kasumba's shrine are all working to respond to interruptions of this kind. In their efforts to understand and respond to these interruptions, they all found themselves asking questions about the intangible persons who might be shaping their lives. As in Susan Reynolds Whyte's writings on the ways people confront misfortune in a neighboring area of Eastern Uganda, the questions asked and the answers sought focus less on the introspective question, "Why me?" than they [do] on the extrospective question, "Who are you?" with the "inquiring gaze focused upon beings outside [the self]" (1997, 30). Further, as is also true in Whyte's work, at both the shrine and the church this question

is not asked as a matter of abstract curiosity or even regret; instead, it is asked in an effort to determine a course of action, in an effort to respond, to *do* something about the influence of those others who are impinging on one's life. For while a life may be shaped by the actions of spiritual others, there are concrete things that can be done—either to exorcise the spirit, on the one hand, or to repair and more productively attend to the relationship, on the other.

For Semuju, whose story we shared at the opening of this chapter, this process of extrospective questioning led to the revelation that Kiwanuka had sent Bamweyana to punish him for his neglect, to call his attention to the spiritual obligations that were always and already upon him through Kiwanuka's intergenerational ties to his family. Semuju's drinking was neither disease nor moral failing, but rather was a punishment inflicted by a possessing spirit for his neglect of his spiritual duties. By properly attending to Kiwanuka and Bamweyana, Semuju was freed from this punishment while at the same time deepening his ties to Kiwanuka with the hope of prospering through his care.

In learning to see his drinking in this way, Semuju came to understand that there were things he could do to change his situation. Even if we bracket the question of the ontological reality of the balubaale for the moment, we can see that in materially responding to Kiwanuka's call, Semuju's experience of the world was transformed, his sacrifices allowing him to approach the task of living a sober life with a different kind of energy and commitment. Just as a woman might be reoriented toward her struggle with an obstructed birth through the recitation of a therapeutic chant (Levi-Strauss 1963; Jackson 2005; Kirmayer 1993), so was Semuju reoriented toward his struggle with alcohol. Likewise, in coming to understand his relapse and the loss of his job as resulting from the destruction of the kit, the restoration of the kit became the means through which he could reorient himself toward the task of sobriety once again (Scherz, Mpanga, and Namirembe 2022).

While the actions of a spirit like Kiwanuka or Bamweyana might seem to be entirely beyond human control, the ritual restoration of the lubaale kit opened a space of possibility for Semuju. There was something to do that might have an effect, and in this there was a new kind of hope, a new source for renewed strength. Semuju was also both responsible for making the repair and not entirely responsible for its result. Kiwanuka's response to his sacrifice lay beyond his control. While Kiwanuka's positive response to the sacrifice was not owed to Semuju as a guaranteed outcome of a reciprocal exchange (Stroeken 2010), it was a possibility, and in this space of possibility, this opening, lay a hope that life could be different.

While such an understanding of the possible effects of ritual might lead to deadly results in the case of an appendicitis if prayer and ritual were not also accompanied by surgery, we want to argue that, in the case of addiction, such an understanding opens up radically new pathways for reengaging one's future. As we can see in Semuju's story, and in the stories presented in the previous chapter, this process of repositioning oneself in relation to illness is not an easy one, and it

may take months or even years to accomplish. But once embraced and symbolically engaged, through ritual speech and action, these understandings of illness can have remarkable effects.

#### HIGHER POWERS

This process of extrospective questioning and ritual engagement differs from the way the “Higher Power” is engaged in inpatient treatment programs and AA groups. While one may submit to any higher power, the Higher Power in AA—the use of the singular is important here—is envisioned as a benevolent force whose role is primarily to strengthen the will of the alcoholic who has become “powerless over alcohol” so that he can live a sober life, despite his unchangeable condition of being an alcoholic (Antze 1987; Valverde 1998; Brandes 2002). While these images of a singular will-strengthening force and the unchangeable nature of addiction are no doubt present in Uganda, in this book we have shown that they, as a pair, are only one small part of the many ways addictions and higher powers are imagined and engaged.

Ugandan Pentecostals and basamize attempting to overcome alcohol-related problems are less focused on asking God to help strengthen their wills than they are on using rituals to engage directly with the spiritual beings who are affecting their lives. In the stories of people involved in either spiritual warfare or kusamira, we find a model of personhood and agency in which people’s actions are influenced by forces that are conceptualized as external and direct. Even more importantly, these influences are also thought to be changeable through prayer and other ritual work, and this opens up a range of possible futures that can be foreclosed in other models. In short, it is less about making oneself strong enough to overcome a permanently determined state, than it is about attempting to deal with the determining spiritual forces directly through ritual means. While this vision of bodies taken over by external forces bears some similarity to the metaphor of the hijacked brain found in discussions of the chronic relapsing brain disease model, at both Pastor John’s church and Jjajja Kasumba’s ssabo there is something one can do to expel or negotiate with the hijacker. While Pastor John and Jjajja Kasumba are by no means always successful in their efforts, the paths to recovery traversed by Daniella, Richard, Semuju, Amos, and Irene allow us to see potentials contained within other modes of living in relation to addiction by allowing us to see how addictions, and their afters, unfold in a world that has not yet been completely colonized by the chronic disease model.