

**THE TREATMENT OF THE THEME OF IDENTITY
IN THE WORKS OF MUTHONI LIKIMANI**

BY

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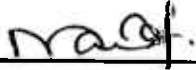
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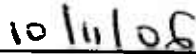
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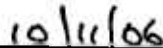
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The project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors



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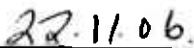


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DEDICATION

**Dedicated to my parents the late George Maina Githaiga,
who passed on in the course of my graduate studies,**

and Susan Wambui Maina.

You gave me a world.

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ABSTRACT

A thematic analysis of Muthoni Likimani's literary works reveals the author's commitment to addressing identity as the focal point. This theme transcends all her literary works. In our study, we examine how the author's pre-occupation with identity becomes a lens through which the author perceives issues that are prevalent in the society.

The study takes into consideration the fact that the author has not been subjected to a comprehensive study. However, we acknowledge the author's inclusion in feminist studies that identify her as a serious author whose works warrant literary appreciation.

Our study in its examination of the treatment of the theme of identity is guided by the tenets of the postcolonial and feminist literary theories. These theories are selected for their particularised emphasis on the experiences of the colonised society, and the woman respectively. The study essentially explores the settings, perspective, voice and characterisation used as deliberate authorial manoeuvres that expose her treatment of the theme of identity.

We focussed on patriarchal and colonial oppression as predominant experiences that have permeated Likimani's creative writing. The sense of victimhood and oppression necessitate an assertion of identity. The study therefore has examined these elements and evaluated their impact on the author's definition of self-hood and belonging. Apparently, Likimani in her writings concentrates on subverting the structures of oppression that would infringe on one's sense of identity.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study examines the works of Muthoni Likimani, a Kenyan woman writer. The study investigates how she handles the theme of identity in her literary works within the context of resistance and struggle. The historical setting of her earliest works is of interest to the study. It intimates a provocative gender and cultural assertion in the context of colonialism and the struggle for freedom. In her later works, Likimani explores circumstances that characterize gender relations in a post-colonial setting.

The author's biographical data

Muthoni Gachanja Likimani was born and brought up in Kahuhia, Murang'a District in 1925. Her father Levi Gachanja, was a pioneer African priest in the very first years of missionary activity in Kenya. She was educated in Kenya and obtained training in community development at the London University in 1958. While in Britain, she worked as a part-time broadcaster with the B.B.C.. Back in Kenya, she has worked with various institutions, though of great import is her assignment as a Women and Children Programme Producer with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. This relates to her Kiswahili novel, Shangazi na Watoto.

Her debut in literary creativity dates back to 1974 when she published her first two works: They Shall be Chastised, and What does a Man Want?. This was followed by the publication of her autobiographical novel Passbook Number F47927: Women and Mau Mau In Kenya in

1984, and Shangazi na Watoto in the year 2001. She has furthered her writing with her informative autobiography Fighting Without Ceasing published in the year 2005.

In an article featured in *The Standard* August 25 1990, Gethiga Gacheru describes Muthoni Likimani's literary creativity as resulting from her interaction with many women from the Commonwealth countries. What she depicts in her novels is apparently induced by their shared experiences in what she terms as "a wide spectrum of social issues." In the same article, Likimani laments that though she has been internationally acclaimed as a respectable author (obviously a subjective comment), she has been ignored locally. She cites evidence from the fact that her text, What Does A Man Want? has been translated into German under the title The Broken Wing (Der Gebrochene Flugel).

In "Friend of Neglected Heroines" Kwamboka Oyaro describes Likimani as an outstanding woman. Being the founder of the first African public relations firm in Kenya-Noni's Publicity, her efforts were recognized when she was named the woman of the year in 1987. The firm serves as a public relations firm as well as a publisher for upcoming authors.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The author under study has attracted inadequate critical attention in major feminist and post-colonial studies regardless of literary wealth realized in her works. Scholars interested in her works have not handled her independently. In most cases, her works have been studied alongside other authors.

Jean F.O'Barr in examining "Feminist Issues in the Fiction of Kenya's Women Writers" lumps Likimani with other writers. At the same time, O'Barr consults only two texts by

Likimani: What Does a Man Want?, and They Shall be Chastised. Killam and Rowe in their text, The Companion to African Literatures, only state their inferences. This could be explained by the glossarial nature of their text, and due to this limitation, they do not illustrate how they infer these observations. This study intends to examine how Likimani handles the theme of identity in all her literary texts with the aim of attaining a comprehensive study of the texts under study.

Likimani conforms to the dominant rhetorical code in the spheres of literary, political and cultural expression. Her literary works display themes and images that capture the position of the disenfranchised and the marginalized. She depicts the Kenyan society as it grapples with the history of colonialism, poverty and tyranny. She gives the reader an intensified perception of how this society is struggling to change structures of oppression.

In her text, They Shall be Chastised, Likimani focuses on a society faced with a new socio-economic, religious and cultural dispensation. She opens wide-ranging vistas through which we can appreciate the disorganisation meted on the African society. Kimori is used as a microcosmic representation exemplifying the effects of this encounter. He embodies the ambivalence that becomes inherent in the post-colonial African society. She provokes the reader to comprehend contradictions precipitated by missionary and colonial activity in central Kenya in particular, and the African society in general.

In her other text, What Does a Man Want?, Likimani traces the position of women in the post-colonial capitalist society. Through the use of several personas, we are offered a cocktail of various perspectives from which we can appreciate the situation of women. These personas are from diverse backgrounds: socio-cultural, economic and racial.

A similar trait is realised in Passbook Number where the author offers us a string of pearl narratives depicting the nightmarish colonial experience and how it particularly affected women. The use of women from varied backgrounds enables the author to comprehensively capture numerous forms of this oppressive experience in its diverse forms, and precipitates their struggle in asserting their identity.

1.3 Hypothesis

The study is guided by the following hypotheses. That,

- creative writing is an arena through which women attempt to historicize their experiences, and at the same time, propagate or assert a sense of identity.
- the quest for, and the assertion of identity is carried out in the arena of cultural, historical and literary development.
- literary works, especially through thematic focus, attempt to offer a statement about peoples lived experiences. Literary works in this light are taken as claims or statements that relate to a people's worldview.

1.4 Justification

Apart from receiving commentaries, the author under study has not enjoyed in-depth critical study. This is in spite of her prolific literary publication. Some of her books, published as early as 1974, have enjoyed several reprints. For example, What does a Man Want? has been reprinted four times. Furthermore, one of her texts has been translated into German. Confirming our argument that Likimani's works have literary appeal.

Previous researchers and commentators such as Adeola James offer an expositional interview. Jean F.Obarr in "Feminist Issues in the Fiction of Kenya's Women Writers" only glosses over the seven major women writers, meaning that the analysis does not accord individual focus, and more so in the face of the fact that these writers tackle gender issues differently. Consequently, the author's perspective is not given adequate focus.

1.4 Objectives

The study intends to

- Examine the author's treatment of the theme of identity.
- Demonstrate how she derives identity from political, gender and cultural settings.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the study

The study is confined to the treatment of the theme of identity in the literary works of Muthoni Likimani. The study examines how identities are assigned to characters, and how events and situations inform her depiction. Primary texts under study include They Shall be Chastised, What Does a Man Want?, Passbook Number F47927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya, and Fighting Without Ceasing.

1.6 Literature Review

This study reviews literature from three fronts: literature on the author, on identity, and also literature on women's writing.

In an essay, "The Female Writer and Her commitment," Molara Leslie Ogundipe responds to the mystification of the African woman. She posits, "one of the commitments of the female writer should be the correction of ...false images of the woman in Africa. To do this, she herself must know the reality of the African Woman." (6)

Ogundipe's statement is relevant to this study for it provides a means of comprehending Likimani's works. As a female writer, Likimani's works are analysed in the premise of how she tells the reality of the African woman. The study is particularly interested in examining

how Likimani develops a perspective through which we can gain insight into the experiences of women in Kenya during colonialism and after, and how this shapes their identity.

As a result of women's shared experiences, women writers can capture women's point of view. Jean F. O'Barr in support of this argument argues that Kenyan women writers have a vantage for "sharply underscoring the idea that the female perspective on social life and women's part in it may be different from the male perspective." O'Barr's observation is relevant and to this study. In appreciating and analysing the woman's perspective, this study seeks to establish how identity is treated from a woman's perspective.

O'Barr further observes that Kenyan women writers address "the question of how individual's re-define and re-affirm their psychological, emotional and social identity" (63) However, O'Barr only refers to two texts in formulating this analysis. The study delved deeper into Likimani's works, and examined how redefinition and re-affirmation is manifested and how it relate to identity in all her literary works.

Adolescence, marriage, social identity and work are in O'Barr's perspective the major issues that concern Kenyan women writers.

In their works, women explore whatever options are open to them as they seek to reconcile the "issues of cultural conflict and economic change as applied to them personally and to women generally." (60) The argument is relevant to the study for in the analysis of Likimani's thematic choices, cultural conflict is echoed in They Shall be Chastised, whereas women's struggle in a really changing socio-economic context manifests itself in What Does a Man Want? O'Barr

however doesn't attend to the question of identity. The study investigates how in her works, Likimani depicts the woman's search for identity in the context of their cultural, economic and socio-political struggle.

Okeng'o Matingi in his PhD thesis "The Treatment of the Theme of Identity and Self-Definition in the Fictional Works of Mariama Ba, Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta," postulates, "female writers do respond to the stereotypification of the woman. They do not accept and perpetuate the existent prescription for the woman, rather, they opt to look at the female condition from another dimension, a woman's perspective." (209-10) Matingi demonstrates that the woman writer is engaged in creating an avenue through which the woman's perspective is realized. While examining how Likimani's fictional works respond to stereotypification, this study further explores how Likimani's post-colonial sensibility affects her treatment of the theme of identity.

In her novella, A letter to Marama Ba, Wanjiku Kabira highlights circumstances under which women struggle in raising of a family in social, political, or economic hardships. Kabira's text was relevant to the study for it demonstrates a way of looking at the portrayal of women who are etching an identity in a post-colonial context. A similar trajectory is captured in Florence Stratton's view. Stratton laments the marginalisation of women from Africa's literary canon. She furthers her argument by observing that male standards applied in critiquing women's literary works have in fact "trivialized, distorted, and maligned" women writers. Overemphasis on racial and colonial oppression is to Stratton a refusal by male writers to acknowledge that

for women, oppression was racist, sexist and patriarchal. It is with such a comprehensive understanding of the colonial experience that the study proceeded to interrogate how Likimani portrays the woman's abnegation of a system whose structures have infringed on the woman's sense of a progressive gender, cultural and historical identity.

Douglas Killam and Ruth Rowe in their text The Companion to African Literatures observe that

the growing awareness of the importance of women writers in Africa has been related to, and accompanied by, an emerging debate on difference. Specifically the difference is ...between African women's experience and understanding and male-centred accounts of African tradition. (96)

Killam and Rowe underscore the needs that enhance the rise of the women writers' perspective. This desire, they argue, accounts for the rise of African women's autobiography, "as a means by which people write themselves into history" (97). In relation to Pass-Book Number F47927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya, an autobiographical novel, Killam and Rowe's position is relevant to the study. This observation helps the study in examining the role of autobiographical elements in building a claim for gender, historical and cultural identity. Furthermore, Likimani's autobiography, Fighting Without Ceasing is examined in the light of this argument

Killam and Rowe refer to Muthoni Likimani as one of the pioneer women writers in Kenya. They continue to observe that her text, Passbook Number – deals with "such injustices as the

lack of personal liberty for both men and women.” Her text is regarded as a historical account of the experiences, and the role-played by women during the Mau Mau insurgency. They Shall be Chastised is regarded as a text that deals with cultural conflict between African traditional and European cultures. Killam and Rowe on the other hand perceive What Does a Man Want? as addressing the “contradictions of married life in an African context”. Apart from giving a fleeting commentary on these works, the two authors do not offer any critical attention to Likimani’s works. This study then analyses the treatment of the theme of identity in Likimani’s texts, and includes her autobiography in the study.

Mbye B. Cham in an essay “Contemporary Society and the Female Imagination: A study of the Novels of Mariama Ba, observes that “relations between men and women in the African and African American women’s literature can be illustrated in the confusion that marks the disproportionate quantity of critical works dealing with women’s writings”. Cham relates this to abandonment expressed in the works of women female writers. There is, as Cham posits, a universal cry manifested in “personal, social, psychological, cultural, political and economic levels”. Thus, women’s writings become a means of “invoking canons of indigenous tradition as well as adopted non-indigenous values (conceived as ‘universal’) to justify or contest attitudes, beliefs and actions” (90). The study explores how this contest is used to negotiate for identity in Likimani’s texts.

Molara Leslie Ogundipe in “The Female Writer and Her Commitment” further explores determinant ideas that guide a female writer. She posits that “the female writer should be committed in three ways: as a writer, as a woman and as a Third World person” (10). Ogundipe’s succinct observation is of great import to the study. It provided the study with a

yardstick with which we examine how Likimani juggles these three responsibilities, and how identity is handled in her works.

'Timothy Ruppel in "'Re-Inventing Ourselves a Million Times': Narrative, Desire, and Identity in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine" argues that the abstraction of particular peoples and events into generalized categories insulates us from the historical trajectories that inform the population. The process of insulation involves a process of labelling where Western civilization is used as the yardstick. A search for identity affirms itself when a writer uses the resource of writing in an attempt to offer an alternative discourse. Ruppel asserts that "narration and identity" bring "into focus how differences are social products of interested desire" (329) Narration in this case is seen as a means of "re-inventing the self."

Ruppel's observations, though dealing with Mukherjee's work, are relevant to the study. They observations offer a basis from which Likimani's works can be examined, and particularly how identity is sought through the reflexive nature of her works.

Abiola Irele in "Dimensions of African Discourse" refers to African literature as displaying the character of contestation. Irele perceives this discourse as one which "has been historically projected in an essentially adversarial posture and has thus assumed a polemical significance" (17). This literature is predicated upon developing an African conscience. Irele's postulations are of great import to the study. While dealing with the postcolonial writing and how African

literature responds to this experience, Irele offers the study the impetus to investigate how Likimani's texts tackle the theme of identity.

Adeola James in In Their own Voices introduces her text by commenting, "writers, as cultural workers, are not apart from other workers in their society" (1). Thus, literary writers display "a deep-seated desire to contribute to the debates and struggles for development that are going on in their times" (1) Some of these debates that Adeola James points at are Africa's devastating contact with Europe, polygamy, the re-enactment of Africa's sense for a cultural heritage, and many others. Writers in this case mitigate, or heal some of these injustices. Apart from informing an approach appropriate to this study, Adeola's work reinforces the study through its informative and candid interview held with Likimani and recorded in this text.

Magu Ngwiri in an article "Kenya's Unsung Heroines" observes that in writing Passbook Number F47927 Likimani aids "our understanding of the past and those forces that helped shape our present." In this case, the past and how it relates to the future can be examined in its relation to the theme of identity.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study employs the tenets of the Post-colonial Literary Criticism, and Feminist Literary Criticism. The two theories inform our explication of the texts. Sara Suleri in an essay titled "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Post-colonial Condition" is of the position that there's

need to re-orient and re-assess both the literary and cultural interpretive practice of Feminist Literary theory. It should “re-assess, re-examine, and re-assert theoretical concerns that constitute or question the question identity of each putatively marginal group” (335). Though Suleri in her article perceives the introduction of post-colonial feminism as the “multiplying of subjectivities” of otherness, we should look at the post-colonial woman in a different light. Masculinity has in the post-colonial context, afforded a priori in the structural definition of gender relations by creating conflict between gender categories. This has enhanced a sense of otherhood and precipitated the rise of woman’s alternative perspective.

From this point of view, the woman is disadvantaged or underprivileged both as a colonial subject, as well as on the basis of gender inequality. This means that the woman in the colonial context is doubly oppressed. Proceeding from the two theories affords the study a means of investigating self-representation and the manifestation of the quest for identity at the two levels. Self-representation in this case seeks to negate the sense of otherness, which has been nurtured by patriarchy and colonialism.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in “Feminism and critical theory” outlines her perception of feminist theory. She argues that the creation of dichotomies between men and women is restrictive and denies momentum to feminist studies. Her argument is that the text should be viewed as “that area of the discourse of human sciences – in which the problem of the discourse of the human sciences is made possible” (477). Spivak sees the problem of human

discourse as generally located in the play of three main concepts: “language, world, and consciousness” The art of writing becomes an ultimate mode of expressing these concepts. This mode is what Spivak labels human textuality. Literary texts are in this light not only means of receiving, but also of expressing consciousness.

As the study set out to investigate the treatment of the theme of identity in Likimani’s literary works, Spivak’s theoretical position is useful. It aids our evaluation of how identity is not only suggested, but also how it is expressed. Author’s, through the art of writing, assume a vantage position and are endowed with a double vision. Likimani’s writings draw their setting even from the colonial period, she thus has a double plane from which she can express the experiences of women in particular, and the colonized African society in general within a historical continuum.

Elaine Showalter in “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” is of the opinion that “Feminist Criticism has gradually shifted its centre from re-visionary readings to a sustained investigation of literature by women” (311) As writers, women should be studied through the vista of “the psychodynamics of female creativity” attending to the postulation that in essence, women’s writing is distinctively different from that of their male counterparts. Feminist criticism in this perspective will enable the study to examine how in her literary works, Likimani propagates a women’s perspective in addressing concerns for gender, cultural, historical, political and other identities.

Toril Moi in Sexual/Textual Politics agrees with the proposition for feminist reading and woman-centred literary criticism. This model, she argues, can afford wide-ranging angles of approaching women's writing. Moi further observes that feminist criticism should be guided by the question of "not how to justify writing anything at all, but rather what one aims to do with one's writing" (185). This feminist position will aid the study in explicating Likimani's texts, and more so to examine her treatment of the theme of identity. This is in line with the contestation that a female writer does not only write about the actions of women, but bears in mind the consideration that "the feminist reader ...not only wants to see her own experiences mirrored in fiction, but strives to identify with strong, impressive female characters (46). Feminist criticism in this case is not monolithic. It is a discourse that acknowledges historical, sociological and political diversity which inform the authorial position.

The Postcolonial literary theory is also used in the study. This theoretical approach helps this study to investigate how Likimani's discourse reacts to Western cultural infiltration into the African cultural heritage, and how structures of colonial oppression are dealt with. This is in relation to the fact that the post-colonial theory aims at discovering the author's perspective. The author is seen to write from the colonised point of view. The author attempts to dig back into the historical past, and unearth historical facts. Likimani's opinion about this past, and her reflections on how it shapes identity was sought using this framework. At the same time, the approach aided the investigation of the author's perspective concerning cultural conflict in the spheres of gender, culture, history and religion or the belief system.

Bill Ashcroft contests that the element of placement and displacement are pivotal in determining one's identity. Displacement, equated to the loss of one's identity, is a consequence of a failure to cultivate a sense of belonging. The study examines how placement and displacement are used, through characterization, to establish the author's position on identity.

Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" opens a substantive debate on cultural identity and representation. As he notes, "writers speak from a particular place and time, from a history and culture which is specific." (110). In this case, as Hall puts it, every writing has a definitive point or position, and as far as postcolonial literature is concerned, such positioning plays a major role in articulating cultural identity. Enunciation of identity, which is highly dependent on "imaginative re-discovery" is closely tied to the emergence of social movements, and included here are feminists ant-colonial, and anti-racist each seeking to negotiate for identity.

Hall continues to argue that "cultural identities are points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture" (113) Hall's postulations are in agreement with Edward Said's Orientalism whereby orientalism is seen as "a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient," (21) As Said puts it, "ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force" (23) This understanding relates to Hall's identification that is enhanced through discourses of history and culture. This study benefits from these theoretical

observations for they model how identity as a means of sustaining a cultural discourse is manifested in the selected works of Muthoni Likimani.

In "The Gender of Tradition: Ideologies of Character in Post-Colonization Anglophone Literature", Patrick Colm Hogan argues that colonized cultures are engaged in an effort to "locate themselves in respect to the new culture". Gender roles and characterization enforce the imaging that is necessary for this effort to be realized. In the quest for gender and cultural identity, male and female characters embody "the putative virtues of both sexes into a new superior identity-a process parallel to cultural universalism or synthesis"(91). This is seen as an effort to repudiate colonial stereotypes and which at the same time captures post-colonial hybridity. Hogan's observation aids this study in its examination of character portrayal as a tool used to express textual concerns.

Bill Ashcroft et al in The Empire Writes Back examine how the Post-colonial

Literary approach can be used in exploring the states of women as colonized subjects. They pose the question: "is the fact that imperialism was essentially patriarchal sufficient grounds for saying that women are, by definition, "post-colonial?" (206). Though they don't offer an answer, the authors continue to observe that women's "double colonization" should be taken to refer to "two comparable and overlapping forms of dominance – patriarchy and imperialism" (206)

Their affirmation that the link between post-colonialism and feminism constitutes a substantial proportion of all work on the post colonial goes in line with the observation that for any

experience in the society to be considered replete, it must of necessity, incorporate the woman's perspective.

These reviews enhance our critical appreciation and interpretation of the works under study.

1.8 Methodology

This study is library based. It involves a thematic reading of the texts by the author under study.

This enables an informed opinion as the starting point of the research.

Material is gathered from the Internet and Electronic Journals. However, primary information is sought from the texts. These texts include: They Shall be Chastised, What Does a Man Want? Passbook Number F47927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya, and Fighting Without Ceasing.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DYNAMICS OF RESISTANCE AND STRUGGLE IN FIGHTING WITHOUT CEASING

This chapter will be approached through the autobiographical framework. We set out to investigate the treatment of identity in its multifarious projections. Identity is examined in its multifarious forms though of prominence is Likimani's assertion of personal, gender and cultural identity. As a philosophical reflection, the autobiography affords a historical and literary method for self-representation. The autobiographer sets out, explicitly or implicitly, to reflect how she has related with the outer world. Muthoni Likimani's Fighting Without Ceasing will be probed in an effort to establish how her interaction with people, events and circumstances shape her identity. In this connection, gender and cultural imperatives and undertones will be investigated in the context of feminist and postcolonial theoretical perspectives. Feminist theory is helpful in examining Likimani's concerns for experiences particular to women while the postcolonial theory helps the study to explore the author's perspective on the effects of colonisation on the African society. These theoretical standpoints enhance our explication of Fighting Without Ceasing in relation to the theme of identity.

The chapter will consider pertinent characteristics of the autobiography: selectivity, subjectivity and the element of truth. We are interested in evaluating how the autobiography, modelled in the realm of struggle, tackles the over-arching theme of identity. In Likimani's Fighting Without Ceasing, the theme of identity offers the persona a pedestal from which her resultant

interaction with events, people and circumstances is assessed in relation to herself. This is in line with Roy Pascal's suggestion in Design and Truth in Autobiography, that in writing the autobiography, "some theme is established which imposes an objective" (150). This theme can only be filtered if we interrogate Likimani's progressive development, and that of the autobiographical persona who is engaged in the search for completeness.

We also acknowledge the fact that apart from self-fulfilment, Likimani shares with others in diverse institutions. These include gender, class, and cultural and political institutions. Her depiction of identity in this case intimately expresses her identification with others in these institutions.

The study is also grounded on the perception that through the autobiography, the author seeks to interrogate social, historic, cultural and even gender structures comprising the world of their experience. This involves a search for balance achieved through the analysis of how interlocking structures and institutions have influenced the self. Likimani's depiction of the theme of identity is derived from her perception of the world and how this world in turn affects her. As Pascal points out, this analysis is best understood by probing the balance between "the self and the world, the subjective and the objective." (180) In this regard, we would view the autobiography not as contemplation, but as a statement about influences resulting from the author's interaction with the world. There is a search for inner understanding filtering down to a search for self-definition and identity. Fighting Without Ceasing in this case must be viewed as an attempt at discovery, a search for meaning and relevance of experiences revealing the "wholeness of personal identity." (184) In this endeavour memory is pivotal to the

autobiographer. It is the resource from which Likimani draws her projections. This is what Ron Price in "Some Speculation About Autobiography" calls the imposition of "spatial form" entirely derived from memory which provides "the writers only reality" (2). No doubt then Likimani depends on her past experiences to discover not only who she is, but also how she becomes what she is. In other words, she is interrogating the formation of her identity in whole through time.

To achieve this wholeness, the events and personalities (including the self) are arranged and evaluated from memory. In this light, themes become determining factors directing the selection of events. Those to be included are privileged by the manner in which they illuminate the autobiographer's thematic intentions. These events, personalities and circumstances are consequently awarded relevance from the subjective position of the autobiographer in relation to their desired contribution. With changing realities and evolving experiences, Likimani's personality and identity changes and develops. Allegiances shift as unfolding events and circumstances re-cast her image. The author explores how intricate experiences affect, shape and reveal her identity. This means that the autobiographer's identity as perceived through narrative is an intricate derivation of resonating past and present responses to situations, people, events and circumstances.

Resonance between past and present responses is the backbone of this narrative discourse, and the adoption by the autobiographer of a narrative position, is key in rendering the narrative. In the autobiography, the first person narrative position to a great extent reveals the identity of the

autobiographer. One becomes the object as well as the subject of the narrative. From this argument then, the autobiographer assumes the focal point from which events, situations and circumstances are illuminated. Images, events, actions and the enactment of the narrative are all organized from the autobiographer's subjective slant. An implicit analysis of this organisation would consequently afford the study a way of getting to understand the author's identity, as well as the handling of wider aspects of the theme of identity.

The autobiography has also been approached as a means of not only self-revelation, but also as an explorative tool that lays bare the autobiographer's life as narrated in the autobiography. In fact, Mineke Schipper in this regard cogently confirms that through the autobiography, autobiographers intend to "bring order into their own past and ultimately wish to explore themselves" (99).

In Fighting Without Ceasing, we encounter the author emphasising on her parentage as the most important aspect of her past. This past relates to the inculcation of values forming the basis for her identity. It is of worth to note that her parentage is greatly influenced by Christian values. Given this fact, her childhood is subject to conflicting values in terms of religious and cultural positions. She is protected from the influence of traditional cultural practices leading to the admission that "as a child, I found I knew very little compared with other children who lived in the village." (17) Right from the outset then, Likimani experiences a sense of alienation from the rest of the community. This is a reflection whose significance can only be assessed in

its relevance in enhancing coherence with the later personality. In this context, such an assertion can be taken as a confirmation of changing sociological imperatives precipitated by the encounter between cultural, religious and political values brought about by Christianity, and those of the traditional African society.

As Likimani writes about female circumcision, we get to understand the author's perspective regarding this cultural practice. This rite is among the most contested practices between traditional African religion and Christian missionaries and its inclusion serves to punctuate this contest. Likimani evaluates missionary as well as African attitudes towards this practice. She makes a confession of her attempt as a child, to witness a circumcision ceremony. Unfortunately, her Christian family thwarts her attempt. Most significant in this case is the introduction of the author's cultural and religious duality. She is implicitly suggesting that one needs adequate facts if an objective critique is to be arrived at. Her attempt is provoked by the value attached to the practice by conservative traditional Africans. Societal attitude and glorification of female circumcision could be captured by the position of honour accorded female circumcisers. Likimani describes them as "well fed and highly respected" (33). On the other hand, missionaries venomously condemn this practice as evil and heathen.

From a gendered perspective, our interest is drawn to the significance of this part of the narrative. We interrogate this narrative in relation to its statement regarding the identity of women in the context of cultural and postcolonial realities. We should in this endeavour first examine observations laying claim to the fact that the image of the woman has been used to

celebrate the African cultural personality. This amounts to idealization of the woman but which paradoxically tends to reinforce her marginalisation. As Mineke Schipper(1987) observes, “the romantic nostalgia that the African writer seems to cherish with respect to the female’s traditional role is not very conducive to women’s emancipation” (44).

What Schipper decries is the misuse of the image of women to celebrate Africa’s pre-colonial past, at the expense of their emancipation. The danger is that there is the temptation to retain the status quo and hence fail to correct situations that impact negatively on women.

In Fighting Without Ceasing, the patriarchal society, which thrives on this imaging of women, has constructed myths that attempt to sanction traditional practices. Discrimination and social ostracism are meted on those who defy these practices. An uncircumcised girl is considered as “one without culture ...unclean,(and) ill-mannered”(31), and one who is bound to become barren. What these myths estrange those who evade the rite, while conformists are rewarded with praises for cultural purity. This invites our attention to cultural performance of gender roles.

The text in this approach explores how women are assigned cultural tags. It is the role of women writers to question these tags by enacting narratives that offer a different perspective. Male writers would, as Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie observe, most probably paint images of women displaced from their own mind. To contextualize this displacement, Molaria decries

what she terms as “another mirage, the ‘pot of culture’” (7) as painted in the image of Lawino in Okot P’Bitek’s Song of Lawino. As a female writer who is concerned with the portrayal of a progressive female identity, Likimani demonstrates how myths compelling women to celebrate in their own subjugation have been discredited.

Education has most importantly been depicted as one of the most effective valorising agents. Through the emergence of an educated generation, the value of uncircumcised girls is enhanced, as the text proceeds to celebrate changing cultural attitudes. She writes, “attitudes were changing and now these women were in demand for marriage.” The prevailing cultural structures have been overturned by the “up-and-coming generation of professionals who are children of educated parents.” (32) By celebrating and privileging this subversion of cultural codes and their replacement with missionary nurtured attitudes, the narratives’ ascription to missionary education can’t be overlooked. This education disabuses its recipients of cultural mythification and stereotypes, and thus assists in alleviating though partially, the burden of stereotypes on women.

Fighting Without Ceasing explores not only cultural, but also historical facts informing the Kenyan society in pre-colonial and post-colonial settings. The text depicts cultural conflict between the African traditional society, and Euro-Christian values introduced by missionaries. The narrative describes cultural transformations with emphasis on shifting cultural positions. Christian values are used to interrogate, devalue and even dissipate certain cultural practices. In this way, the narrative admits cultural ambivalence and hybridity. As much as certain

cultural values such as extended family are privileged, discrimination of women through cultural roles, disinheritance, and female circumcision are devalued. Likimani in this way attaches as an ontological function, textual discourse that engages socio-cultural and religious values in relation to how they affect women's identity, and also that of the African society emerging from colonial and Christian influence.

However, as much as Fighting Without Ceasing acknowledges historical truths, the narrative focuses more on events as they affect Likimani. Historical events, and their relevance become important as far as they illuminate Likimani's personal narrative. The structure of the autobiography mostly focuses on the evolving personal consciousness as shaped by historical events and experiences.

Some of these circumstances may require our appreciation of Likimani's background. Although she is brought up in a staunch Christian family, missionary-educated and with her father being a pioneer Anglican priest, we find her questioning emerging religious values. Emerging denominations fail to first of all understand African religious attitudes. Secondly, she faults missionary education for its puritan approach. This education ignores any social issues and instead insists only on the dissemination of religious morals.

In writing the autobiography, autobiographers seek to shape their experiences with the outer world. According to Roy Pascal, the autobiographer is, "not simply uncovering facts and

relationships that an outsider must necessarily be acquainted with, but presenting an order of values that is his own" (193).

When Likimani orders values from her own subjective point of view, the image that we get is the one that she would wish to project. To us then, this image is representative of the author's identity. She appears to propose her own religious understanding shaped by her own experiences, as well as her own conscience. She evaluates religious mysticism and emotionalism, which are used as guises for economic and ideological oppression. Religious inequities are portrayed as a continued form of oppression and exploitation. From a postcolonial perspective, the narrative makes a statement to the effect that religion has been used to erode the African personality, as well as the cultural standing of the African. There is imminent relegation of the African to a receptive position in total disregard of his or her own perception.

The autobiographer's husband, Dr Likimani, is used in the narrative to illustrate colonial disregard, mistreatment and exploitation of the African. All these forms of oppression are based on stereotypes constructed along racial lines. We acknowledge Homi Bhabha's suggestion in "The Other Question" that "the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin", aiming at justifying "systems of administration and instruction." (41) Though a qualified medical doctor, Likimani is subjected to surveillance and constant transfers. Moreover, he is not allowed to reside in

houses meant for doctors, as they are a preserve of the whites. Colonial perception of the African then apparently seeks to inferiorize the African culturally and intellectually.

Being the first African doctor, Likimani has to fight stigma and subjugation in order to secure facilities such as were available for his white contemporaries. This amounts to a refusal to succumb to inferiorization, and an assertion of dignity and identity. Likimani praises him for being “tough, brainy and unshakeable”(77) In fact; he had to physically push a white doctor out of a theatre, refusing to be insubordinated to him. In line with the stereotype of “degenerate types”, Likimani is not considered competent enough to perform an operation on his own. Racial stereotypes are extended include matters like housing. The whites question the ability of an African family to fit into a white outfit and handle “furnished European government houses” (78). Administratively, these stereotypes have been legislated to make it formally impossible for an African to acquire a class and a status that should be a preserve of the whites. It is therefore not surprising that the Likimanis had to contest house allocation through the Legislative Council. Discrimination then becomes an express effect of colonial discourse, thriving on stereotypification to negate the identity of the racial other.

Emerging from such a background in terms of social and historical considerations, Likimani's quest for identity would definitely be influenced by these factors. Indeed, in “Temporary Suspensions: Form and Multicultural Expression”, Paul Sharrad articulately enhances our interrogation of the narrative. In Sharrad's view, writers emerging from such a process, “insist on differences, make plain their particular torments, and resist the erosion of individual

choice.” (61) Foregrounded in Sharrad’s observation is the interplay between the individual and socio-historical forces that have shaped their particularized perceptions. The insistence on individual choice, and the emphasis on difference expressly translate into the assertion of one’s identity.

In an effort to decentre patriarchal and colonial domination and inferiorization, reimagining the self becomes inevitable. There is a striving for socio-cultural and economic migrancy. Class mobility must then be celebrated for it enhances the scuttling of the degenerate myth. After the humiliating doubting of her ability to handle European furniture, a change in colonial opinion is celebrated in these words

I was happy to learn that they recommended me as someone who could be given a white man’s house and furniture. The report stated that Dr.

Likimani’s wife was a young missionary-trained woman who spoke good

English. Her children were clean and the house and garden well kept; and she even sewed the(sic) clothes for her children(79).

For our purposes we must explore how the narrative celebrates the element of fighting – which inherently bears a recourse for self-realization. For us to illustrate this aptly, we may explore the nullification of material determinants as pathway for domination, and conditioning the entrenchment of hegemonic discourse.

Nowhere else is the struggle for self-realization played out as in marriage. Under patriarchal structuration, marriage signifies, on the side of the woman, a loss of independence and identity.

Material dependence strategically places women under the yoke of patriarchal provision, and in turn demands from her submission and subservience. As Muthoni Likimani states, “here was a woman who had everything; surrounded by servants, cooks and gardeners.” Nevertheless, she chose to walk out on a man, “who had reached the apex of his profession” (89). The juxtaposition of material provision and status do more than tell us about the nature of their wealth.

The autobiographer appears to imply that there was gender imbalance. There was, as it appears, the husband’s provision of material and status needs which he used to justify his dominance over the wife. In this context then, this imbalance precipitates the fact that a corrective remedy must be administered in the devaluation of this patriarchal perception. The bond, which in this case is the lustre of material provision, must be severed. The woman must seek to contest her own identity that rejects societal conventions.

This is an attempt to rise beyond the tripartite repressions presented in terms of gender, race and class. She must engage these social constructions if her quest for identity is to be achieved. Patriarchal snobbery and masculine authority have to be subverted. Likimani must engage social constructs if her quest for identity is to be realized for there exists institutional reinforcement of patriarchal ideals. One of those institutions engendering patriarchy is unsurprisingly missionary education that fosters values enhancing subservience. Women are only taught home economics, puritan religious values and social etiquette. As Likimani laments, this education never taught her, “what to expect on the other side of the ‘fence’” (95).

Likimani critiques the missionary enterprise for its failure to adopt a comprehensive approach. Emphasis was placed on the spiritual and religious at the expense of social, political and economic needs. In its confrontational approach to the traditional African way of life, Christianity ignored and even dismissed any meaningful structures that guarded against social, political and economic injustices. Thus, any meaningful appropriation of self-identity has to first and foremost disabuse the self of values that are self-defeating, values that only suck the victim deeper and deeper into the quagmire of social, gender and economic injustice. It is with this realization that Likimani quit her marriage but obviously blaming her misfortune on her ignorance of social forces.

Apparently, this is reminiscent of Aissatou in Mairama Ba's So Long a Letter. This involves severing the bond of marriage, dependence and submissiveness. Likimani seeks to attain personal identity through economic independence and the autonomy of personal choice. There are roles that may be taken as defining the role of a woman in marriage. Apart from being a wife, mothering is privileged in Fighting Without Ceasing. The loss of this role translates into disappointment, bitterness and the despair. In Likimani's case, losing this vital role "finished the little hope (she) had." (97) In retrospect, the African woman who to Likimani is, "a special woman" whose "tolerance is difficult to explain,"(98) subjects herself to physical and psychological torture in a bid to cling to the last straws of this social definition. Even if it means a complete loss, concerns for selfhood appear to be submerged under motherhood. The woman is not concerned with her own destiny, and Muthoni Likimani's exit from marriage embodies then, a gesture that amounts to the assertion of her personal identity.

Significant in Likimani's exit from marriage is financial and material depravity with which she started life on her own. Regardless of her input in marriage, there are no structures to protect the woman. Women must therefore rise on their own to challenge these structures by asserting their identity and dignity. In fact, Okeng'o Matiangi observes that, "the greatest challenges to the African woman's identity has got to do with how she deals with her socio-cultural and religious institutions and how she responds to the changing socio-cultural environment" (73). Socio-cultural and religious constraints that confront women should as well include the economic institution that is central in women's negotiation for dignity and identity.

Fighting Without Ceasing has an apparent didactic essence that emphasizes the centrality of economic independence. Likimani's exit from the security of marriage illustrates how the lustre of this perceived security obscures the woman's potential. By sharing these intimate details of her life, Likimani points out that consolidating one's experience and a determination to forge ahead, to challenge uncertainty, can illuminate one's path towards self-knowledge that expressly links to the attainment of personal identity. The element of fighting is key in this endeavour.

Events narrated in Fighting Without Ceasing are hallmarks in the process of self-realization. It is with this understanding that our study would regard Likimani's first residence, Makongeni A2 Door 4. This gesture is an affirmation of independence, freedom and peace. She describes her first night in this residence as "satisfying" and as having nurtured "many sweet ambitions."

(103). The meaning of these sentiments cannot be lost. In contrast to her previous home of comfort, this bare, dilapidated room becomes a starting point in her quest for freedom and independence. This phase of the autobiographer's life is can be viewed as a recollection, and a re-collection enhancing the interplay between the past and the present, punctuating social and economic beginnings.

Literary critics have explored how, in literary works, African women respond to social, cultural and economic entanglements entrenched by marriage and the patriarchal order. There has been a near consensus on the most probable responses. Mbye Cham (1987) is categorical in his postulation. To Cham, these women will either "surrender... and bear the burden while lamenting and exposing social and other kinds of ills," or advance a "categorical refusal to shoulder the burden, and a determination to opt for freedom through various means." (90)

This translates into a power struggle between social, cultural and economic forces and institutions on one hand, and the individual (woman) on the other. This struggle must be probed in the context of a victory/defeat binary set, with our comprehension of the situation hinged on a particularized, yet universal dimension. We must, to aid our understanding, explore didactic elements suggested in the text and their gendered celebration of the woman's success. We should assess, as Cham suggests, "the experience on the individual and the letter's ability to examine, articulate and utilize the transformative capabilities of such and experience of struggle" (90; 91).

In Fighting Without Ceasing, we encounter victory/defeat binary oppositions being played out to explore meaning and significance of what the autobiographer experiences. Victory is privileged and celebrated. The entire narrative gravitates towards this celebration and projects the autobiographical intention of devaluing defeat. In its socio-cultural, economic, historic and political settings, the narrative examines the appropriation of experience, knowledge and energy that enhances the attainment of victory and success in making the self. This involves an act of introspection, self-dissection and the recalling of an aspect of the autobiographer's life in an attempt to make sense of it. To the autobiographer, this serves a therapeutic function while to the audience it serves as an inspiration.

This phase of the narrative is marked by a high degree of melancholy and bitterness and we would rightfully argue that her exit from marriage left a wound in Likimani's psyche. Recovering from this traumatic experience calls for the summoning of inner psychic energies. Likimani develops a capacity for self-reliance and self-interpretation and thus manages to purge her emotions. Confessing her intimate secrets and feelings through the act of writing the autobiography is more than an act of courage. It has a cathartic effect both for the autobiographer as well as to the audience. The autobiography helps to educate the audience on the possibility of victory in fighting against social injustice. We pity Likimani when she makes confessions about her husband's infidelity, how she started life on her own, having borrowed

only one hundred shillings (illustrating the giver's benevolence) and we are consequently purged of any feelings aroused by her fearful and piteous experiences.

Women's writings precipitate a gendered discourse that aims at influencing the socio-cultural, religious, historic and economic institutions. Convincingly, Hazel Carby in Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist, views women's literature as enticing our attention, and shaping our approach to social issues. She proposes that this literature should be viewed, "not only as determined by social conditions within which they were produced, but also as cultural artefacts, which shape the social conditions they enter (95).

Carby's assertion is conscious of literature's ability to engage social forces and institutions. Narratives should prick our conscience and suggest a means of interrogating social institutions. Writing should be perceived as an agency for social indictment. Fighting Without Ceasing in this way exemplifies an indictment of social institutions and the extent to which women must struggle to negotiate for their identity.

Power relations in marriage as depicted in the narrative repress individual potential. It is of interest to observe how Likimani attempts to realize her business potential while in marriage. Her attempts can be read as indications of her struggle for economic independence. She tries her hand in various small-scale investments such as sewing, poultry keeping, ghee making. In contrast, we view her success afterwards as qualifying the fact that in marriage, her potential

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was inhibited. As a matter of fact, it is after leaving her husband that Likimani is able to advance her education in Britain, after fighting against dwarfing social stereotypes and attitudes. The opportunity opens new vistas for Likimani and sharpens her outlook.

While in London, her socio-economic and political consciousness evolves. We find her interacting with diverse personalities such as Mbiyu Koinange and Joseph Murumbi (who became Kenya's vice-president). By attending seminars and talks, she developed a yearning for freedom. As she admits, "(she) too became bold. It was nice to feel free, and talk freely and live freely." (137). These interactions help to shape her evolving consciousness. Subjective truth in the autobiography serves as a literary window through which we assess values esteemed by the autobiographer. Historical events such as the emergency and Kenya's attainment of independence are relegated to the background while Likimani's experiences are foregrounded. It is from this foregrounding of personal moral ideals that we filter Likimani's assertion of her identity.

Up to this point, events that have been narrated are more representative of the author's particular concerns. However, as she expands her outlook and gathers more experiences, her humanism grows. Concerns with the particular become less important and she adopts a universalistic approach. The more she interacts with people from various parts of the world, the more she establishes areas of commonality, and the more universalistic her outlook becomes. She cites her father's "sharp sense of progress" (5), which she imbibes and celebrates as having influenced her identity. The self is attached to people and events that help to elucidate how the

person is configured. Autobiographers set out to explore not only who they are, but also how they became who they are. The autobiographer in this regard accounts for the influences that result from encountering not only influential people, but also the unique aspect of their influence.

For instance, while in Britain, Likimani interacted with students and politicians from Kenya and other parts of Africa. These encounters open political vistas which were originally imperceptible to her. As she admits, "listening to them and discussing Kenyan politics with them was very enriching and I learned a great deal" (137) There is in this assertion the admission of an aroused political consciousness, as well as an awareness of a national identity. She establishes a connection with Kenya, a fact we may argue results from her distance from the country. Her postcolonial sensitivities are sharpened by her exposure to a totally different set of racial realities.

Though the enlightened members of the colonized societies have been perceived as originally displaced from their cultural backgrounds, they should also be seen as expressions of multiculturalism. Paul Sharrad in "Temporary Suspensions's Form and multicultural Expressions" contributes to the argument by suggesting that in essence, "writers who emerge out of this social process insist on differences (and) make plain their particular torments, and resist the erosion as individual choice "(61) This is endeavour that involves an effort to locate the self. Cultural, historic and familiar landscapes acquire a re-awakened relevance and significance, and consequently self-identity begins to thrive with these factual appropriations.

Likimani in line with this renewed outlook defines her attitudes more boldly. She is not ready to view herself from a point of inferiority. This relates to the incidence where she interrupts a speaker who gives a misleading presentation on forced communal labour back in Kenya.

In writing the autobiography, Likimani puts the self on a pedestal. This creates an idealized image that the author projects for us. Her perception is focused on a particularized perception. At the same time, she has at her disposal strategies that invite empathy from her audience. As readers then, our perception of the author's image is solely shaped by our identification with what she experiences, and inevitably our appreciation of the author's identity will definitely be subject to how she carves her own portrait. With this consideration, we interrogate the text's subjectivity. Likimani gives us on that side of her story that illuminates her identity in total disregard of the other side of the story. Her primary aim is to elicit empathy from her audience. For instance, we do not get to know Dr Likimani's version of what led to the dissolution of their marriage.

In Fighting Without Ceasing, we encounter the autobiographer echoing her parents' entrepreneurship. We find her experimenting with various investments such as making ghee, sewing and poultry farming. As a matter of fact, she claims to have learnt the art of trade as early as the age of ten. Full significance of these revelations to the autobiographical persona, as well as to the audience is hinged on the fact that as a backward looking gesture, the writing of an autobiography allows the autobiographer a chance to engage in self-representation, and self-interpretation. It is evident that even to the autobiographer, these reflections do enhance her

understanding of her circumstances, and in retrospect in understanding of the process of being and becoming. The autobiography is consequently an exploration of Likmani's identity. It is a progressive endeavour aimed at unveiling meaning attached to particular events and experiences.

The fighting motif forms a thread that interlocks diverse personal experiences. To Likimani then, the welter of her experiences that is important in understanding herself revolve around this motif. It is an attempt to explain myriad treacherous experiences that she has encountered while on the path to self-realization. Her life then and the autobiography are captured through this motif. Muthoni Likimani fights oppressive cultural, religious, social and even political and economic injustices. Nevertheless, she remains humane and philosophical. As she claims, her relentless struggles are not aimed at putting others at a disadvantage but rather fighting for the disadvantaged.

A lexical examination of Likimani's reveals the she attaches to words related to the fighting motif. Examples of such words include battle, demanding and complaining. These words provide cohesion to the narrative. Likimani appeals to us as a woman who fights oppression, exploitation and subjugation for herself and also for others who are incapable of fighting for themselves. This introduces as part of her character, an elevated level of humanism captured through her sentiments about acts of unfairness, injustice and foul play meted out on others in the society. She denounces social evils and the mistreatment of others. For instance, when visiting a lands office, she is dismayed by the helplessness of "bare-foot poorly dressed, and

hungry looking” (302) people seeking justice from the powerful tribunals composed of corrupt, partial individuals who collude with the rich to “exploit these poor, shy, old women, many of whom could not read or write.”(302) This amounts to identification with the plight of the poor and the disadvantaged. Interestingly, feminist undertones are felt in the sense that what strikes Likimani most is the situation of women. These are old women who had been subjugated by cultural constrictures, and who have been marginalized by a new socio-economic dispensation where education becomes a determinant of how well an individual can access basic economic and administrative justice.

The impetus behind Likimani’s unceasing fight for her rights, as well as the rights of others emanates from social injustices and oppression she has personally experienced. As the case when she encounter these “miserable-looking women” (302), pity, anger and determination is roused within her. Women’s oppression has manifested itself in the emerging post-independence, capitalist society. There are tycoons who are using their financial muscle to deprive the disadvantaged (mostly women) the little they still have. Her case then is not an isolated case, but which is a general representation of gender imbalance and oppression. There exists disillusionment with the social, cultural and economic relationships.

Most important to the study is the author’s perception of her personal identity, as well as the identity of women in the contemporary society. Though there are encouraging considerate gestures such as from her father from whom she inherited land, societal attitudes that relegate women to the subaltern are still prevalent. To the author then, there is a persistent search for

fulfilment. There is evidently an attempt to organize the self in opposition to the limiting socio-cultural and economic forces. Frantz Fanon in Black Skins, White Masks captures this trajectory by suggesting that “the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters aris(es) in part, out of the purely personal way in which that individual reacts to these influences.” (81)

Though Fanon’s suggestion derives from a psychological analysis of racial relations, we can use it to illustrate how gender and material difference is used to construct identities. This view illustrates how individuals subjected to discrimination may organize their psychological orientation in an attempt to re-define the self in negation of the oppressive situation. As a woman who encounters patriarchal domination and inherent subjugation of women, Likimani’s autobiographical narrative can be seen to strive to construct an identity that refuses to be defined in the position of marginalisation. The outcome then is an interpretation of the self not as a marginal but central in terms of socio-cultural definitions. For this to be realized, the autobiographer must in essence subvert social myths that attempt to encompass and dominate in line with social constructions of gender.

For instance, land inheritance, which is a patriarchal domain, is used in the narrative to examine women’s position as well as to challenge their marginalisation. Traditions and cultural values are in effect used to reinforce this marginalisation. As a consequence of her exit from marriage, her daughters are perceived as the tribal other, and they are disinherited of their ancestral land. This amounts to severance of the ancestral chord that holds the spirits, the

living and the dead together. With anger and bitterness, Likimani laments, “they have been thrown out of the family homestead even as the spirits of their ancestors fill the atmosphere of the Ngong Forest.” (318) The narrative in this instance appears to contest and question tribal and familial identity, affirming the African traditional beliefs in the existence of a tribal and ancestral identity.

While in business the narrative illustrates a systematic marginalisation prevalent even in corporate institutions. Likimani’s career in these institutions, for instance while in broadcasting and public relations, she illustrates the plight of women in a gendered society. As a social construct, gender categorization is used to rank employees in opposition to merit. It is unfortunate that though she had an outstanding career, her merits were overlooked. And she wonders, “is it again because I was a woman?” (153) Women are in this social context surrounded by an aura of insecurity. Their qualifications are neglected and sidelined for priority is given to the dominant gender.

Throughout the narrative, Likimani is not dwarfed by either gender or racial discrimination. She is aggressively optimistic. Being the most outstanding trait in her character, this enables her transcend any limitations that emanate from social, economic and religious imperatives. The self-narrative strives to reveal Likimani’s character. We strive to derive how the persona interacts with the outside world. The conflict, which the persona attempts to resolve through an internalised focalisation of the self is based on how the inner and the outer, the subjective and objective, interact in the process of self-recreation.

It is with this conviction that Ron Price in “Some Speculation About Autobiography” describes writing the autobiography as “a rapid invention of the universe” where memory offers the autobiographer “a panoramic visual impression.” Selectivity and the shifting focus given to events and experiences tend to highlight the autobiographer’s evolving focus. She undertakes to present a “sense of control of an individual destiny”(5). The use of private documents such as photographs provide paratextual evidence and create a sense of achieved identity. These documents are in essence assertions of the autobiographer’s sense of self. They are systematic punctuations of Likimani’s story that is better told with the visual accuracy supplied through these visual ‘narratives’. They are bound to supply narratives that may not necessarily fit in the body of the autobiography.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE

GENDER AND CULTURAL PRESENTATION IN THEY SHALL BE CHASTISED.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the use of distinctive cultural models in the text for the author's interrogation of performative and expressive cultural definition. They Shall be Chastised is set in the period when missionary activity infiltrated traditional African culture. On its part, traditional African society responded in varied ways depending on individual preferences and ideological positions. The resultant cultural conflict was a consequence of the missionary attempt at deculturation of the African. While some Africans supplicated to missionary indoctrination, others held on to their tribal customs.

Muthoni Likimani in her text exploits cultural performance and expression to explore cultural dislocation, its enhancement and eventually its resistance by the adherents of African customs. Identities are forged in line with the two dominant ideological poles to which the text attends. More useful to the study is the fact that cultural positions are used to negotiate and propose identity and difference. Culture, according to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, is "a way of life fashioned by a people in their collective endeavour to live and come to terms with their total environment" (4). This collective endeavour involves a composite structure that is hinged on their science, social institutions, belief systems and values, which give the society its "unique ethos". Christianity and the imposition of European cultural values disrupts the African socio-cultural equilibrium.

From this cultural invasion, a culture that is representative of a society's sense of being is altered. This means that their identity that was dependent on how they define the world around them acquires new dimensions. Traditional beliefs and practices, the society's primary ontological tools, are in this context used to define and assert the African identity. In Muthoni Likimani's They Shall be Chastised, Christianity introduces a totally new set of values that is antagonistic to this traditional mode of self-definition. Africans are exposed to a different cultural disposition. Likimani in examining this encounter interrogates historical, socio-cultural and religious imperatives that inform this exposure and the ensuing cultural conflict.

From a postcolonial perspective, Likimani examines European and Christian attitudes towards African cultural and religious heritage. At the point of its introduction, Christianity and Christian education, had, as Ime Ikiddeh points out, the sole duty "to capture the soul and the mind" (xii) of its recipients. Missionary enterprise had the express aim of changing the African way of life, and imposing Euro-Christian cultural values. The theme of identity in this context is informed by either acceptance or rejection of foreign values. In the opening chapter of They Shall be Chastised, we encounter Mzee Kachungi serving as a representative of the conservative generation. He is described as "too conservative to be mixed up with an unknown foreign ideology" (2) His apprehension is based on his conservative definition and understanding of the ideal African personality.

Kachungi's view of missionary enterprise as ideological is not an incidental. It reveals Likimani's perception that the missionary activity was based purely on ideological contestation. Her text therefore presents the enactment of this contest. In this undertaking, Likimani makes a distinction between various groups of missionaries.

There are on one-hand missionaries whose main objective is to offer humanitarian aid. There are also agricultural extension officers whose duty is to watch over matters pertaining to farming. But on the extreme there are "the worst of all the whites, ----- (those) who used to collect taxes" (2). In this case, the text attempts to define a boundary between colonialism and missionary activity. Missionaries are depicted as philanthropists whose main aim is to salvage the African from the ditch of savagery. We encounter Reverend Smith and Mrs Smith making precarious journeys in the dead of the night, "to help pagans whom they had never seen" (4). This lure of kindness and philanthropy forms the basis from which the activity of capturing the soul of Africans, as well as preparing the ground for missionary criticism of African culture and tribal customs is enacted.

Kimori, the protagonist of the novel gets acquainted with missionaries through these acts of humanitarian aid. After falling off a tree and breaking his arm, missionaries come to his rescue. He is entranced by their kindness and he eventually moves over to Shimoni mission centre. We should take note of the fact that much of Likimani's portrayal of missionary activity is derived from her autobiographical experiences with the missionaries. For instance,

Kimori's characterization and particularly his interest in the missionaries is arguably an embodiment of Likimani's father.

Nevertheless, the text in line with Kimori's character traces the slowly creeping polarization catalysed by missionary activity. There are characters that ascribe to missionary teachings, and even adopt missionary attitude towards African tribal customs. There are on the other side of the divide those who are determined to safeguard their African identity. Lastly, there are those who even while accepting missionary teachings do not denounce their traditional background. These groups are antagonistic. There are conflicts and tensions with each trying to dominate the other and prescribe its point of view. The emerging confusion forms the narrative's framework in its portrayal of these characters' contestation of their identity as informed by their polemical stances.

In qualifying his perceived civilised identity, Kimori abandons his African roots. He must endure the indoctrination process starting with his learning of biblical scriptures, and moving on to catechism and eventually baptism. Baptism in essence is symbolic of Kimori's initiation into Christianity, and his acquisition of a new identity, and with it civilization. This is celebrated in his perception that "he had a new name and everybody in the village know [sic] that he was civilised--- he had already arrived as far as his idea of civilization went" (24-25).

3.2 The Lure of Difference

Likimani attends to the fact that the two polarities, traditional customs and the church are almost mutually exclusive. As she writes, “one had either to belong to the community, or be a Christian”(33). In his search for a sense of belonging, Kimori is in effect searching for his identity. The lure of civilization and socio-religious status informs his struggle for a distinctive identity. At the same time, he is faced with an urgent need for social and cultural acceptance by his community. Implying that he has to make a decision to settle this fluidity in his sense of identity. As this part of the narrative illustrates,

Zacharia was not completely free in his mind. If a Christian should not perform circumcision dances because the festivities were the work of the devil, songs of sinners, then what was he to do? What was he really risking? There were two things on offer. To be with his people, or to be a recognised Christian----- he decided that he must be recognized in his tribal community at all costs. (25-26).

Kimori recognises the urgency of acceptance into the two cultures. This recognition forms the essential paradigm from which our interrogation of the polemics of identity is based. Kimori's baptism and his ensuing change of name to Zacharia, and his later circumcision translate into his initiation into the two cultures. This duality is evidence to the fact that Kimori is aware that Christianity alone cannot afford him a complete sense of being. He must not cut himself loose from his tribal customs even as he embraces Christianity. In this case, They Shall be Chastised indicates that what Christianity affords Kimori is just an attitude towards his culture and its

customs, whereas his sense of belonging rests with his tribal culture. He fears being ostracised and losing his place in the community.

Even though he would want to be identified with his community, Kimori's alienation from customs is perhaps aptly explained by his desires. He envisages a future ordered in line with what he sees at Shimoni mission. He craves for " a missionary wife-----a Christian wife, civilised, clean and educated" (37) He views the African way of life as uncivilised and primitive. Witchcraft, charms, medicinal cuts, superstitions and other African tribal customs are in Kimori's perception reductive, unclean and unhygienic. It is no surprise that he wants to change his cultural outfit and carve an identity tailored in line with the Euro-Christian model.

Through Kimori's hierarchical formulation, all that is African is inferior to all that is Western. Western culture, presumably the mark of perfection, is taken to be the centre. On the other hand, African tribal customs are relegated to the margin. There is evidence of a structured cultural hierarchy that affords supremacy to Western cultural views. On his part, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics, perceives the coming of Christianity as having

Set in motion a process of social change, involving rapid disintegration of the tribal set-up and the framework of social norms and values by which people had formerly ordered their lives and their relationship to others (31)

The importation of Christianity, which was inextricably tied to European cultural values, attempted an express scuttling of African tribal customs. This culminated into a process of social change as converts like Kimori, entranced by the haze of 'civilization', leapt for this new cultural dispensation. They repudiated African practices and sought to emulate European missionaries. African values, norms and practices were labelled as sins.

By exploiting the religious fervour that characterised this context, Likimani attests evidence pinning down Christianity as the sole reason behind this disintegration. With particular emphasis, Likimani examines how this disintegration was played out in the institution of marriage. African marriages "were not Christian, were not legally acceptable. A woman married in the African fashion was a concubine"(48). We take note of the fact that Western values are formalised to make them more forceful. The entrenchment of these alien customs imminently brings confusion and social dramas.

In the context of polygamous marriages, African Christians are caught at a crossroads. There is no substantive guidance on how they can resolve social, religious and cultural contradictions. For instance, "converted polygamous husbands threatened to divorce their wives, and stay with their first wives only." Likewise, "converted second wives too threatened to leave their husbands"(53). The situation becomes even more melodramatic if the polygamous husband preferred the second wife. This portrayal adduces evidence to the claim that these converts wanted to fit themselves into an outfit that could not admit them. Monogamy as a Western

construct could not admit the African personality as it were, a fact these converts failed to acknowledge.

Brainwashed by Christian missionaries, converted Africans went in search of a renewal in the form of a new identity. This new identity is an express negation, and an attempt to uproot themselves from their former values. Mzee Kachungi in his attempt to entice Kimori from the mission centre is aware of this fact. Kachungi admits that Kimori's pride rests in his "becoming a Christian, getting baptized, acting civilized, and leaving his African name"(24). In a similar fashion, all converts want to denude themselves of their African identity, and as Francoise Lionnet suggests in "Cultural Appropriation and Postcolonial Representations", they "internalize a vision of themselves (as) projected by the colonizer, a vision which promotes a form of idealization of, and identification with, the colonizer "(117). To Kimori, western culture that is precipitated through missionary education is the ideal. He would only be content in himself if he can achieve this dream identity as evident in the fervour with which he works for his baptism, an indication of his dire need to change his identity.

3.3 Devaluing Patriarchal Structuration of Gender

Even while engaging a postcolonial depiction of the clash between tribal African customs and Euro-Christian cultural practices, Likimani attends to issues pertaining to the situation of women. There is a deliberate representation of patriarchal marginalisation of women but which missionaries attempt to remedy. When Toga, a teenage girl is abducted, her abductors when challenged respond, "she was born to be married" (46). Regardless of her prospects in life, and

ignoring her personal choice, Toga's father arranges for her marriage. There is an outright denial of free will, pointing to the fact that tribal customs had formulated a straight jacket through which women's identity is defined.

From the socio-historic setting of the novel, the narrative draws a picture of a changing gender perspective. Patriarchal authority is being challenged by the emerging socio-cultural structure. Through Kimonri, the protagonist of the novel, this argument can be well illustrated. In his quest for a civilised identity, he would not attain fulfilment if he cannot secure, as a wife, a woman who reflects his evolved consciousness. His ideal woman must be a diametric opposite of one nurtured by patriarchal construction of femininity. Women emerging from this patriarchal construction "knew they were girls, later to be women, to be controlled by men, and to be protected by men, and in spite of everything, to have to nurse them as if they were infants, feed them, but obey - - always obey"(69).

In contrast, Kimori (Zachariah) prefers women who are liberated from patriarchy. These are women "who developed preference for civilized men, men who could write and read"(69). As the text attempts to liberate women's attitude and remedy their situation, several factors emerge. Literate men for one are perceived as having a different attitude. Apparently, the implication is that men who remain within the confines of the traditional worldview are in essence uncivilised and hence remain trapped in patriarchal definitions of gender hierarchy. Education in this case is a potent tool that works to scuttle the myth of women's subjectivity.

In Kimori's view, Mrs Smith, the white woman, is an ideal portrait of what a woman should be. His rejection of village girls is based on the fact that they "would not cook the food Mrs. Smith cooked ... they would not be able to clean (his) shirts, (and)...mend (his) socks" (69).

Nevertheless, as much as Kimori's contact with Christianity nurtures an attitude that is conducive to women's emancipation from patriarchal egotism, it fails to embrace a comprehensive resolution of inherent social contradictions. African tribal customs had functional justifications, which Christianity in its wholesome dismissal could not perceive. These functions are depicted through dilemmas that face certain characters involved in the narrative.

One of these characters is Moses. He is a converted African Christian who is haunted by his customary duty to his dead brother's widow. In line with customary obligations, "Moses had to take care of his dead brother's family" (64). He ends up impregnating his brother's widow earning himself the wrath of the church. He stands firm, consoling himself that the missionaries, simply "didn't understand his problem" (64).

Moses' predicament helps the narrative to illustrate how an eventuality like widow inheritance, a customary duty, was used in the African way to hold the family together after the husband's death. In contrast, we have Yohana, reflecting on Sarah. He pities her in the following manner, "poor young woman who lost her husband! Still young, no one to marry her. . . she will never have a man outside marriage! "(43) Yohana's reflections help to precipitate the

disintegration of functional social structures such as polygamy. In the context of customary laws, Sarah should have been incorporated into her late husband's family and not left to fend for herself. But in this case, due to her acquired Christian faith, Sarah will not have anything to do with tribal customs, nor even get married as a second wife. She looks at herself from a totally new perspective, meaning that her identity has undergone a significant change in the sense that she tempers her social attitudes in total negation of tribal values. She is alienated from her African identity.

Socio-cultural and religious definitions that characterize the period immediately after the introduction of Christianity have an alienating effect on the African personality. Daudi's frantic complaints highlight the near ridiculous puritanism esteemed by African Christians. Concerning bodily embellishments, Daudi perceives this as sinful, and thus justified the mending of his ears. As he says, "God had made enough decorations on me" (58) He furthers his arguments to condemn girls who pierce their ears, hang silver and gold earrings, and who have also taken to wearing bangles and necklaces, besides plaiting their hair "like prostitutes" (58).

In similar terms, Ibrahim is ridiculed in his efforts to divorce his two wives in line with his new faith. Christianity spells for him the only options that he had, "the way to the light and the way to darkness" (156) while that which is African is distinctively the way to darkness, from which converts must be redeemed. In the context of Christian teachings, polygamy is tantamount to

committing adultery, even though such wives may have been married in accordance with the demands of customary laws. Ibrahim fails in his attempt to divorce his second wife and ultimately reverts back to polygamy, abandoning Christianity after it fails to rhyme with his African socio-cultural and religious personality.

One fact remains constant in view of how African Christians perceive themselves. Identity is central in terms of how individuals shape and order their beliefs and desires. In essence the conflict, and the confusion that characterises this phenomenal period revolves around people's creation of identities according to how they experience the prevailing social institutions. Likimani in her depiction of the shifting perspectives, beliefs and worldviews arouses our need to examine the institution of culture, and the phenomenal question of identity. It is with this intention that she portrays the paradox of cultural appropriation and the need to be identified in accordance with this appropriation, resulting consequently, to alienation.

As guitars and gramophones, undeniably part and parcel of Western civilization embraced by African Christians find their way into the society, African Christians are in haste to label these instruments evil. In an effort to decide alternatives that may diffuse the youth's attraction to traditional dances, Mr. Smith floats the idea that Mrs Smith, "could teach girls to dance decent clean dances.....could teach the girls to dance national dances (of Europe of course), such as the jigs and reels which would be the ideal thing"[emphasis added] (57) Due to their acceptance of such a proposal, African Christians are portrayed as having assimilated western civilization not just as the paradigm for telling apart good and bad, but also as an expression of their acquired identity.

As Ngugi observes, alienated individuals laboured to preserve, “outer signs and symbols of a European way of life” (33). The mode of dressing, dances, songs and hymns, and in general social etiquette were tailored to imitate the European. In Ngugi’s view, which agrees with our view, the European is taken to be the prototype worth of emulation. In the process of emulating the archetypal European code, the converts are in essence admitting their aspiration for a European identity. In the likes of Zacharia, Daudi, Sarah and Yohana in They Shall be Chastised; African identity is a sin, a regrettable eventuality that must be shed off. Evidence for this view is corroborated by their disillusionment, and their vindication of African tribal customs.

Vindication of African cultural expressions and practices is to Likimani a phenomenal question whose centrality is well illustrated through character ascription of identity. In a cross-reference to the title, Likimani explores the concept of chastisement. Those to be chastised are singled out in relation to Christian and European perception of Africans and their culture. Biblical justifications are used to add weight to their refutation of cultural and social facts that inform African culture. Brewing of traditional beers, polygamy, bodily embellishments, dances, songs, and having their daughters circumcised are sins that warrant chastisement. The aspect of othering is dominant in the construction of binaries that are used in the portrayal of cultural barbarism, and primitivism of customs. It is this perceived negative aspects that elicit hatred of African customs, and a refusal to be identified with anything that would betray the converts earlier attachment to this culture. Symbolically, this denial is illustrated in the adoption of

Christian names. All characters that ascribe to the Christian faith take up new names, which are purportedly a mark of their new identity.

What missionaries failed to accept is that each and every culture, and indeed each cultural artefact, practice and customary belief, has a role in defining the identity of those who share in that cultural reality. The necessity to undertake this interrogation of cultural facts is an express demand made on whoever wishes to understand another's identity and cultural definition. Jean – Francois Bayart in The Illusion of Cultural Identity, captures this trajectory. Bayart is of the opinion that “understanding a social, economic or political phenomenon amounts to deciphering its cultural reason”(9).

Christian missionaries do not attempt to explore reasons or functions that justified African cultural discourse. Mr Smith who view of his work as a “duty which brought him in[sic] this jungle” (65), reveals the European perception of the African as having been desperate for civilisation. Mr. smith makes an obvious assumption. Smith's attitude is that Africans were uncivilised and uncultured. He thus had the role of enculturating the African by denuding them of their customs. In place of the African cultural heritage, missionaries sought to impose Euro-Christian values. These values were not commensurate with the African personality and hence they became a recipe for chaos, tension and confusion. Likimani casts her text to reveal the tempestuous times the Kikuyu of Central Kenya had during this period.

From a gendered postcolonial perspective, focus is emphasised on the place and situation of women in the context of African culture at its point of encounter with Christianity and European influence. In particular, we examine how the traditional society that is ordered in accordance with the dictates of patriarchy, defines the identity of women. Indeed, Ania Loomba in view of gender relations suggests that

Colonialism intensified patriarchal relations in colonised lands, often because native men, increasingly disenfranchised and excluded from the public sphere, become more tyrannical at home. They seized upon the home and the woman as emblems of their culture and nationality (168).

Christianity's questioning of African tribal customs, the nest of male dominance, had the express result of affecting gender relations in the negative. Denuded of its domain of power, patriarchy seized the image of women for cultural expression and performance. Gender in this background must be taken as an important factor in postcolonial discourse. Missionaries on one hand, on realising the importance of gender, attempted to seize women and incorporate them as part of their discourse. The aim definitely was to diffuse the African identity by tilting the axis of patriarchal power, the mainstay of the African tribal culture.

Missionary education is in Likimani's They Shall be Chastised a ploy to lure women away from the grip of patriarchy. It is a guise meant to create the impression that women were in dire need of liberation from men, and hence justify missionary enterprise in their community. In demonising African culture, and particularly the patriarchal order, missionary education

attempts to create a new vista from which women should perceive the world around, and even go further to reassess their role and identify in the society.

Likimani depicts the dilemma that confronts women, and particularly young girls caught between missionary education, and the appeal from their socio-cultural background. Christianity and missionary education are portrayed as displaying an overwhelming intention of imposing a culture that is derived from the European way of life. In this case, women are subjected to a religious and cultural struggle. Matters are not easy on women caught in this tug of war. Each side imposes demands on them leaving them at a crossroads. Mbye Cham (1987) is of the opinion that women are in this context, “ forced to fight a battle on two fronts: one against the narrow confines of tribal customs and the other against the equally narrow standards of the Christian culture” (61)

Men want to tighten their hold on woman while on the other hand, missionaries on realising the centrality of the role and status of women in defining tribal, patriarchal power, fight to loosen the grip. Miss Green, the missionary teacher in charge of Shimoni Girls best illustrates this contest. She militates on her girls to abandon both African tribal customs and men. Miss Green’s attitude towards African tribal culture is in a larger sense a microcosmic representation of missionary attitudes towards the African. Dedicating her time and energy, Miss Green attempts to brainwash the girls in the hope that at the end, she might succeed in overhauling their African personality.

In her conviction, Green is confident of success. She does not anticipate any resistance. To her, there is nothing that should entice her girls back to African culture, and she assumes that her girls would wholesomely adopt Euro-Christian values. After it is revealed that some Shimoni girls have undergone circumcision, Green is shocked.

Circumcision !....oh no!that pagan custom! That horrible operation on my girls! Not my sweet Monicah I hope! Poor Esther! I am sure they are forced. They know it was a bad, evil, devilish action. We taught them that (198).

As much as miss Green is convinced of the expected alienation of her girls from their African customs, various factors are responsible for her failure. Obadiah, a beneficiary of missionary education points this out to Miss Green. As he tells her, she has not, despite her twenty-five years stay in Shimoni, “understood.... their (African) culture or tradition“ (198). What Obadiah’s remark emphasises is Green’s failure to interrogate socio-cultural forces informing African customs, beliefs and practices. Likimani uses Obadiah as a character to devalue European prejudices and stereotypes on African cultural identity. He strikes us as an objective voice and helps us to examine reasons that explain practices such as female circumcision. In the following excerpt, Obadiah explains societal and tribal imperatives that attract girls to circumcision. He tells Miss Green as follows:

Accept them as they are, for in truth, circumcised girls are more mature than uncircumcised (ones). They know there is a line of maturity and once you are

circumcised, you have crossed it You must behave like a grown up. You are no longer a child, but a woman, a lady (198)

Shimoni girls may imbibe Christian values and even desire a European way of life, but at the end of it all, they are still subject to African values and cultural imperatives. From Obadiah's point of view, the ritual itself may be detestable, but its significance holds sway. It endows the girl with a sense of identity as a woman. This is the same drive that attracted Kimori back to his tribal customs, meaning that the community's recognition of an individual's identity is more valuable than that Christianity may offer.

Conversely, interrogating Likimani's text reveals a further dimension from which female circumcision is portrayed. Though an uncircumcised woman is "like a child....tries to do what men do, and manage to do it sometimes betterthey are clever, but, but....." (199). What emerges from this statement is the fact that female circumcision is a tool that is used by patriarchy to blur women's attainment of personal identity. Prior to circumcision then, a woman is equal to the man, but this is changed through the imposition of cultural definition effected through the ritual of circumcision. Obadiah further describes an uncircumcised woman as "daring and they frequently look into a man's eye as they talk – a thing which a woman should not do" (199).

In this view, an uncircumcised woman is not yet subjected to male domination, subservience and control. She is free-spirited and not subjected to male definition of womanhood, and generally not given an identity from a patriarchal perspective. In essence then, this woman defines herself from her individual position and refutes patriarchal hegemony that is advanced through the older generation of women. They teach their young candidates, “education in things which make a man feel he is a man not to answer a man back, never to gaze at him when he is giving orders” (200). Patriarchy thrives on women’s self-imposed subservience that is propagated from generation to other. Young girls are modelled through circumcision to fit into a predefined role.

Obadian’s further remarks illustrate the author’s recognition that as much as these girls need academic education, they need to be equipped with social skills. He tells Miss Green to give her girls academic education,

But education on how they should live, leave to the old ladies of the village. You shout at them, and they are still naughty. You had them for years brainwashing them and they still give you problems. These old village ladies take them for just one week. Now look at them – clean, polite, grown – up, shy, obedient and worthy of any man (200).

From this creation, we can conclude that Likimani attempts to juggle two points of view. On one side, she attempts to critique patriarchal domination and definition of women, and on the other to criterion missionary education. Evidently, she fails to harmonise her views. If old village ladies are used to indoctrinate young girls in line with patriarchal demands, why should the text advocate for education on how they should live to be left in the hands of the same

agents of patriarchy? The overriding force in Likimani's stance appears to stem from her defence of the African identity that is represented through African cultural practices. Her critique is overtly an insistence on the need to understand, in Bayart's words "cultural reasons" necessitating various cultural and customary practices and rites.

Missionary education, and in particular missionary view of African culture is also faulted in its attempt at sexual differentiation. Again Green's philosophy of separating boys from girls, and her constant refrain to her girls "men are like wolves" (184) are used to achieve this. Miss Green's is a puritanical, one-dimensional approach to gender relations. In her depiction, Likimani makes a strong statement about her view of a realistic approach to gender relations. Obadiah, the male African teacher embodies the author's view in his struggle for harmonious gender relations. After defying Green and introducing a mixed sitting arrangement, "boys were well behaved, and the girls were no longer shy" (187).

Obadiah's attitude and approach to the issue of differentiation interrogates gender, racial and cultural issues. It is worth noting that Obadiah advocates for the use of African tunes in composing Christian dances. This, as he sees it would retain the same African rhythm in Christian songs. Obadiah's aspirations go beyond their immediate context. They illustrate the need for hybridity in approaching issues of gender, race and culture. More significantly, his proposal aims at a balance in line with the African rhythm, personality and identity. African dances are arguably the expression of the African worldview and identity. The syncretic dances that Obadiah proposes are thus an invitation for Christianity to embrace Africans

together with their culture, and to panel-beat Christianity so that it can fit within the African worldview.

Obadiah's perspective is used to downplay views held by other characters such as Daudi. Daudi strikes us as a character that vehemently opposes any contact between Christianity and African culture. If one subscribes to Christianity, they should strive to change their identity so as to fit into the demands of the new faith. Christianity in this sense would represent a distinctively superior religious and cultural identity, which must not tolerate African social, cultural and religious heritage. As Ngugi (1993) argues, cultural discourse in the colonial context was, "meant to undermine peoples' belief in themselves and look up to the European cultures: (43). This would amount to the acceptance of a Euro-Christian identity, as a priori that excludes everything that is African as advanced by characters such as Daudi.

Obadiah, a refraction of the authorial standpoint, refutes the systematic denigration of the African identity. His point of departure is that Christianity should accommodate African cultural expressions, identity, and art. However, Obadiah's conjectures on gender relations represent the author's attempt to take a neutral position. Obadiah represents a man's perception of the situation of women. Though as a male character he may have some limitations, he enables us to understand cultural reasons informing African tribal customs. He explains to the reader those socio-cultural, economic and political realities that constitute the African identity including the African definition of gender role and identity.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTER AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN WHAT DOES A MAN WANT?, AND PASSBOOK NUMBER F47927: WOMEN AND MAU MAU IN KENYA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the course of this chapter, our study interrogates Likimani's two texts: What Does a Man Want? and Passbook Number F47927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya, as focused through the author's choice and portrayal of her characters. We choose to read the text from this angle due to our conviction that characters are the author's building blocks in the process of creating a narrative whole that is the novel or text. It is imperative therefore, that in our examination of Likimani's treatment of the theme of identity, we should consider how her characters are presented.

Authorial presentation of characters is closely related to the author's perspective on central issues that they raise in their works. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg view characterization as tempered by the author's quest for "extraordinary range of dramatic possibilities, made up of aspirations, suppressed desires, masks and anti-masks, nobility and depravity" (191). In our endeavour to filter Likimani's treatment of identity, we lay emphasis on the significance of characterization.

This is informed by our conviction that the focus of the narrative in these two texts revolves around character more than on incidences.

The two texts, What Does a Man Want? and Passbook Number place female characters as their focal points. The episodes and scenes that are described are informed by a stream of feminine consciousness in their pursuit of exploring social, cultural, historical and gender implications on women. This points towards the author's inclination to explore women's experiences in a range of domestic and public domains. Likimani heavily relies on the resource of female consciousness to make statements about women's condition in the context of these two domains. Our study will thus use the archetypal women characters in the two texts to explore how each is used as a prism for gender, cultural and historic female identities.

In the projection of female characters, the texts also make statements about the identity of men. These statements are used in a complementary sense to contrast, reinforce or even substantiate women's identity, by way of the fact that gender relations are the evocative grounds from which identification with the situation of women is developed. Crucial to our reading of the two texts is the fact that Likimani appropriates both typical and apparently factual modes of mimesis. Factual, historical events and autobiographical experience merge to shape the nature of characters involved in What Does a Man Want? and Passbook Number. Apparently these characters as Scholes and Kellogg continue to suggest, should help us, "understand the principles they illustrate"

Likimani's feminist discourse enacted through her female characters in the two texts is an explicit exposition of the condition of womanhood. Apart from gender roles, women involved in the two narratives embody a negotiation of a wider social space.

Women adopt a boisterous assertion of individual and collective destiny. This assertion illustrates the fact that individual destiny is expressly tied to the collective sense of identity. Characters actively influence and seek to resolve impediments inherent in the economic, patriarchal and historical institutions. Primary in these impediments are patriarchal constructions and oppression, and colonial political oppression. In this set-up, conditions abound that impose a double-edged oppressive system. In her portrayal of female characters, Likimani advances a challenge to male social and political domination.

4.2 PASSBOOK NUMBER

In this text, Likimani relates the role of women in Kenya's struggle for independence. The entire narrative is composed of strings of narratives, widening the sphere of its focus in the sense that ultimately, we have a diversified portrayal of colonialism and its particular effect on the situation of women. The episodic novel is replete with autobiographical elements. For instance, Likimani cites the title of the text as her own passbook number but which she fictionalises through Wacu. Women under colonialism are subjected to socio-political and economic constraints, a fact Likimani highlights through her woman-centred narrative.

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Women adopt a boisterous assertion of individual and collective destiny. This assertion illustrates the fact that individual destiny is expressly tied to the collective sense of identity. Characters actively influence and seek to resolve impediments inherent in the economic, patriarchal and historical institutions. Primary in these impediments are patriarchal constructions and oppression, and colonial political oppression. In this set-up, conditions abound that impose a double-edged oppressive system. In her portrayal of female characters, Likimani advances a challenge to male social and political domination.

4.2 PASSBOOK NUMBER

In this text, Likimani relates the role of women in Kenya's struggle for independence. The entire narrative is composed of strings of narratives, widening the sphere of its focus in the sense that ultimately, we have a diversified portrayal of colonialism and its particular effect on the situation of women. The episodic novel is replete with autobiographical elements. For instance, Likimani cites the title of the text as her own passbook number but which she fictionalises through Wacu. Women under colonialism are subjected to socio-political and economic constraints, a fact Likimani highlights through her woman-centred narrative.

For women, the acquisition of a passbook is subject to conditions that deny them their rightful individual, independent existence. As Likimani writes, “as a woman, you must be the wife of a passbook holder or must be legitimately employed” (4).

For those who, like Wacu, had no immediate employment, they had to pose as wives of passbook holders. This led to the emergence of the “passbook wives” phenomenon. However, being in possession of a passbook is not a guarantee against colonial oppression.

There exists a contrast between the colonial impact in rural and urban areas. Though Wacu manages to escape repatriation by posing as Irungu’s wife, her experience with colonial oppression is relatively mild. Her story ends with her celebration of the protection afforded by her passbook. This is evident in the last line of this part of the narrative: “The passbook was so precious, it had to have a special plastic bag, and permanently hang round Wacu’s neck, like a precious gold chain, that green passbook number 47927” (23). It is evident from this citation that Wacu has effectively cushioned herself against colonial oppression by way of her acquisition of the passbook.

However, her celebration may be viewed from a different angle as a statement of her acceptance of patriarchal and colonial subjugation. Wacu’s situation is made worse by her fear of repatriation. She dreads returning to the village for she is going to “be hunted day and night by that ex-husband.....who is jealous of my smooth skin, and (who) complains and calls me a prostitute” (15). Either way, Wacu is insecure and subject to oppression.

Her return to the village, to be a victim of a man's ego is more traumatic. She thus prefers to seek protection by again, subjecting herself to a man's protection.

By enacting Wacu's dilemma, Likimani exposes the extent of insecurity and helplessness that colonialism sanctions against women. Colonialism, a male-dominated structure, is overly oppressive to the woman. There lacks, as in the general denial of justice and freedom for the African, recognition of the problematic situation caused by patriarchal impunity. Wacu as a character precipitates that sense of helplessness and lack of choice that women in particular suffer in the hands of men. As a woman, Wacu has no clear definition of her identity. She is a woman who is running away from the grip of patriarchy, but who finds herself running back to attach herself to a man in search of protection from the colonial system. The colonial situation is in this regard a factor that colludes with patriarchal social dispensation to erode Wacu's freedom and personal identity.

Symbolically, the passbook may be taken not just as a tag that identifies her as a colonial subject, but also a symbol of patriarchal ownership. By demanding that a woman should be the wife of a passbook holder, women are in essence relegated to the status of male appendages. In this case then, the colonial system institutionalises women's denial of individual identity. Although Likimani does not say it in print, the stereotype of the prostitute is the impetus behind conditions imposed on women before they can be furnished with a passbook. The notice reads in part, "if an unemployed woman, she must be living with her husband or her father" (9).

Undeniably, such conditioning creates a dilemma for the woman. She is a victim of two equally oppressive systems, meaning that she is under a double yoke.

As from the cited notice, the woman is stereotypically subject to definition in relation to male custody, meaning that she must be owned either as a wife or a daughter. This is tantamount to the denial of the woman's identity, denial that is further entrenched through the colonial code. Even though Wacu may have subjected herself to male custody, the element of personal choice is apparent. She appears to have agreed to the idea of patriarchal custody in a bid to create a space for her individual freedom.

In another narrative, Likimani depicts the phenomenon of forced communal labour with its particular impact on women. Colonial chiefs, as in the character of Gikandi, are congenial in exerting colonial oppression and exploitation. Women are left helpless and bitter, as expressed in this part of the narrative, "they grinded their teeth and were ready to bite. But bite whom? And bite them if they dare! ... so in the end, the angry women had to listen and obey! (26). Realising their powerlessness, they toe the line. They are double victims of the inhuman colonial systems, as well as the victims of the even more enthusiastic homeguards.

Through the colonizer's eye as focalised through the young D.O. Mr. Clifford, who is described as a "...young boy who had just finished school at Prince of Wales in Nairobi," colonialist perception of the African is an express derivation of racial othering. They are, as Clifford sees them, dirty terrorists, evil-doers and savages. The aspect of othering is evident meaning that

the colonizer constructs his identity by negating the humanity of their subjects, or even by attempting to inferiorise them. In a similar fashion, the patriarchal structures dominant amongst the homeguards have as their primary target, those women who fall under their rule.

Women take the blunt of communal labour, as well as curfew rules. In the fictitious Kimuri location where most men have taken to the forest to join the Mau Mau fighters, women are left at the mercy of the homeguards. It is in such a context that we encounter Wambui, Kamau's mother. Her son is imprisoned and she is harassed. There is despair, anger and bitterness. She understands the ultimate price for her sufferings. All her other sons have been killed, most probably in the struggle for independence. Her husband has disappeared without trace and now her last son has been imprisoned. Wambui's agony is captured in this part of the narrative, "poor Wambui wished that she was a forest-fighter. This would satisfy her, even if she got killed, at least she would not die like a sheep, not like a woman, but like a man fighting for the land" (33). As a prototype, Wambui is representative of women's suffering during colonialism. She voices the frustrations, bitterness, and the pain experienced by women. Nevertheless, this woman remains stoic, focussed, and defiant. This is a woman who embodies the role of the male and the female in her fight for independence, by refusing to be restricted to the marginal feminine boundary.

In the light of this argument, Wambui and others like her are accorded an identity that disputes the dependent, silent other. In contrast, we find the woman depicted as the reverse. As in

Wambui's character, the woman is articulate, independent, assertive and innovative, as in this segment where the authorial voice wonders at the woman's ability.

It is hard to believe how close to death the women at Kamuri were. It is unimaginable how they survived. Their legs and arms grew thin, their veins were showing all over and the women's softness was replaced by cracked, rough hands and feet (37).

In essence, this citation exemplifies how women shouldered the burden of colonialism. They had to manage their domestic affairs, and at the same time serve in forced communal work.

It is through Mumbi's character that Likimani carves the image of a woman who is committed to the Mau Mau cause. Mumbi has been left without a husband when her husband joined the forest fighters.

Furthermore, she is forced to work in the forced communal projects, and at the same time look after her family. But when she meets General Gaitangi, the leader of a Mau Mau battalion, she dedicates her resources to help the fighters fulfil their mission. She collaborates with her mother-in-law in hiding and feeding the fighters. Mumbi engages herself in the dangerous scheme of attacking a homeguard post. It is through her efforts and those of her mother-in-law that a successful attack is carried out.

It is from such a significant encounter with Mumbi that we can filter the image of the woman that Likimani projects to the reader. We do not in any way have a complacent, naïve Mumbi. On the contrary, Mumbi is proactive, courageous and highly efficient. Through these character

traits, Likimani makes a strong case for women's identity. This is contrasted in relation to Kamau's retort to his inquisitive, nagging wife. In a fit of anger Kamau silences his wife thus, "you women, your minds think of nothing else even during emergency times....if it wasn't for women, the world would have been great" (87). Kamau's statement has an explicit negativity towards women. All the same, it is denied any significance for it appears self-defeating. This is reinforced by the fact that as much as Kamau would want to view women thus, Mumbi undermines any significance to his words. It is Mumbi who pioneers the attack on the homeguard post, and even covers all traces of the family's involvement. She is sly, cunning and calculating.

The woman from the foregoing appears to appropriate a new perspective. She plays a bigger role that is in all its merit beyond the contrivance of the scared, emotional woman. In fact, the likes of Mumbi and Nyakio embody androgyny in their presentation.

They fuse together male and female traits, and their achievements are in no doubt a reflection of this synthesis. Moreover, these women characters sharply contrast with their male foils. This is aptly captured in their moral standing. Despite being separated from their husbands, they remain unattached. This is significantly absent on the side of men. They forge other relationships, qualifying the fact that men are in essence the villains of matrimony.

Likimani's portrayal of her female characters is an outright negotiation for a reassessment of social values, their meaning and significance. Even when we encounter female characters such as Wacu and Nyakio conforming to the "passbook wives" arrangement, they are driven,

justifiably, by the contextual demands of colonial oppression and not by bodily cravings. In this case then, we argue that Likimani's characters devalue prevalent social prejudices that purport to depict women as sentimental and whimsical. In contrast, these women are astute, and also exemplifications of moral probity.

This character build-up is inextricably tied to women's socio-political consciousness. As evident in their constant refrain, "the land is ours," these women understand social and political imperatives that shape their immediate reality. Furthermore, as exemplified in the character of Mumbi, these women understand their role in the struggle for independence. They undertake this task with an incredible degree of efficiency and commitment. They are enduring, daring and decisively anchored in the struggle.

In recounting the sad story of Nyokabi, a squatter on Major Greying's farm, Likimani heightens our insight in the predicament of women during the Mau Mau uprising.

When other squatters are ferried to detention camps, Nyokabi is not anywhere near the farm, explaining her isolation. This aspect of being set apart from the others individualizes character depiction. Nyokabi is beaten, harassed and abused by the barbaric homeguards. This sad incidence is described as follows:

They later pulled the Landrover by the roadside, pushed her into the bushes and poor Nyokabi had to struggle in vain with four men. They attacked and raped her as if it was the only thing they wanted in the world. And Nyokabi who wanted to die did not care but made them know that what they took was through sheer bestiality and nothing she

would give to the likes of them. Nyokabi was overpowered, bruised, battered and raped. (105)

The barbarism that is meted on the colonized is perhaps well symbolised in the rape of Nyokabi. This is an exertion of masculine power symbolized or equated to the colonizer, as opposed to the effeminate perception that is imposed on the colonized. This incident invokes not only a feminist protest against the violation of women, but also to a larger extent symbolizes dominance over the other. The self/other binary should be read in terms of power relations and a desire to dominate. It is necessary to bring into the argument the element of resistance. Nyokabi's resistance in the face of her powerlessness makes known her defiance.

Although women are depicted as vulnerable, they retain a strong sense of defiance. We are led to appreciate colonial infringement on women in particular, and the colonized African in general. Our alienation from the homeguards who are conduits in the entrenchment of a biased gender and political oppression, basically stems from their being portrayed as beasts.

Knowing that the vulnerability of the woman lies in the violation of her body, these agents of oppression seize upon this knowledge. The point that Likimani makes a consistent observation that women, because of their social and biological nature, were doubly oppressed.

Women's resistance and defiance exudes a sharp sense of character. In this narrative, we are presented with the nurturing and visionary side of women in a dominated and oppressed society. Joseph is sent for further education abroad through the efforts, and guidance from

peasant village women. It is through the visionary Rebecca that such a huge task is made a reality. Rebecca is endowed with a consciousness that helps her guide the society on the prospects of a future without the colonial masters. She mobilizes her community by reminding them of the need for education, which would provide individuals who would take the helm of leadership after the attainment of independence.

“Hero’s Welcome” no doubt illustrates how the contest for the future is played out. When Kamau, the village hero who has been to Britain, comes back, he has to be clothed in African attire, thus, symbolically cleansing him of Western influence. This welcome is depicted thus

there was chanting, more singing, more excitement. There was Rebecca ready with the calabash of porridge, the mother was ordered to feed him. Mungai placed the skin cloth on him, saying, “you are one of us. Welcome home.” And Macharia gave him [sic]spear saying, this is to fight for our land, and here is a shield to protect us and our land from our enemies.” (157-8)

The absence of men in this communal effort that is significant in the moulding the future of the community, makes a strong statement in regard to gender and consciousness. This illustrates the visionary character of women, who embody a signification of social and political consciousness. Rebecca takes centre stage in showcasing this depiction.

More than any other character, Rebecca is militant, and again serves as a symbol of strength and hope. In this depiction, Likimani makes a case against gender and colonial

marginalisation. To support this claim, we may examine the concluding line of the narrative when Kamau becomes politically conscious. After his false arrest, Kamau decides to become a sworn participant of the struggle for liberation. As he says, “ I now must take that Mau Mau oath. It is a shame that I never took one. I must be a real Mau Mau.” (171). It is significant that Kamau takes the oath administered by Rebecca, meaning that she is a conscientizing agent.

Through the narrative then, Likimani identifies women through a particular slant. They are pivotal in not only building the society, but are active participant in social political growth of the society. The fact that women are given this role in political and social discourses supports our claim that Likimani explores women’s identity in the context of socio-political upheavals. They are the pillars that support the society as it grapples with these problems. Their identity is negotiated from a socio-political and historic context. Women are not cushioned against colonial abuses. They have their share of suffering and abuse, and in fact they are more vulnerable to the excesses of the oppressive colonial system. Women are victims of the existing social and political values.

It is with this revelation that we examine Likimani’s treatment of social class and social placement in this historic period. In “Vanishing Camp” Likimani, through the character of Nyaruai enacts a discourse that we may use to interrogate her quest for identity. This narrative attempts to merge issues of class and tribal identities. In all the other narratives included in the text, “Vanishing Camp” has its characters drawn from the upper strata of the society. Nyaruai is married to a doctor. This reminds us of the author’s marriage to Dr Likimani.

Autobiographical elements in this case reveal the author's personal participation and in general, participation by women across the entire socio-economic divide.

Nyaruai's efforts in supporting Mau Mau fighters and detainees must begin with first of all, influencing her husband. She must open his mind to political issues of the day. In this way we find Likimani asserting an integrative, all inclusive contribution to the struggle, that cuts across gender and tribal divisions. Towards such an approach, Patrick Taylor views the anticolonial discourse as one that "provides possibilities for reconstructing distorted communicative processes by enabling subjects to decipher their own historical trajectories and recreate them as incessant movements towards reciprocal human understanding" (141). This kind of discourse does not exclusive in its portrayal of gender and tribal identities as in "Vanishing Camp". But we should note the presence of racial differentiation. Mwacharo, Nyaruai's husband, comes to terms with his racial and political identity after persistent prodding from his wife. It is thus again in this depiction that we see the woman taking up the role of the conscious part of the society.

As evident from this part of the narrative, Mwacharo has been awakened.

As he queries himself

Is that flag so important; is human life of less importance than the Union Jack?...If the colonialists think so, then I think I am making a mistake not to help my people to have our own flag, slightly torn, flying outside where masses stay helplessly frustrated. The flag is tearing just as their colonial power is falling to pieces....He felt deeply where he

belonged; he looked at his hands, yet I am black man, black African and a Kenyan.

(145)[emphasis added]

The choice of characters from various tribes adds to the creation of a nationalistic identity. We have Mwacharo, Wambua, Omondi, Mungai and others providing a cocktail of different tribal backgrounds. The author in this case tries to create a tribal balance in the narrative, and thus create a national and racial identity. As Mwacharo further asserts, “we are both black, and blacks we are going to remain,” (146) racial considerations are important if one is to discover their true identity.

In her narrative poem, What Does a Man Want?, Muthoni Likimani presents us with women characters who interrogate gender relations in a more contemporary setting. There is the castigation of the social order that disadvantage women. Identity in this case is particularly concerned with gender in terms of stereotypes, roles and relations.

4.3 WHAT DOES MAN WANT?

In What Does a Man Want?, Likimani depicts a continuous search for a satisfactory definition of ideal gender relations. The text is highly discursive in its portrayal of male/female relations. The text is highly versatile. It is rendered through multiple voices of women drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and races. Consequently, it is imperative that we examine not only how these voices interrogate in their creation of character, the image and identity of men and women. As we filter the character of women, and its inherent underlying consciousness,

we should as well investigate textual deconstruction of not only the presumed patriarchal domination, but also inherent undertones of cultural and racial differences.

Much of these textual merits are realized through the style utilised by the author. Its free verse enhances the intermingling of voices, as well as enabling the author to enact a free-flow of expressions and thoughts. Our study however concentrates its focus on the consciousness that leans towards the depiction of a near universal claim about the experiences of women. This universality is primarily achieved through shifting points of view employed in rendering this work of poetry.

As the text opens, we are promised a militant emotional depiction of the experiences of women in the hands men, as this excerpt illustrates:

If a man does least,

Show me the least!

I demand to be shown!

Let me know,

Let me read,

Let me see,

And let me compare

What does a man want

In a woman – I mean (1)

The rest of the poem, as promised here, functions to expose the myriad attitudes adopted by women in this elusive search for what can satisfy men. In essence, the text acknowledges a historical continuum that is evidence of an ever-present domination of women. We have for instance the mother who suggests winning the man “through his stomach” (1), the aunt who is of the opinion that she might get hold of her man “through the jealous mother-in-law” (2).

These and many other suggestions such as being fashionable, cooking good meals, motherhood and pampering are presented as just examples in the long search for what a man wants. It is evident that this persistent search is useful in shaping the character of women. There is a traditional feminine indoctrination that takes the form of tutelage, as in the following verse,

Before my marriage, I knew;

I could sing the whole list

Without looking.

I could sing

I could rehearse (2)

This citation serves to illustrate the claim that women are victims of a traditional patriarchal society ordered with a desire for subjugation. One of the major sites for the enactment of subjugation is the institution of marriage.

Part of the poem introduces the first character that is a married woman, and presumably an African woman. Her husband is cheating on her. The result is the emergence of a

psychologically and physically disoriented woman. Emotional bereavement and the sense of abandonment emotionally weigh down the wife. A good example of this,

A young woman on Sunday morning

All by herself, neglected

On a freeday

A resting Sunday

Rolling about alone

In a double bed,

Meant for two! (18)

The text is lamenting emotional negligence. Men forgo their marital responsibilities, and thus demonised in contrast to the dutiful wife. Likimani draws the character of a faithful young wife with whom the reader is likely to develop an affective attachment. This is particularly so if we contrast the wife's agony with her concerns, her caring for, and sincere commitment to her husband as in this case,

The stillness of the morning

Came back to my mind

I thought of my.....

I missed him

I hope he is not sick

.....

I hope it is not an accident!

.....
My poor husband (21-2)

As much as such a contrasting depiction may be relevant in its portrayal of the tolerant, caring faithful wife who has nevertheless been abandoned by her husband, we cannot downplay its underlying statement. As readers, we are led to suspect that the husband is safe and having fun elsewhere. With this knowledge, we are tempted to not only identify and empathise with the wife, but also get to see the folly of her concerns. Thus, what Likiman presents to us in the ridicule that women undergo in marriage.

Our reading of the text pays attention to the portraying of marriage as the site where the woman's identity is dissolved. She is always expected to remain within the confines of domesticity and still her personal ambitions. This way, Likimani laments that the woman is perceived as another embellishment just like pieces of furniture. The use of the image of woman to satisfy male gaze and ego has in Likimani's text, been depicted as having a western origin. Mr. and Mrs. Smith a European couple, serves to contrast African patriarchal attitude, and the same time make a universal claim to male domination. Mrs. Smith is preoccupied with making herself attractive to her husband, as she says in her monologue

I had to be beautiful.

To capture my man.

My husband now complains

I am getting fat;

.....

It is frightening

To hear such comments (69).

When Mrs. Smith concerns herself with her body in order to satisfy her husband and preserve her marriage, she plays into the hands of patriarchal stereotypes of femininity. In Paulina Palmer's view, this equals consenting to "the assumptions of female inferiority in Phallographic ideals of beauty" (33). Palmer identifies marriage and the female body as the sites where women's oppression takes root. The image of the woman as prescribed by the desire of the male gaze has adverse effects not only to the woman's physical health, but they also limit her ability to scuttle patriarchal constructions of femininity and replace this with a self-nurtured identity.

Mrs. Smith takes upon male definitions and she consequently subjects herself to male definition. Her conscience is not directed towards the amelioration of the image of the woman. In her feverish search for that bodily image that would win her man, she laments of these consequences:

Life without food

Is not life at all.

I get hungry!

And yet I cook –

I may be anaemic

While the store

Is full of food

My flesh is gone

My big bones stick out;

.....

I feel lazy, I feel sick (70)

As Palmer continues to observe,

The proliferation of visual representations of femininity, while encouraging men to feel secure, makes women feel anxious. It pressures the latter into a narcissistic preoccupation with self-image and imposes indirect control on their behaviour (34).

As much as women frantically try to model their bodies to suit the demands of male gaze, they are bound to lose at the end. With this recognition, women must, in a counter-hegemonic discourse as in Likimani's text, refute these oppressive male definitions. The woman must build her character in tandem with her rising consciousness if she is to succeed in scuttling phallocratic stereotypes and definitions. This kind of consciousness is captured through Mrs. Smith who at the end vows to "throw all the make-up away ... enjoy her meals,... get fat and be "out of fashion" (84).

To qualify the universal, indiscriminate male oppression we have other institutions such as religion portrayed as working to support the male agenda. This is more so as realised through the persona of the preacher's wife, and the structure of formal marriages whose custody lies

within the religious institution. When the persona deserts her husband as a result of his unfaithfulness, her male relatives are cynical of her behaviour. Her brother dismisses her in this manner,

I wish I had

The money you have

And as your husband has

For I would marry

One, two and three,

Even a fourth wife. (94).

Patriarchy the world over is depicted as sharing in the oppression of women. As the persona's thoughts reveal,

Men are men

I came to remember

Your father is a man

Your brother is a man,

Your son is a man. (95)

Similarity of male domination of women cuts across cultures and racial boundaries. We have for instance, the Indian woman whose predicament is in no way different from her African counterpart.

Religion and the caste system combine to mute the voice of the persona, and in general to weigh down on the Indian woman. She must function within constructions of patriarchy

strengthened by the older generation of women symbolized through the nagging mother-in-law. Impediments to the liberation abound from wifedom and motherhood. Through the persona is well educated, she must surrender her individuality at the altar of marriage.

In a bid to explore cross-cultural gender imperatives, we have complementing personae. On one hand, we have an African man who is married to a European woman, and an African woman married to European, a former colonial master. Expectations are broken as disillusionment sets in. The European woman who emerges from a different patriarchal background is subjected to the severe demands of the extended African way of life. Threats of polygamy and pressures of cultural difference weigh heavily on this European woman.

With postcolonial undertones, the African woman in a mixed marriage is confronted with not only patriarchal, but also racial stereotypes. Her mother-in-law regards her as a racial other. In her monologue, the persona laments of her mother-in-law's persistent gossip. Everybody knows

.....how primitive

And uncouth

A black daughter-in-law

Could be. (154)

Beneath these laments lie the yearning for a sense of belonging, and self-fulfilment. The woman, who is a victim in the universal, patriarchal regulated institution of marriage, is engaged in a persistent search for self-understanding. This quest, as evident through the

monologues that constitute What Does a Man Want?, relates to the building of a female discourse that should nurture a female consciousness. The text involves a dialectic that is representative of a consciousness. Characters, who are the personae through whom the narrative poetic discourse is delivered, form the basic polemical pillars.

Towards the end of the text, we have an all-inclusive discourse where female voices that include prostitutes merge to express, and also to present their ideas on men. The most striking is the resolve to be independent of men, albeit in a friendly manner. In her conclusion, Likimani writes,

Recipe of winning a man

No one seems to know

.....

No matter what it is

Should never be served

With a hot tongue

Nor with a cold shoulder. (209)

The need for gender tolerance, an indication of a lack of authorial prescription of a right or wrong, limits the author's vision for the woman's identity. As much as Likimani would want to lash out at men, she displays a hesitant authorial position. In an imminent authorial voice, Likimani seeks to pacify her man, identified as her husband.

What a man wants

No one seems to know.

Life without a man

One might as well forget.

My husband, I cry

Keep calm, listen my love:

If I talk of men

You better understand

When I talk of men

That does not mean you. (193)

The author's polemical stance is integrative and non-confrontational as illustrated by this citation. Likimani appears to be entreating men for in essence, men and women will still have to co-exist in the society.

Nevertheless, What Does a Man Want? strikes the reader as a significant exposition of the excessive oppression of women by men, and the denial of their personality. The woman is a victim of social, cultural and economic forces, whose liberation rests on her ability to interrogate these structures. There is then the hope of balanced gender relations if the woman can discover her identity, which is not reliant on social, cultural and economic definitions. This can only be achieved if the woman has the ability to raise her consciousness in line with existing social structures. She must develop the questioning habit that is symbolized in Likimani's search for answers to the man's definition of the woman. In retrospect, Likimani

attempts to interrogate the sense of womanhood, an inextricable part of the woman's sense of self.

The two texts, Passbook Number and What Does a Man Want? though emerging from totalling different historic and social settings agree in their use of iconoclastic women characters who question oppressive systems. The texts are thus an indication of the need for questioning patriarchal and political structures that inhibit the woman's realization of her true identity. The text raises the sense of a solid female gender by not only exemplifying the need to question existing structures, but also through their heightened consciousness of inequality and their desire to remedy the same. Women's consciousness and the forging of strong bonds of sisterhood is what can aid women in their search for means and ways of determining not only their identity, but also their destiny as a gender category.

CONCLUSION

Our study set out to investigate the treatment of the theme of identity in Muthoni Likimani's literary works. We have interrogated four of her works: Fighting Without Ceasing, They Shall be Chastised, Passbook Number, and What Does a Man Want? a Man Want? Our aim was to demonstrate that in these works, Likimani explores social, historical, gender and cultural issues as they relate to societal and individual definitions of identity.

Identity as a theme in literary works is closely tied to social forces that confront people in a society. These forces may result from historical experience such as colonialism and neo-colonialism or may be as a result of underlying social contradictions, institutions and social constructions. In particular, colonialism and patriarchy are of significance to Likimani. From our reading of Likimani's works, we have gathered evidence to prove that the quest for and the assertion of identity inform her creative writing.

In our first chapter, we sought to review information that streamlines this study. Noting that Likimani as an author has not been subjected to adequate critical inquiry, our study proceeded to read her works guided by the postcolonial and feminist theoretical approaches. This has been occasioned by the typical settings that form the basis of her works revealing that colonialism and questions of gender are evaluated in relation to their effects on the sense of identity.

In the course of the second chapter, we analysed Likimani's autobiography. This study noted that Likimani's autobiography makes a strong impression of a persona who celebrates her life. Apparently, the autobiography as observed earlier, is an assertion of Likimani's personal identity. The author's assertion of her identity coalesces with gender and cultural imperatives

to shape her world-view. We have, in the course of this chapter, read these cultural and gender undertones as illustrations of the author's perception of not only her personal identity, but as significant expression of her gender and cultural identity.

Chapter three explores the author's depiction of a community that seeks to come to terms with a foreign culture. They Shall be Chastised is read as the portrayal of characters grappling with the question of their cultural identity. We particularly appreciate the author's bifurcation of characters into two distinctive groups. Our study notes that each of these attempts to assert their identity as informed by the question of what constitutes the African personality in the context of Christianity.

For instance, we observed that characters define their identity in relation to their religious standpoint. Likimani's depiction of their quest is compounded by questions of gender and culture. Likimani attends to the position of women and young girls and how socio-cultural forces shape their identity, and how they respond to this cultural definition. In essence, questions of identity are treated from a gendered point of view where tribal structures are evaluated amidst the influence of Christianity and missionary education.

Chapter four, our last chapter, focuses on Likimani's two texts: Passbook Number and What Does a Man Want? a Man Want?. In this chapter, we interrogated Likimani's treatment of identity through characters and their consciousness. Major characters in these works are women who question colonialism and patriarchy in the context of marriage. We observe that as characters interact with these two forces, they serve as conduits that express the authorial position on identity. These women are victims of the existing social order. Their liberation is inextricably tied to their understanding of their identity from their own position.

We have seen that Likimani's fictional works through their thematic focus, narrative perspectives and characterisation, offer the reader a multifaceted appreciation of identity. As we have demonstrated, gender and culture are primary cohesive elements that inform the texts.

Likimani's fictional works are fed by her own personal experiences. This can be investigated further through a psychoanalytic reading of her works, and particularly the autobiography where her strong attachment to her father may be significant in examining her character and personality. A Deconstructionist reading could help in examining uncanny moments, silences and even absences evident in Likimani's works.

In conclusion, Likimani's fictional works as this study has revealed, attach significance to the theme of identity. The author is consistent in her evaluation of herself, and of others with whom she interacts in terms of gender and culture.

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